WAB 家 Parent Link



BEIJING LIVING INDEX

2025/26

Welcome to Beijing,

... and welcome to the WAB family!

At Parent Link, we know that arriving in a new city is both exciting and overwhelming. This guide is our way of extending open arms to you—a warm embrace from parents who have walked this path. Inside, you'll find practical tips, community resources, and local know-how to help your family feel at home.

Most importantly, please remember you are not alone. The WAB community is a village, and Parent Link is here to walk beside you. We invite you to join our monthly coffee morning, WeChat groups, reach out whenever you need a helping hand and lean on us as friends and family.

We are delighted that you are here. Embrace the journey.

— Hang Ngo

Chair of Parent Link

WAB 家 Parent Link

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1. Beijing Basics: What to Do First

Here are some essential things to do shortly after you arrive in Beijing:

- **Mobile Phone**: Get a local mobile phone connection. Note that iPhones and iPads bought in China do not support FaceTime Audio, and Android phones lack the Google Play app store. For more information on getting a SIM card, visit China SIM Cards.
- **WeChat (Weixin)**: A must-have app that functions as both a communication tool and a mobile payment platform, essential for daily life in China. It also features a vast ecosystem of mini-apps for services like food delivery and shopping. For a comprehensive guide, visit WeChat for Foreigners Guide.
- **Bank Account**: The process and requirements for opening a bank account vary by bank, so it's a good idea to do some research first. For a detailed guide on opening a bank account in China, visit China Bank Account.
- **e-Wallets**: Download **WeChat Pay** and **Alipay**. WeChat is essential for communication and includes electronic payments for various purchases, as well as sending and receiving money. For more detailed guides on setting up and using these, check out WeChat Pay Guide and Alipay Setup.

2. Overcoming the Language Barrier

Although English is not widely spoken in Beijing, the younger generations are becoming more conversational, and many locals make great efforts to communicate with our expat community! Learning a few Chinese words such as “ni hao” and “xie xie” goes a long way, locals truly appreciate it when you make the effort!

To help with daily life and communication, these essential apps can make things much easier:

- **WeChat Translate**:
    - **Translate Text in Chats:** Press and hold a message to translate it directly in your conversations.
    - **Translate Photos:** Use the camera function to translate text on signs, menus, and more.
    - **Translate Mini-apps:** Many mini-apps have a built-in translation function. Just tap the three dots in the top-right corner to translate the entire interface.
- **AI Translation Apps**: Apps like DeepSeek and other AI-powered tools are excellent for translating anything from photos and articles to single words and sentences with high accuracy.
- **iTranslate**: Great for translating phrases by copying and pasting text.
- **Google Translate**: Use the camera function to translate text around you.
- **Siri on iOS11**: A built-in feature that can translate phrases for you.
- **Pleco Chinese dictionary**: A comprehensive dictionary with paid add-ons.

3. Essential Local Resources

From finding the best dumplings to navigating school life, these local platforms and publications are essential companions for expat families.

- **TheBeijinger**: An essential resource for the expat community. (WeChat ID: Thebeijinger). The Beijinger is the longest running and most comprehensive publication for expats in Beijing, founded and run by a former WAB dad. It's a must-have in your WeChat accounts. Don't miss the videos either, and they run many food-themed events. They also run many public WeChat groups, which you can join by adding their WeChat account TB-JButler.
- **JingKids** (CN) / BeijingKids (EN): An essential resource for international families. (WeChat ID: Beijing-kids). JingKids is also run by the same family and operated by the WAB mom from the same household. There is a Chinese and English version that focuses on all things family in Beijing (WeChat ID: Beijing-kids).
- **BeijingService** – A popular WeChat account for expats, offering up-to-date news, policy changes, and practical guides for navigating life in the capital. Think of it as a one-stop platform for staying informed and connected in Beijing.
- **Dianping**: A must-have app. Think of it as the Yelp or Yellow Pages meets Google Reviews. You will find all restaurants rated and reviewed, as well as photos and rankings of the restaurants' most popular dishes.
- **Xiao Hong Shu (The Little Red Book)**: An app that is Instagram meets shopping and travel guide. It's a little advanced, but if you can master it, you will get a lot of tips and info about restaurants, shopping, and travel from it.



4. Travel & Outdoor Fun

One of Beijing's greatest perks is how easy it is to get out and explore. With **two international airports** and **multiple high-speed train stations**, you're connected to the rest of China and beyond. But unlike most Asian megacities, you don't need to go far—**mountains, trails, lakes, and even the Great Wall** are less than an hour from downtown.

Whether it's hiking, cycling, horse riding, camping, climbing, running, swimming, or cultural day trips, Beijing is a playground for outdoor lovers. The Great Wall itself is right on your doorstep.

Having a car is convenient for weekend escapes, but you can just as easily book a **Didi driver** to take you anywhere within Beijing municipality. Beyond the city, **Hebei Province** opens up even more adventures: west to **Chongli**, the Winter Olympics ski haven, or east to **Qinhuangdao**, a beachside summer favorite. Head north and you'll reach **Inner Mongolia**, with its vast grasslands, horse riding, and unforgettable starry skies.

There's no limit to what you can do here. This guide will get you started, but the best insider tips always come from your fellow WAB families—don't hesitate to ask.

4.1. Hiking

Hiking is becoming increasingly popular in Beijing, with more locals and expats heading outdoors on weekends to enjoy nature. The Great Wall and nearby mountains offer countless trails, many of which are just 1–1.5 hours away by car.

- **Beijing Hikers** – Fun, friendly hiking trips in and around Beijing.
  (Website: www.beijinghikers.com | WeChat ID: Beijinghikersk)

- **WildWall** – A wilderness Great Wall experience created by William Lindesay. (Website: www.wildwall.com)
- **Great Wall Adventure Club** – Specializes in authentic Great Wall hikes, camping, and trekking adventures, ranging from day trips to overnight expeditions. (Website: greatwalladventureclub.com)



4.2. Beijing Tours and Fun Activities

- **Our Beijing**: Offer unique and authentic experiences, including bike tours through ancient hutongs, wild Great Wall hikes, and cultural workshops like making traditional Chinese pancakes.
- **Lost Plate**: Specializes in food, craft brewery, and photo tours.
- **Beijing Postcards** – A unique cultural initiative organizing community events, oral history projects, and Saturday walking tours. Their collection of vintage maps and photos is also turned into creative souvenirs like framed prints and jigsaw puzzles.
- **Dennis Beijing Tours & Interpretation Services** (Email: dennisbeijingtours@outlook.com and Tel: 15910579123)
- **Fun Farm Fam**: A Danish designer opened this natural farmland in the city and sets up a nature education programme for children aged 2-8 years. The content includes nature science,

animal conservation, food education, creative woodworking, and so on. Get children outdoors and get their hands dirty. (Address: FunFarmFam Ecological Farm, Litian Road South 7, 101317 Shunyi District, Beijing, 北京市顺义区天竺镇李天路南7号院，畈畈畈生态农园. Wechat: Mortenholm123)

- **Sheep MoMo's Forest Kingdom** – Family-friendly petting zoo and playground. Great for kids' birthday parties. (朝阳区小羊MoMo森林王国 / WeChat: h541840959)

- **Mimi Mars Family Center (MINIMARS 亲子会所)** – Family entertainment space with play areas, crafts, dining, learning, and childcare. (朝阳区酒仙桥南路39号 久隆大厦2层西侧)

- **BomBomSpace** – Trampoline park near the airport Outlets Mall, popular for birthdays and fun for parents too. (Address: Forest Park East No. 1, Second Airport Expressway, Springtime Outlets Mall Phase II, Zone B, 3rd Floor, B3-1 地址：北京市顺义区机场第二高速金盏乡森林公园东1号 斯普瑞斯奥莱购物中心二期B区3层B3-1号WeChat: 搜索"弹力猩球运动乐园" (BomBomSpace) on WeChat or Dianping for tickets and group deals)

4.3. Escape Beijing

Weekends are busy at popular sites—book accommodation and transport early. Many destinations can be reached by organized shuttle, high-speed rail, or private car hire.

- **The Brickyard Retreat at Mutianyu Great Wall**
  A boutique eco-retreat at the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall, known for spectacular mountain scenery, comfortable rooms, spa, countryside walks, and direct wall access.

- **Chengde Summer Resort** – The former Qing Dynasty imperial retreat and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Easily reached in about one hour by high-speed train from Chaoyang Station to Chengde Nan, it's a great weekend escape for history lovers.

- **Beijing Marriott Hotel Changping** – A favorite among expats for a quick escape, offering hot springs, spa facilities, and family-friendly amenities. Perfect for a day of soaking or a relaxed weekend stay. (Website:)

- **Yanqi Lake**
  Scenic lake in Huairou District, excellent for hiking, water sports, and children's activities. Surrounded by mountains and popular for summer escapes. There is a Kempinski hotel (Website: https://www.kempinski.com/en/yanqi-hotel-managed-by-kempinski)

- **Gubei Water Town & Simatai Great Wall**
  A recreated ancient water town with boutique inns and the only Great Wall section open for night hikes. Atmospheric and relaxing, about 1.5 hours from Beijing.

- **Aranya Jinshanling**
  About 3 hours drive. Aranya arts enclave in Chengde, offering stunning mountain scenery, contemporary lodging, and curated lifestyle programs.

- **Aranya Qinghuangdao**
  A famous coastal community blending art, architecture, and



nature; experience the acclaimed Lonely Library, beach, and cultural events. (Website: https://www.aranyaartcenter.com/english/visit-copy)

- **Chongli**
  The site of the Winter Olympics, with many resorts like Thaiwoo or Genting Secret Garden, great in Winter for snow fun but also in summer for hiking and mountain biking.

4.4. Go further

Venture beyond Beijing for a weekend, or a week, and explore the vast diversity of China. From the serene landscapes of Yunnan and the vibrant city life of Shanghai, easily reachable by a five-hour high-speed train, to the breathtaking natural wonders of Yellow Mountain, Zhangjiajie, Guilin, and Emeishan, there is an adventure for every interest. Many of these incredible locations can be easily reached by plane or high-speed rail.

Recommended Travel Agents:

- **Horizon Travel**: Organizes affordable trips with English and French-speaking guides. WeChat ID: Travels- China Horizon Travel. https://www.chinahorizontravel.com/en/
- **WildChina**: A premium, sustainable travel company that offers bespoke, off-the-beaten-path journeys. (Website: https://wild-china.com/)
- Songtsam built and operates more than a dozen boutique lodges throughout Yunnan and Tibet
- Zanadu: travel agent specialising in high-end journeys, domestic and international. Their staff speaks English and customizes any trip for you. (Website: zanadu.com.cn Email: info@zanadu.cn)
- **Trip.com** – One-stop booking platform for flights, trains, hotels, and car rentals, with easy international payment options and excellent travel guides.



5. Health

For your health needs, Beijing offers a wide range of international-standard hospitals, clinics, dental centers, and mental health resources. Many institutions can bill directly to major international insurances, but always confirm with your provider.

5.1. Major International Hospitals & Clinics

- **Beijing United Family Healthcare (BJU)** – Full-service international healthcare group with multiple facilities across the city, offering psychotherapy, psychiatric services, and full medical coverage. (Appointment: 4008-919191 / Emergency: (010) 5927-7120 / WeChat ID: BJU59277000 / Web: beijing.ufh.com.cn)
- **Raffles Medical Beijing** – Full-service international group with clinics offering psychotherapy and general healthcare, about 10 minutes from Sanlitun. (Call: (010) 6462-9112 / WeChat ID: Raffles_medical / Web: rafflesmedicalchina.com)
- **Oasis International Hospital** – Private medical center with international services. (Appointment: 4008-762-747 / Emergency: (010) 5985-0333 / WeChat ID: OASIS_hospital / Web: oasishealth.cn)
- **IDC Dental** – Full-service dental and medical center.

5.2. Mental Health & Family Counseling

- **Calm International** – Psychotherapy in-person and virtual, close to embassy, serving kindergarten to adults, with direct billing to American insurances. (Web: calm-international.com)
- **Tracey Yang** – U.S.-trained psychotherapist offering in-person and virtual therapy, existential therapy, coaching, and trainings. (WeChat: YiduPsych)

- **The Truman Group** – U.S.-based, virtual psychotherapy for ages 10+, out-of-pocket with insurance reimbursement options. (Web: trumangroup.com)
- **Oceania International Counseling Services** – U.S./U.K.-trained therapists offering psychotherapy for ages 10+. (US Tel: +1-410-216-4134 / China Tel: +86 166-0003-8245)
- **Olivia's Place** – LIH-based counseling and psychology center, open Mon–Sun, 9am–6pm. (Web: oliviasplace.lih.pub / WeChat: Yun, Dr. Yun Liu)
- **CandleX** – Provides in-person psychotherapy, support groups, and counseling in English. (Web: candlex.cn)
- **International Medical Center Beijing (IMC)** – U.S.-trained providers offering psychotherapy in English for all ages. (Tel: (010) 6465-1561 / Web: imcclinics.com)
- **The Learning Frontier** – Provides OT, PT, speech therapy, and applied behavioral analysis in English, best for children aged 3–11. (Web: learningfrontier.cn)
- **Michelle Andersson** – U.S.-trained therapist providing psychotherapy. (Web: mopeandersson.com)

5.3. Veterinary Services

- **International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS)** – International-standard veterinary hospital in Wangjing offering healthcare, vaccinations, and relocation services. (Tel: (010) 8456-1939/1940 / Web: ICVSASIA.com / Email: ICVS_China@yahoo.com)
- Beijing Ruicheng Animal Hospital They are more economical than ICVS. Not an English-speaking clinic so they use a translating tool to communicate. However, they are super helpful and kind.

5.4. Air Quality

Beijing's air has improved dramatically over the past decade, and blue-sky days are now the norm. Still, pollution can return occasionally (sometimes it's just fog), so it's best to check conditions with the **AirVisual app**. At WAB, families can rest assured: the school's positive air pressure system keeps indoor air quality at excellent levels year-round.



6. Transportation

Beijing is a sprawling city, and while it's not always practical to get around on foot, there are plenty of ways to move quickly and comfortably. Walking is best enjoyed along scenic routes like the **Liangma River** or through the city's **hutongs**, but for daily life you'll rely on other options:

- **Metro** – Fast, affordable, and extensive. You can buy a **Yikatong card** at any station and recharge it at counters or machines.
- **Didi** – China's version of Uber, with service levels ranging from budget rides to luxury cars. The app is available in English.
  Shared Bikes – Found everywhere in the city, perfect for short trips or the "last mile." Unlock with **WeChat** or **Alipay** (usually under RMB 1.5 per ride).
- **E-Scooters** – Easy to purchase and convenient for short commutes or errands.
- **Driving** – If you hold a foreign driver's license, you can take a theory test to convert it to a Chinese license. A valid license is required to drive both cars and motorcycles.

7. Food Delivery & Grocery

Beijing is a true foodie's paradise, offering everything from street-side chuar skewers to fine dining. The city is packed with options for **Chinese, Asian, and international cuisines**, so you'll never run out of new places to try.

China's culinary diversity is on full display here: with **over 20 provinces, each with its own distinct cuisine**, you can sample everything from **Beijing duck, dumplings, and hot pot** to the fiery flavors of **Sichuan and Hunan**, the fresh herbs of **Yunnan**, or the delicate dim sum of **Guangzhou**.

Beijing's large **Korean community** means outstanding Korean BBQ and comfort food is everywhere. You'll also find excellent **Thai and Vietnamese spots**, alongside a wide mix of international restaurants—**Italian trattorias, French bistros, Spanish tapas bars, German beer gardens, Lebanese kitchens, and vegetarian havens**.

Because restaurants come and go, it is difficult to curate a list of recommended establishments. The Meituan Black Pearl is a curated list of fine dining establishments in Beijing.

And when you don't feel like going out, food delivery apps bring it all straight to your door.



7.1. Food Delivery Apps

- **Dianping** – China's Yelp: browse reviews, ratings, and photos, then order directly from thousands of restaurants. App available in English, though most content is in Chinese. Also available as a **WeChat Mini Program**, where translations make it easier to use.
- **Meituan** – The most popular food delivery app in Beijing, fast and affordable with endless dining options. Also available as a **WeChat Mini Program** for easier access in English.
- **JSS** – An English-friendly service designed for the expat community, offering both restaurant meals and groceries.

7.2. Specialty Food Services

- **Sweet Cravings BJ** – Connects you with over 400 independent bakers offering desserts and custom cakes. (WeChat ID: Camkon)
- **Black Sesame Kitchen** – A long-time expat favorite for Chinese fusion dining, cultural workshops, and private events. (WeChat ID: BlackSesameKitchen)
- **The Hutong** – Cultural hub with cooking classes, hands-on food workshops, and unique culinary experiences. (WeChat ID: TheHutongBeijing)
- **Susu** – Well-loved Vietnamese restaurant chain; the hutong branch is especially popular with expats.
- **Slow Boat Brewing** – Great burgers and Beijing's best-known craft beer, run by current WAB parents.
- **Hatsune** – Legendary Japanese fusion restaurant, famous for creative sushi rolls and a longtime expat go-to.
- **Arrow Factory Brewing** – One of Beijing's original craft breweries with a solid menu of pub classics.

- **The Bake Shop** – Beloved artisanal bakery offering excellent sourdough breads, pastries, and homemade deli items. (WeChat ID: TheBakeShop)
- **Schindler's Deli** – Maizidian staple near Solana, stocking European meats, cheeses, sausages, and specialty imports.
- **Boucherie Michel** – A popular French butcher shop in Xingfucun near Sanlitun and Workers' Stadium. (Tel: 010-64170489)
- **All in Wine** – Founded by Yifach and Fani Bar, offering wines from boutique to top-tier producers. Their showroom hosts private tastings for a small fee. (Address: All In Wine Shop, RM 106, Building C8, 751D-Park, No 4 Jiuxianqiao Rd, Chaoyang District, Beijing 北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路4号751D-Park园区C8栋106 All In Wine Shop 澳琳湾进口葡萄酒商店)
- **Annie's Pizza** – A Beijing institution for nearly 30 years, with multiple locations. Known for good-quality Italian food, an extensive menu, fair prices, and English-speaking staff.

7.3. Online Grocery

- **JSS** – WeChat mini-program for online restaurant orders and groceries.
- **Epic' Store** – Online store with imported and high-quality local products.
- **JD.com** – Reliable app for fresh produce, household essentials, and imported goods with fast delivery.
- **Sam's Club** – Membership-based retailer known for consistent quality and one-hour delivery service. App and product descriptions in English.

7.4. Grocery Stores

- **Jenny Lou's** (multiple locations) – Long-time expat favorite for local and imported products.
- **April Gourmet** (multiple locations) – Similar to Jenny Lou's, with a strong range of imported groceries.
- **Sam's Club** – Walmart's premium warehouse store with several large locations in Beijing; many families prefer ordering online for delivery.
- **San Yuan Li Market** – Famous fresh market near the northeast corner of the 3rd Ring Road, known for local produce, seafood, imported meats, and Southeast Asian specialty ingredients.
- **Jingkelong** – Affordable Chinese grocery chain found throughout the city. Great prices, consistently fresh produce, and tasty prepared Chinese dishes.
- **Hao Sheng Huo** – A cross between Jingkelong and BHG, with excellent fresh bread, produce, and affordable pricing (especially with membership).
- **BHG Market Place** – Slightly more upscale, carrying international brands, specialty items, and even premium skincare and household supplies.
- **ProFarmers** – A WAB student-led initiative connecting local farmers with the WAB community, bringing fresh produce directly to campus. Ask a Parent Link representative to get added via WeChat.



8. Real Estate

If you haven't found your home yet, this may help you get started. In Beijing, expat families generally choose between three main areas:

- **Shunyi** – Home to WAB and many other international schools, this area is popular with families who prefer villa compounds where kids can roam freely. Shopping centers and restaurants are plentiful, though commuting to and from downtown can take 30–60 minutes by car.
- **Sanlitun** – The city's embassy and lifestyle hub, full of shopping, restaurants, nightlife, and expat-friendly services. Apartments here are more urban and compact, with easy access to international amenities.
- **Other Central Areas** – Options include **Lido and 798 (arts district)**, **Gulou and Houhai (historic hutongs with lakeside charm)**, **Chaoyang Park** (family-friendly, with greenery), and the **CBD** (modern, business-focused). These areas mix local character with convenience, though housing styles and prices vary.

When deciding, school and work locations will likely determine your area. Once you've narrowed it down, look at compounds that fit your lifestyle—high-rise or low-rise, modern or older, larger or smaller, near your favorite grocery store or with a view.

- **Private agents**: Ask our WAB Community Link leaders for recommendations.
- After you identify a suitable apartment complex, talk to the property managers.
- **Diplomatic Residence Compounds (DRCs)**: There are six DRCs in Beijing that offer turnkey western-style housing options.

For furniture, a few good places to start your search are:

- **IKEA** – Convenient and affordable, with locations at **Siyuanqiao** and **Xihongmen**.
- **Taobao** – China's online marketplace giant. The easiest trick: upload a photo of what you're looking for, and Taobao will find the same or similar item. Ask a Community Link member to help you navigate—it can be overwhelming, and yes, it's addictive once you start!
- **Easyhome** – A large market near IKEA (northeast corner of the 4th Ring Road), with dozens of suppliers offering everything from bathtubs to lounge chairs.
- **Shilihe Furniture Market** – Located at the southeast corner of the 4th Ring Road, this sprawling market is like Easyhome but several times larger, offering an endless variety of home furnishings.
- **Domus Furniture Showroom** – Downtown showroom with high-quality designer furniture.
- **101Plus Showroom (Langyuan Station)** – A curated showroom specializing in high-end vintage and statement pieces.
- **John Wang** – for more custom Chinese inspired furniture.



9. Expat Interest WeChat Groups

WeChat groups are one of the best ways to stay connected in Beijing—whether you're looking for friends, food tips, parenting advice, or just some local humor.

How to Join

1. Add TBJButler on WeChat with a message clearly stating **which groups (up to 3)** you'd like to join and why.
2. Requests to join more than three groups will be ignored (you can always ask to join more later).



9.1. Art & Culture

- **Art Attack** – The latest news on Beijing's art scene, from exhibitions to arts & crafts workshops. (Scan the QR code; if full, add **TBJButler** and request access.)

- **The Beijinger Book Group** – A book club for readers in Beijing.
- **Best of Beijing in Photos** – For photographers to share their shots of the city.
- **Lifelong Learning in Beijing** – Adult education and lifelong learning opportunities.

9.2. Food & Drink

- **Beijing Bars & Booze** – Cocktails, bar hopping, and nightlife news.
- **The Beijinger Foodies Group** – General foodie chat.
- **Taco Lovers** – For admirers of all things taco.
- **Beijing Expat Promos** – Discounts and food/drink promotions aimed at foreigners.
- **Beijing Craft Beer Lovers** – For local and imported craft beer fans.
- **Beijing Spicy Food Lovers** – Restaurant tips and recipes for spice enthusiasts.
- **Beijing Burger Lovers** – Burgers and nothing else.
- **Beijing Pizza Lovers** – All about pizza in Beijing.
- **Sausage Lovers** – Everything sausage and hot dog-related.
- **Cheap Eats in Beijing** – Dining under RMB 50 per person.
- **New Restaurants in Beijing** – Reviews and updates on the newest openings.
- **Beijing Caffeine Addicts** – Coffee lovers unite.

9.3. Family & Parenting

- **Third Culture Kid Parenting** – For parents raising children in cross-cultural environments.
- **JingKids Parenting in Beijing** – General parenting group for families in Beijing.
- **Beijing Family Friendly Eats** – Kid-approved restaurants and family dining tips.
- **Beijing Dads Group** – A space for fathers in Beijing.
- **Kid & Family Events in Beijing** – Sharing family-friendly activities and happenings.

9.4. Lifestyle & Community

- **New Englanders in Beijing** – A slice of New England in Beijing, for natives and nostalgic expats alike.
- **Expat Investment** – Insights on investing as an expat.
- **Mandarin Learners** – Tips from beginners to advanced.
- **WeChat Tips & Tricks** – How to master WeChat.
- **Just Jokes** – Lighthearted group for humor.
- **Only Stickers** – WeChat stickers, and nothing else.
- **Peking Pups & Other Pets** – Resources and cute pics.
- **Sanlitun Stuff** – All about dining, nightlife, and shopping in Beijing's most famous expat hub.
- **Beijing Sports** – For players and fans of local sports.
- **Beijing Explorers** – Discover hidden gems across the city.
- **Beijing Entrepreneurs** – Resources and networking for entrepreneurs.

9.5. Work & Study

- **Jobs for International Educators** – Listings for K–12 education roles in China.
- **Expat (Non-Teaching) Jobs in BJ** – Job opportunities outside education.
- **International Educators in China** – Discussions and resources for K–12 teachers and administrators.
- **Students in Beijing** – A group for university students in the capital.
- Health & Environment
- **Beijing Pollution Fighters** – Tips and information on coping with air, water, and environmental issues



10. Museums and Galleries

Beijing isn't just China's political capital — it's the country's artistic heartbeat. From the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) to the legendary 798 Art District, Caochangdi Village, and Songzhuang, the city has fueled world-renowned names like Xu Bing, Fang Li-jun, Yue Minjun, and Zeng Fanzhi. Whether you're into blue-chip galleries or experimental spaces hidden in hutongs, Beijing has it all.

10.1. 798 Art District

The city's contemporary art hub.

- UCCA Center for Contemporary Art – Flagship contemporary museum with international exhibitions.
- Pace Beijing – The Beijing branch of New York's Pace Gallery.
- Tang Contemporary Art – Influential gallery with major Asian and global names.
- White Space – Sharp, conceptual shows from emerging Chinese artists.
- The Cube – Small but consistent program.
- Hive Art Center / Platform Beijing / Beijing Commune / Star Gallery – Well-established Chinese galleries mixing established and new voices.
- Galeria Continua / Galerie Urs Meile / HdM Gallery / BTAP – Foreign galleries showcasing strong international programs.
- Spurs Gallery / Tong Gallery & Projects / Double Double Gallery / Space Station – Go-to spaces for discovering young and experimental artists.

10.2. Caochangdi Village

- PIFO Gallery – Photography and experimental focus.
- Three Shadows Photography Art Centre – China's first contemporary photography space.
- Ink Studio / ShanghART – Contemporary heavyweights with serious programs.
- Yuan Museum – Reliable contemporary exhibitions.

10.3. Songzhuang Artists' Village

China's largest artist colony with hundreds of studios and the Songzhuang Art Museum.

10.4. Standalone Highlights

- Red Brick Art Museum – Architectural landmark with blockbuster exhibitions.
- Today Art Museum – Pioneer of private museums, strong contemporary program.
- National Museum of China – On Tiananmen Square; from ancient bronzes to modern history.
- Luo Hong Photography Art Museum – Large-scale photography shows in Shunyi.
- Gallery Where – Hidden in Dongcheng hutongs, one of the coolest small spaces in town.
- Hyundai Motorstudio Beijing – Where design and art meet technology.



11. English-Language Bookstores

Finding English books in Beijing can be a bit of a treasure hunt, but there are some excellent options ranging from large international chains to cozy second-hand shops. A great roundup of places is available on Rachel Meets China, and here are a few highlights:

- Page One — Large international bookstore chain with a wide selection of English books: fiction, non-fiction, bestsellers, and classics. Multiple locations including Taikooli Sanlitun, Wudaokou Shopping Center, Wangfujing, and Qianmen.
- Roundabout Charity Store — Non-profit second-hand bookstore; good place to find affordable English titles. Located in Cathay View Plaza, Shunyi. Proceeds support local charities.
- Foreign Languages Bookstore (Wangfujing) — Iconic shop for foreign language books in English, literature, history, business, etc. Address: 235 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District. *Currently closed for renovations; reopening expected by end of 2025.*



12. Parks

Beijing may be known for its size and energy, but it's also a surprisingly **green city**. Scattered across town are dozens of large parks where locals go jogging, strolling, or simply spreading out a tent for a picnic on weekends. In the early mornings, before work, you'll see people of all ages coming out for exercise—everything from tai chi and kite flying to the famous **dancing aunties** who turn open plazas into outdoor dance floors. Every season offers something special: spring blossoms, lively summer evenings, brilliant fall colors (with golden **ginkgo trees in Yuanmingyuan** especially stunning), and winter festivals with rides and food stalls.

Some highlights:

- **Beihai Park** – One of Beijing's oldest and largest imperial gardens, with lakes, temples, classical Chinese architecture, and scenic boat rides. A tranquil retreat right in the city center.
- **Jingshan Park** – Just north of the Forbidden City, famous for its hilltop pavilions and some of the best panoramic views in Beijing.
- **Yuyuantan Park** – Known for its lakes, walking paths, and cherry blossoms in spring. A favorite for outdoor activities and picnics.
- **Zhongshan Park** – Centrally located, with landscaped gardens, lakes, historic halls, and play areas for kids.
- **Summer Palace** – A vast imperial retreat with lakes, pagodas, temples, and winding garden paths. Perfect for long walks and cultural exploration.
- **Olympic Forest Park** – Beijing's largest urban park, created for the 2008 Olympics, with expansive green landscapes ideal for running, biking, or escaping city life.



- **Chaoyang Park** – A huge, activity-filled park in the heart of the expat district, often considered Beijing's most "Western" park, with playgrounds, sports fields, and even a small amusement park.
- **Temple of Heaven Park** – Famous for its Ming-era architecture and morning scenes of tai chi, music, and dancing.
- **Ritan Park** – A peaceful, smaller park with gardens, shaded paths, and playgrounds.
- **Yuanmingyuan (Old Summer Palace)** – Once a grand imperial garden, now a mix of picturesque ruins, lakes, and natural beauty, especially magical in **autumn when ginkgo trees turn golden**.

13. Learning Mandarin

Learning Mandarin is one of the most rewarding ways to immerse yourself in Beijing life. The city offers everything from cozy hutong schools with cultural activities to full-scale university programs.

WAB Chinese Link Mandarin Workshop

The **Chinese Link Mandarin Workshop** is organized by the Chinese Link team at WAB. It helps parents build practical Mandarin skills for everyday life through interactive, community-based lessons. Classes focus on real-life communication in settings such as restaurants, markets, and schools — a great way to connect with Chinese families and meet other WAB parents. For more information and registration, contact chineselink@wab.edu

Immersive Mandarin Programs with Cultural Activities

- **Culture Yard**
  An award-winning hutong school offering Mandarin from beginner to HSK 6, with a focus on communication and real-life fluency. Small classes, flexible schedules, cultural workshops, and online options make it a favorite for expats. (website: https://www.cultureyard.net/)

- **Hutong School**
  Flexible courses (part-time, group, private, immersion) combined with cultural activities like cooking and calligraphy. Known for fast progress, small classes, and strong support for newcomers.(website: https://www.hutong-school.com/)

Private Mandarin Schools

- **That's Mandarin**
  Highly praised for modern, engaging lessons with flexible in-person and online options. Teachers and staff are noted for professionalism, student progress, and a welcoming community. (website: https://www.thatsmandarin.com)

- **MandarinRocks**
  Focused on small, personalized classes (max six students) at budget-friendly rates. Loved for its social atmosphere and experienced teachers, though space is limited.(website: http://www.mandarinrocks.com/)

- **The Bridge School** – Provides affordable private lessons either on-site or at your home. (Tel: 130-0107-0338 / WeChat: TheBridgeSchool2021 / Web: bridgeschoolchina.com)

University Program

- **Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU)**
  China's top university for Mandarin studies, offering intensive semester and short-term programs (20–30 hours/week). Courses cover all levels, with electives in culture and business, plus online options via eBLCU. (website: https://english.blcu.edu.cn/)



14. Finding an Ayi (Housekeeper)

In Beijing, many families hire an **ayi** (housekeeper) to help with daily cleaning, laundry, cooking, or childcare. A trustworthy ayi can make a huge difference in your day-to-day life and settling smoothly into the city.

Ways to Find an Ayi

- **Word of Mouth & Recommendations** – Asking friends, neighbors, or other expats is the most reliable method. Many Ayis are found through recommendations in close-knit communities, playgroups, or expat WeChat groups dedicated to domestic help.
- **Hiring Through Agencies** – Professional agencies provide trained Ayis, often with background and health checks, and sometimes basic English. While more expensive due to agency fees, this reduces stress and ensures reliability. Agencies usually handle replacements if your ayi is unavailable. Search for "家政服务" (*housekeeping services*) on **Amap (高德地图)** or **Baidu Maps** to find nearby agencies.
- **Online Classifieds & Forums** – Sites like **The Beijinger**, **Beijing-Kids**, and other expat forums regularly post ayi listings and discussions.
- **Mobile Apps** – Platforms such as **58Home (58到家)** and **Wuyou Baomu (无忧保姆)** let you book cleaning or babysitting services, either one-time or regularly.
- **Building Management & Flyers** – Many apartment complexes keep contact lists for trusted helpers, and local supermarkets (like Jenny Lou's) often have flyers from ayis seeking new families.

- **Networking at Social Gatherings** – Newcomer events, playgroups, and expat meetups are a great way to hear first-hand recommendations.

Salary Reference

- **Part-time**: 40–50 RMB/hour
- **Full-time**: 4,000–6,000 RMB/month (English-speaking ayis may charge more)

Contracts & Resources

Community Link leaders can provide a bilingual ayi contract and job description. For a detailed overview of what to expect, see the **ExpatDen Guide to Helpers in China**.



15. Pets

Beijing is a pet-friendly city in many ways, but there are **strict rules** around importing, owning, and keeping pets—especially dogs. Knowing the regulations ahead of time will save you stress.

15.1. Bringing Pets into Beijing

- Only **one pet (dog or cat) per adult** with a valid work (Z) visa can be imported. Other animals are considered exotic and face complex entry rules.
- Pets must have an **ISO-compliant microchip**, **current rabies vaccinations**, and an official **health certificate**. A **rabies antibody titer test** may also be required depending on your country of origin.
- Upon arrival, pets typically face **7–30 days of quarantine** (at the owner's expense), depending on health documents and country of export.
- You must present documentation—**rabies vaccination proof, microchip records, and health certificates**—to customs and quarantine officials.
- Large dogs (taller than 35 cm at the shoulder) and certain **banned breeds** are not allowed within Beijing city limits, especially inside the 5th Ring Road.
- After quarantine and inspection, pets must be **registered at the local police station (Public Security Bureau)**.

15.2. Owning & Keeping Pets in Beijing

- **Dogs** must be licensed and registered annually. Registration requires photos of the dog, vaccination certificates, residence documents, and a fee (~1,000 RMB for initial registration, ~500 RMB for annual renewal).

- **Size restrictions** apply in central districts: dogs cannot exceed 35 cm shoulder height.
- **Cats** do not need to be registered, but must be healthy and vaccinated.
- Public parks are not always dog-friendly; most walking happens within compounds or in designated areas.

15.3. Veterinary Care

- Veterinary standards vary, so it's best to use reputable international clinics for vaccinations and healthcare.
- **International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS)** – Located in Wangjing, highly trusted by expats for veterinary care, vaccinations, licensing, and relocation services.
    - **Web: ICVSASIA.com**
    - **Email: ICVS_China@yahoo.com**
    - **Tel: 8456 1939 / 1940**

15.4. Additional Tips

- **Diplomats** should check with their embassy for special regulations.
- Rules can change—using **professional pet relocation services** is highly recommended for import and registration.
- Some expats register pets at a **friend's address outside the 5th Ring Road** if their dog exceeds the city's size limits.
- Contact **Community Link leaders** for a list of trusted agencies for adoption, shelters, relocation, and international transport.

16. Access to Important Information

Stay informed through these channels:

- **WAB Weekly**.
- **WAB Parent Portal**.
- **WAB WeChat Groups**.



Parents
at Ice Cream social



Parent Volunteers
at Fun Fair



Parent Lynx
Dragon Boat Race



here to help:
WAB Parent Link



ASEAN Link
Luncheon



Parent Link
Hutong Walking ztour



Parent Lynx
Dragon Boat Race



Korean Link
Winter Market



Chinese Link
New Year Celebration

WAB Parent Link

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