



THE OXFORD UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK
FOR STUDYING ABROAD IN
BEIJING





Hi guys,

This booklet has been produced by undergraduates in the year above to tell you about what will happen when you go to Beijing to study. This period is, for most people, their only opportunity (during the degree) to spend a long time in China and to gain some fluency in Chinese. From third year onwards, the Oxford course places more focus on History and Classical Chinese, so take advantage of the opportunity to get your modern Chinese up to scratch, and gain a decent speaking ability in Chinese to take away with you when you finish your degree. Obviously, you'll also want to have a good time when you're out there and make the most of the experience, as it is also a change of scene from the rigours of Oxford. This booklet should tell you most of what you need to know before you leave, what do to when you arrive, and hopefully help you make the most of living in Beijing. It may be fairly long, yet we highly recommend that you use it as a reference guide when you are in Beijing – especially the "Step-By-Step Guide to Setting Up Your Life" section.



Contents

Before you go	5
Flights	6
Insurance	8
A Step-By-Step Guide to Setting Up Your Life	9
Documentation (visas, temporary residence permits)	11
Visa Extensions	14
Money	15
Packing	17
Health	22
Vaccinations	22
Medicines	23
Mosquitoes	23
Sanitary Products	23
Drinking Water	24
Sunburn and Heatstroke	24
Toilets	24
Food Hygiene	25
What to do if you are ill	25
Pre-existing Conditions.	25
MEDICAL EMERGENCIES (Hospital Contact Details & Locations)	27
Student Finance Reimbursement	31
Arriving	32
Methods of transport	32
Where to stay	33
Beida Course	35
Holidays	37
International Language Competitions	37
Class Representative	38
Extracurricular Beida	39
Accommodation	40
Locations	40
Rental Agencies	40
Living in an apartment	41
Alternative Accommodation	43
Registration at the Police Station	45

Communications	46
Internet (& VPN)	46
Phoning	47
Post	48
Transport	49
Bike	49
Travelcard	49
Subway	49
Bus	50
Taxi	50
Long-distance Buses	50
Train	51
Plane	51
Around Beijing	53
Food	55
Beida Campus	55
BLCU Campus	56
Wudaokou	56
Beijing Roast Duck	58
Korean BBQ	58
Street Food	58
Places That Deliver	59
Must-Try	59
Special Dining Outside of Wudaokou	60
Beijing Nightlife	64
Clubbing	64
KTV	66
Cinema	66
Music Festivals	66
Beijing and Beyond	67
Wudaokou Map	68
Metro Map	69

Before you go

Before launching into the specifics of the preparation process, here is an idea of what the structure of your year will look like. This is the programme for the current second years – while it of course will not be absolutely identical for you, it should hopefully serve as a rough guide.

1 Sept	Registration at Beida	You will be welcomed to the university by the International Students Coordinator, Li Ke (李可). Afterwards, you will meet your new language partners, have a group photo taken and have a welcoming lunch.
2 Sept	First day of classes	You will also have collections set by Oxford around this time.
Sept - Oct	Beijing tours/activities arranged by Beida	Staff from the university will organise (free!) tours around some of the touristic sites of the city. Among these might be the Forbidden City, an acrobatics show at Chaoyang Theatre, Peking Opera, a Hutong tour, the Temple of Heaven and the Great Wall.
1 Oct – 7 Oct	National Week	You will have a week off class; these dates are approximate.
18 Dec (approx!)	Classes for the first term end	You <i>may</i> have one or two Beida exams just before the end of term. This date is approximate – more will be discussed in the <i>Flights</i> section about how to account for your flights, should you wish to return to the UK for the Christmas break.
13 Feb	Classes for the second term begin	Again, just an estimated date. You will also have collections set by Oxford around this date.
Apr – May	Possible day / week off	There may be a possibility of a mid-term break here – still unsure!
18-22 Jun	The week of final Beida exams	

The prospect of spending an entire year abroad is incredibly exciting, and your time in China will likely be more fantastic than you can imagine. Having said that, relocating to China is something of a mammoth task, and there are certainly things that you need to account for well in advance. A variety of considerations (such as flights, visa procedures, health checks, insurance, documentation, money, housing arrangements etc.) need to be dealt with, or at least should have some thought, before leaving the UK. Chinese visa bureaucracy is definitely better to be anticipated than not! As we, the current second years are the first cohort to be studying in China for a full year, the advice we would give is different to that from previous years, and this guide will attempt to detail the procedures as relevantly and comprehensively as possible.

From our experience, it is highly recommended that you head to China about two weeks before you are needed at Beida, so we would recommend arriving around the 18th August. We would advise this so strongly because it will be much easier to sort out living arrangements (which requires lots of *cash* as deposit payments) without the commitment of having to be in class every day. The section *Documentation/Temporary Residence Permit* has more information on what you'll be obliged to do in Beijing so early on.

You will probably be booked in to stay in Beida's on-campus *Sháoyuán* (勺园) accommodation for either one week or two. You may alternatively decide to find accommodation nearer Wudaokou (which is a popular district for university students), where many students decide to live. This will be discussed in more detail in the *Arriving* section.

Flights

When you have decided when you want to fly to China, try to book your flights as soon as you can – the sooner you start to enquire about fares, the more likely you are to find a good deal. If you travel in groups, Beida will send out a minibus to collect you from the airport. Alternative transport from the airport is not too difficult. You can use the Airport Express train which connects to the Beijing Subway for just 27 RMB (25 for the Airport Express line, 2 for any onward journey on the subway) or you can go with taxis from the well-organised taxi rank at the airport. The latter will inevitably be pricier (still only about 100 RMB), but a lot more convenient if you have a lot of luggage or are unfamiliar with the city. There is more about getting to the city in the *Arriving* section.

If you want to come home for the Christmas break, you will have four individual flights to book. You could book this:

- in two segments (a return ticket for the beginning and end of the first term, and then a return ticket for the beginning and end of the second term) or;
- in three segments (so a **single** ticket at the beginning of the year, then a return taking you home for Christmas and bringing you back for the second term, and then another **single** at the end of the whole year).

If you book it in two segments, you can be limited by Beida's somewhat unpredictable change of term dates / exam arrangements and thus have to change flight dates, but if you book it in three segments, it could be easier to overcome these problems by only booking the segments whose dates you are sure of.

Consider what you want to do at the end of the year – do you want to come home straight after term time ends or will you want to travel around China? It is a really good opportunity to travel around and the Beida course doesn't really allow any considerable amount of time for any long excursions. If you want to do some serious travelling, plan ahead and consider booking your return flight from another country. In the past people have travelled from Beijing across South East Asia and have flown home from Bangkok, Hong Kong, etc. STA travel can get you good deals on this.

Student Finance England offer reimbursements for certain costs incurred for obligatory study-abroad periods, and this includes up to three sets of return flights! There is more information about this in the *Student Finance Reimbursement* section.

Either way, you should book at least the first outward flight as soon as possible.

Booking flights

As far as booking flights is concerned, there are a number of options.

1. **Use a flight comparison website.** There are a good number of these websites out there. The ones we would recommend are <http://www.fly.com/>, <http://www.skyscanner.net/>, <http://www.travelocity.co.uk/>, <http://www.kayak.co.uk/> and <http://www.travelsupermarket.com/>. The way that these sites work is by searching independent booking agents to find the cheapest deal, which may well sometimes be cheaper than booking directly through the airline's own website. It is definitely a good idea to use these websites to make sure you're getting the cheapest possible price, although be aware that some comparison sites are better than others, and they do not always guarantee that you get the absolute cheapest price.
2. **Book directly through the airline's own website.** Once you have decided which airline to book with (if you have a certain preference, see the *Airlines* section below), use their website to book the flight. It is a good idea to compare the prices shown on the airline's own website with those shown on flight comparison websites. The advantage of booking through the airline's own website as opposed to any other method is that you will be able to manage your booking directly through the website, which will make it more convenient for online check-in, seat requests, meal requests etc.
3. **Travel agents.** STA is always a popular choice if you choose to go through an agent. They often have discounted fares for students, and apparently they have a branch in Shanghai, which some find handy. Another option is to use a Chinese travel agent – there is one in Oxford on Park End Street and several in London – which could save you money on your flights.

Airlines

Emirates has received great reviews from those of us who have travelled with them. They seem to be reasonably priced, have good food and service, comfortable planes and, importantly, a generous baggage allowance (30kg where the majority of airlines only offer 23kg). Furthermore, Emirates allows you to change your flight dates for a flat fee of £75, which can be convenient if your travel plans change. The disadvantage is that reaching Beijing takes longer as you have to transfer in Dubai (it takes around 20 hours to reach Beijing). However if you don't mind the longer journey time, the baggage allowance and relatively cheap flight change fee definitely make Emirates a good option to consider.

Aeroflot, the Russian flag carrier, is usually returned as the outright winner on low prices. The quality of service is adequate, but not as good as Emirates, and Moscow is not as nice an airport to transfer at as Dubai. Their baggage allowance is standard, at 23kg.

British Airways is often the most convenient option, although not always the cheapest. You can (obviously) fly directly from London, which is a big plus. Its luggage allowance is 23kg, as well as a laptop bag to supplement your cabin baggage. Additional baggage is fairly cheap (£30), which could be useful at the end of the year. Its flight change policy is a £100 flat fee.

Cathay Pacific. Two of the nine second years have had negative experiences with Cathay, due to delays, missed connections and poor customer services, as well as poor in-flight comfort.

Insurance

Get travel insurance for the time you are in China. Make sure you have adequate medical coverage as if you need to see a doctor in China you will have to pay for it. There is a clinic in Beida but as the doctors there do not speak English and seem to practice a mixture of Chinese and Western medicine, they may not be able to help you. There are private medical facilities in Beijing with English speaking doctors who will charge around \$70 US for a consultation (see *Health* section). This is claimable under travel insurance.

If you are taking a laptop or other pieces of expensive equipment, this can be covered too, although there is normally an add-on charge to your basic insurance. Consider a separate laptop policy; these will generally cover your laptop worldwide for anything, including accidental damage, for one year for about £50.

You can either get a whole year policy or can book your year's cover in segments. It may be more convenient and cheaper to consider doing it in segments, as you will obviously not need insurance for the Christmas period, should you wish to come home. Also, it may be more convenient to book it in certain segments as your travel dates and plans may change for the end of the year. Many insurance companies indicate that they do not allow you to take out cover whilst you are abroad, so all the organisation for insurance policies must be done in the UK.

When finding a policy, the main things you'll want included are medical, baggage cover, personal money (cash), cancellations of flights etc, and you may want to check if cameras and phones are included. Internet insurers are often cheaper, though some companies such as **Endsleigh** offer discounts to students. <http://www.moneysupermarket.com/insurance/> is a decent comparison site. Don't skimp on this – you should expect to pay somewhere in the region of £250-300 for the total of the year's insurance. Fortunately, Student Finance England's year-abroad reimbursement will refund 40% of the insurance cost for you (as this is the normal proportion which counts for healthcare cover). See the *Student Finance Reimbursement* section for more details.

A Step-By-Step Guide to Setting Up Your Life

When we, the second years, first arrived, we went into transports of panic over the aforementioned administrative quandary, and others besides, because we were the guinea pigs. So, pass us the lettuce and Small Pet pellets; we earned them acquiring the gems of wisdom which follow – so you don't have to...

This section is a brief run-through of what to expect in your first few weeks in China. It is not overly detailed; for further information you should refer to the specific sections later on in the guide. Like death and taxes, all these tasks are unavoidable, and best dealt with swiftly and under anaesthetic. Airline gin will do.

1. Initial visa
2. Arriving at Beida
3. Getting a Mobile Phone
4. Residence Permits
5. Getting Somewhere to Live

1. Initial visa

This is all mentioned in the *Documentation* section below. Just to give you're a sneak preview:

- You apply for your initial visa in the UK, having stated your intent to study in China for up to one year.
- For this, you will have to pay about £70.
- You will have to submit whatever the website states that they require, usually application form, passport photos, admission letter and form from Beida, passport. Of course, this means that you should pick a time to organise this when you don't need your passport for anything else.
- You will pre-book an appointment online if you plan to go in person, and diligently bring along everything.
- The centre administrators will tell you when your visa will be processed and ready for collection. Go back to the centre to pick up your passport, together with visa, and pay the fee. Your visa will be labelled [Validity: 000], meaning your permitted length of stay is yet to be determined. You are going to determine it later by applying for a Temporary Residence Permit, more on this to follow. For now, you have a visa which permits you to be in China for up to 30 days from your day of entry. It will be valid for entry (not including subsequent 30 days) for **3 months** after you applied for it.

2. Arriving at Beida

Of course, for more details on this, the *Arriving* section below is a lot more thorough. You should have made arrangements for the lodging for the first days/weeks, either at Beida's Shaoyuan accommodation, or something arranged independently.

- When you come out of the airport, you have pretty much two options wherever you are going:
 - Get into a registered taxi. These are recognisable by their broad yellow stripe on a red/blue/green base. Look out for the yellow stripe, plenty of official-looking certificates and driver IDs inside the cab, a registration plate bearing “B 京” and a “TAXI” Toblerone-thing on top. They're really cheap compared to British ones, so it should only cost you just under 100RMB (£10) to get to Beida. Don't get into an unregistered people carrier.
 - Take the Airport Express line, and then the subway (地铁). It's very well signposted, and you'll be able to get to Beida and Wudaokou both with just two transfers.
- It's probably not a great idea to plan exciting travel before term. Uses up days of your initial visa, and unless you're a seasoned gappie you'll probably find it totally knackered, especially as you'll be lugging all of your bags about. Take it from us, yurts and camels start looking more grim than great when you haven't slept in 48 hours and are dragging everything you own behind you.

3. Getting a Mobile Phone

It might look odd to list this so early on, but being contactable will be necessary for some forms from Beida, and the health check people, and your estate agent and landlord, not to mention your poor long-suffering language partner.

- You wander into a phone shop and ask for the cheapest handset they have that can text (发短信) in Chinese, , and ask for a **pay-as-you-go** sim card (智能卡). Get them to set it up. China Mobile is the least expensive.
- You can buy more **credit** from newspaper stands on the street, but your first wodge should last a few weeks.

4. Residence Permits

This is all in the *Documentation* section, but in short, it will involve:

- Your passport, Chinese visa, the university's initial letter of invitation and the JW202 form
- Health check
- A trip to the local police station with your landlord to obtain a Housing Registration Certificate
- A fair lump of money
- All of the above to be handed over to the university's visa office

5. Getting somewhere to live

This should of course be done in conjunction with the previous step, and involves:

- Considering what kind of accommodation you'd like to pursue. If you're brave enough for a homestay, you should have it organised either to be there when you arrive (and then carry out the residence permit rigmarole when you're with the family), or organise it while you're in China to start after you've already arrived.
- The majority of you will still be looking for a flat. Do this by calling into an estate agent (for example 我爱我家 or HomeLink, and then proceed according to the above section).

The *Accommodation* section will have a lot more useful information there.

Documentation

Application form for Beida

This should be given to you by the department. You fill it in, give it to Rosanna, and the department sends it out to Beida for you. You will then receive an **admission letter**, which you will need in order to get your visa.

Visa

To enter China you will need a **visa**. The details regarding visa applications seem to change fairly regularly, so, for the most up-to-date information, check the website:

www.visaforchina.org/

As of April 2012, you will need a type **X** visa. (Tick the box "Multiple entries, staying up to 12 months" on the application form.) This allows you to **enter China once and then apply for your Temporary Residence Permit**. There is more on this joyous process under the heading *Temporary Residence Permit* below.

You can either apply by post or you can apply in person at the centre. The website explains the procedures for both, but both start by filling in an online application form and printing the result. Then gather up your passport, admission letter and anything else the website asks for, saddle up your most noble steed and submit it all.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- **BEWARE: you can no longer get same day or next day service.**
- Make sure you have enough time to allow for a **failed application**. If your application is rejected you will need to reapply, so the Centre recommends you apply 1 month before

departure. However, the Centre asks that you do not apply more than 3 months before entry into China.

- Do not be late for your submission appointment! Otherwise, you may not be able to submit your application.
- Generally, the Visa Centre wants you to submit applications yourself. Contact them to check if it is okay for one person to deliver several applications. (Tel: **0207 842 0960**).
- If anything happens to your passport, this can make your visa invalid. Make sure you tell Mr Kan and contact the visa office as soon as possible.

Temporary Residence Permit

This is effectively the visa that you will live on for the year. It is obtained by first applying for an 'X' visa in your own country, entering China on this, and then converting the 'X' visa to a Temporary Residence Permit. Your 'X' visa will allow you to enter once within the three months after it was given to you. It will probably say that it is valid (i.e. allows you to be in China after that one entry) for "000" days. Please note, this actually means "28 days after entry"! Within this time, you must get your application for a Temporary Residence Permit in to the visa office in Beida (reached via your course coordinator). To be perfectly honest, we could not work out whether you had to "submit your application" or "receive your Permit" within this time (confusingly phrased rules in Chinese); some of us played it very safe and made sure to *receive* it within the time, others *submitted* their applications within the time. None of us got fined or deported, but the slowcoaches might just have got lucky... It would be a good idea to be prompt, just to be safe, especially as the office only works four days a week and takes public holidays off, of which there are a few in September.

The procedure for receiving your Temporary Residence Permit is, alas, tortuous, intricate, and pretty rigid. However, we hope that this order of events will remove some of the confusion we experienced and help everything run smoothly.

FOR THE TEMPORARY RESIDENCE PERMIT, YOU WILL REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING:

- i. Passport
- ii. Initial ('X') visa
- iii. Letter of admission to Beida (fancy red letterhead, collected from Rosanna in Trinity Term)
- iv. JW202 form (arrived with your letter of admission, official slip saying you're a student)
- v. Health Check Certificate (more on that later)
- vi. Housing Registration Certificate (more on that too)
- vii. 400-500 RMB for Temporary Residence Permit (ours was 460, they might have gone up by now), plus 700-800RMB for Health Check Certificate, plus 5.5% of your total rent for foreigners' residence tax, plus Housing Registration Certificate processing fee (maybe 100 RMB) – i.e. in total about £350/3500RMB if you have a one year rental contract

The **first four** are straight forward, and Li Ke might look after your admission letter and JW202 for you in her office until you submit them.

This is where the real fuff comes in. The **health check certificate** is a pain. Upon your registration tête-à-tête you will be presented with a small map which will guide you to the health check centre. (Take a taxi, it's easier than buses to start with, and not very much more expensive if you share. You will know you have come to the right place by the coach-loads of Westerners and Koreans being deposited outside.) You then seize and fill in an arrival form, queue up to pay your money – 700-800RMB – and get herded about between little offices for blood tests, x-rays, etc. It matters not what order you do it in, as long as you do it all. The whole palaver takes about three hours. Get there at half past nine (taxi ride should take about 20 minutes), it is only open for checks in the morning, only for collections in the afternoon (1-4). Your results are then handed in, processed, and will be ready for collection in 3-4 working days. You can opt to have them sent to Beida for collection, but this adds two days odd to the waiting time (and another little fee), so keep your permit application deadline in mind.

The **housing registration certificate** is another delightful rigmarole. It is a form stamped by your local police station to say that you live somewhere. You must be taken to the relevant police station by the owner of the address. So, if you're renting, it's your landlord. If you're staying with a family, ask them – it might be *their* landlord. We don't know who would go with you if you lived in hall in Beida, none of us chose to. You'd have to ask your course coordinator. Don't panic, we didn't know the word for "housing registration certificate" either – just tell him/her you need to be taken to the police station (派出所 pàichūsuǒ) to say you live here. You then pay more money in processing fees, plus a tax payable by resident foreigners. At the time of writing, this was 5.5% of one's monthly rent, multiplied by the number of months of the tenancy – all upfront. The processing is, thankfully, instant. However, please do note that you need this form to apply for your Temporary Residence Permit, so you will need to have chosen and signed the contract for a flat. Landlords are busy, sometimes absent, people, so it is best to **get a flat very sharpish** – we recommend within the first week in China – and then pester your landlord, doing sad faces about imminent deportation (points for melodrama) unless he takes you to the police station quicksmart. Wherever you choose to live – all-Chinst flat, home stay, sharing with young Chinese people, bus shelter... – you will still need to register your residence and obtain a certificate. Housing options besides all-Chinst flats may be cheaper, and may therefore reduce or even remove (check with police station!) the foreigners' tax.

You will notice that there is quite a lot of money involved in processing your Temporary Residence Permit application – as mentioned in the required items list, you will need up to £350/3500RMB (though varying in accordance with the level of your rent, which is linked to the foreigners' tax) just to obtain all the paperwork. Please also be warned that to get a flat (to get an address, to get a permit) you will need to pay yet more money upfront in estate agents' fees, deposits and advance rent. Since landlords can often ask for quite a few months' rent upfront, this can amount to a couple of thousand pounds (see the *Accommodation* section). Please be prepared for this eventuality! As Student Finance will insist on releasing loans in chunks over the year, if you are not in a position to borrow money from family, please speak to colleges/department/Student Finance and find a way around this.

To be absolutely clear, it is advisable to **lay your hands on all of the above documents, give them all in** to the Beida visa office, and **get back a Temporary Residence Permit, within 28**

days after landing in China. This will mean 1) doing your health check, 2) deciding upon a flat and 3) getting your landlord to register you as resident there within the first few days/week of arriving. Do not panic, this is achievable. Once you have all of your documents, proceed, processing fee in hand, to the course coordinator, who will point you in the direction of the Beida visa office. You will hand over everything, including your passport, for up to two weeks of processing. Then you'll get back your passport with what looks like another visa glued in. Check all stipulations printed thereon are as expected. Celebrate.

Sadly, all this means that even if you have arrived early, you will not really be able to travel before the start of the course. You need to make use of your 28 days with all your documentation about you, and yourself within easy reach of a Beijing estate agent, until you have submitted your documents; thereafter, you are passport-less for a while. It is probably not advisable to turn up too early to get round the travel limits, either: you need Beida to be up and running to process your application and you need time to gather all your documents together. Check with your coordinator when her office and the visa office start running, but it would be best, we think, to arrive and get sorted about a week/two weeks at most before the start of the course. Then you'll be all settled in for term, not dashing about like headless chickens wondering vaguely about being deported. Sigh. Plenty of time for Yunnan next summer...

The Temporary Residence Permit, now that you finally have it, will be valid for up to 365 days – shorter if you ask the course coordinator to list a shorter time – but for no longer. (Its end date will be printed on it when you get it back.) Hence if you arrived halfway through August, you will have to be all done backpacking/interning/whatever by just before the same time the following summer, or may be deported. (Free flight, I guess...) Either that, or get a visa extension.

Visa Extensions [Potentially out-of-date information. Check with course coordinator at Beida!]

To get a new visa during the course at Beida you can do one of two things. The first option is to go to the course coordinator at Beida. The other option is to go out, come back in on an 'L' tourist visa (obtained in whichever country you go to) and then arrange the new student visa once you are back. This option is useful if you have to leave the country quickly for any reason. Note that your 'L' visa only lasts 30 days from the day of entry.

To arrange a new student visa in either case, you need to see the coordinator. They will give you a form saying that you are a student at Beida. Be warned, however, that the coordinator has control over the date until which your new visa will run, and will sometimes only put a date on the form for when the Beida course ends rather than when you are leaving Beijing. If you are planning to stay in China for a while, this is rather inconvenient. If this happens, get Mr Kan to email them explaining the situation.

You must take this form to the PSB Visa section, near Yōnghégōng metro station in Beijing. You also need your housing registration certificate from the Public Security Bureau – see **Temporary Residence Permit** section – and a colour passport photograph. When you get there, fill in the form and join the queue for visa extensions. There is a fee for processing your new visa. Like the London visa section, it takes a week to turn around. There is no express option, which is

why, if you want an extension quickly, you may have to get a tourist visa obtained in the country you go to and organize the student visa once you get back.

If the coordinator will only give you a visa until the end of the course, or if for any other reason the visa you are on runs out, you can apply for an 'L' tourist visa extension in Beijing. This visa only lasts 30 days from the day it is granted but you don't need a letter from Beida to get it (you still need the housing registration certificate). You can specify how many entries you want. This means that you can stay as a tourist for 30 days in China after your student visa runs out, although it is unlikely that you would need to do so as this would probably take you into Michaelmas term of your third year! Obviously, if you go out of China when the course has finished you can come back in on a tourist visa obtained in the country you go to. This visa can be extended twice.

In short, the go-abroad-and-get-new-visa-there option is for "Oh no, my visa runs out tomorrow. Quick, leg it to Hong Kong!" but the in-Beijing 'L' visa is for "Oh, I have a month left on my visa but I would like two months. Better get this processed soon, and allow time on my old visa for processing."

Money

1 元 (*yuán*) also called 块 (*kuài*).
= 10 角 (*jiǎo*) also called 毛 (*máo*).
= 100 分 (*fèn*).

The biggest denomination for Chinese money is the 100 元 note, followed by 50 元, 20 元, 10 元, 5 元, 1 元, 5 角 (0.5 元), 1 角 (0.1 元) notes.

The most common coins are of 1 元, 5 角 and 1 角, but there are also 10 分 to a 角, meaning you get strangely fake-feeling coins worth 5 分 (0.05 元), 2 分 (0.02 元) and 1 分 (0.01 元). Collect change as most vendors would rather you didn't pay for your *baozi* with huge notes.

Get some RMB before you leave for China (you can visit the Post Office): getting set up is quite expensive as you're likely to have to pay your rent in one lump sum (see *Accommodation*). Your student loans might not come through until you've been in China for about a month, which can really make the first few weeks difficult if you don't think ahead.

ATMs are everywhere, and you shouldn't have a problem finding one that will take your card. There are some will only accept Chinese bankcards though, so don't panic if your card isn't accepted. Most of the cash points in Beida accept foreign cards (there are several outside *Wumei*) and there are several cash points around *Wudaokou*. The big Western-style shopping malls are also a good bet.

Beware! Money comes out of the ATMs before your card so DON'T FORGET THE CARD. The banks are unhelpful, and you won't be getting it back.

Withdrawing cash from a foreign account in China can cost a lot, so if you don't have free withdrawals get out the maximum amount you can in one go and keep it in a safe place rather than withdrawing 100 元 when you need it.

If you need money from your parents fast, the best way is to give them your bank account details (account number and sort code) and get them to pay it into your account in cash. That way it is available for you to withdraw instantly, whereas bank-to-bank transfers can take days in some cases.

It is perfectly possible for you to travel to China with your normal student debit card without going through the rigmarole of searching for the best deal. However, it might be a good idea to drop by your local branch and inform them that you will be going to China for X months and that you'd appreciate it if they didn't block your card. Whilst your card may still end up being blocked, you will be more entitled to your indignant fury. Check out your bank's policies on blocked cards and make sure you have their emergency number in case something goes wrong.

For those people who want the best deal (or whose parents insist on it), the following rates and charges were accurate for Dec 2010:

BARCLAYS	= Withdrawals - 2.75% + £1.50 - £4 = MAX £300 withdrawal in a day
LLOYDS TSB	= Withdrawals - 2.99% + £2-£4.50 = purchases with debit card - 2.99% +£1 per transaction
CO-OP BANK	= Withdrawals - 2.75% + £3 or 3% (whichever is lower) = purchases with debit card - 2.75% = MAX £250 withdrawal in a day
NATWEST	= 2% + £2-£5 = purchases with debit card - 2% + £1.25
HSBC	= 2.75% +£1.75-£5 = purchases with debit card - 2.75%
NATIONWIDE	= charges 2% + £1 on withdrawals

NB. Nationwide have **cancelled** the Cashcard free-withdrawals-abroad system, they now require you to open a Current Account with them and probably want you to make it your main account. Whilst it is still a better deal than the other banks offer, switching accounts is a bit of a hassle.

An alternative and a good back up in case of a lost debit card, is a **currency card**. These cards offer great exchange rates; you transfer money onto them online then use them to withdraw money. They can't be used for transactions but as they only contain a finite sum of money, if they are stolen, the thief won't have access to all your cash. You can apply online:

Caxton FX: <http://www.caxtonfx.com/>

Fair FX: <http://www.fairfx.com/>

Traveller's Cheques are becoming less popular and, according to one Post Office employee, more and more of them are coming back unused. They are potentially a good failsafe method of getting cash, but be warned that you will be charged if you return them to the Post Office and want them exchanged back into money. It is unlikely that in most towns or cities you will fail to find places to withdraw money, but in some rural areas you may have problems. However, good planning is probably the best way around this. You may want to have some cheques as a backup but make sure you keep your back-up options in various safe and separate places.

Packing - what to bring & what to buy

Hand luggage:

- Laptop and charger (and adapter!). If you want to travel around in China I would especially recommend a netbook or tablet PC, as full-sized laptops can be really heavy after a few hours standing on a train...
(Note on laptops. Many people found having laptops invaluable but **make sure your laptop is insured** if you bring it. Consider that you might want to go travelling after the course ends and will either need to courier it back home (which will probably cost you about £100), leave it with a friend while you travel, or carry it with you and risk it being stolen or damaged. Consider this carefully as the type of accommodation you choose might limit your choices. If you are staying in a Chinese dorm with five others in your room, for example, there may not be room for one and it's probably not a safe idea either.)
- Travel documents (passport, ticket/boarding pass, visa, address of hotel/Shaoyuan and hotel booking confirmation)
- Entertainment, such as a book, kindle, iPod or magazine
- Wallet with pounds and RMB for use in both airports and the taxi when you arrive in Beijing (this will be about RMB 100, but bring more than that. How much exactly would depend on your plans. Of course bring your bank cards too, but don't bring all your various cards from home like your drivers licence and your Tesco clubcard, because if you lose them, they're a hassle to replace.

Hold luggage:

Clothes

Clothes are going to make up the bulk of your luggage. Consider where you're likely to go and if it will be hot / cold / wet. The weather in Beijing when you arrive in August will be swelteringly hot, so some of your clothes should be for hot weather, however from October to March, Beijing can be freezing. Make sure that at least for the first half of your year here, you focus on warm clothes – you definitely won't regret it when November and December come around. After March or April, Beijing heats up again, before returning to the high summer temperatures in May.

Since you'll experience both the sweltering heat of Beijing summertime as well as the bitter cold of winter, you will need a good range of clothes for different seasons. If you are intending to go home at Christmas, this is a little simpler. For the first term pack a few summer items (a pair of shorts and a few T-shirts) and a good stock of layer-able items for winter. Bring home most of your winter clothes at Christmas, and bring a higher ratio of summer to winter clothing the next time round. Bring one going out outfit, girls, as you will struggle to find anything suitable in Beijing.

Bear in mind that you might find yourself climbing mountains and visiting cold areas on your travels so take a decent pair of walking shoes, waterproofs and fleece. Similarly, you may want a bikini and sun cream for China's lovely beaches. Sun cream is available from Watsons in *Wudaokou* in the summer but won't be appearing in the shops until late May/June so take some if you burn easily.

Clothes in Beijing are not especially cheap. They are about the same price as clothes in the UK, if a few pounds cheaper, so if you're hoping to buy most of your wardrobe when you arrive (which is definitely an option) bear the cost in mind.

(NB: strap tops may be considered "too friendly", try cover up a bit more if you're spending time with older/more conservative Chinese people).

Household

You can bring sheets and pillow cases, but this isn't crucial. The rooms in Shaoyuan (or wherever you'll end up staying when you first arrive) will have clean sheets, and you will most likely have the chance to go to IKEA to get your own bedding before you move into your flat. Another option is to buy bedding at Wumei on the Beida campus, or Lotus in *Wudaokou*.

If space in your case is limited, consider bringing a small towel. You can pick up a bigger one in China.

Hairdryers cost about £5 in Lotus, so again, think about how much you need your one from home. Straighteners might be harder to find, however.

If you're bringing any electronics from home, like a laptop, you will need an adapter. Electronics in China tend to have three pins (not the same as in the UK) but sockets have both three pin and two pin slots.

Definitely bring something to make your flat more homely. Think posters, your teddy, photos of friends and family and whatever else you'll miss!



Toiletries

You can buy excellent toiletries in China so bringing travel sized bottles is enough, unless you have specific needs. A good brand for facial cleansers is Limi, available in Watsons. You cannot get easily tampons in China, so stock up.

Other

- Have several spare **passport photos** for various forms in China. You can get these done in the *Wumei* mini-mart on campus near *Sháoyuán* 勺园. It's a good idea to carry a **photocopy of your passport** in case it goes missing -this will facilitate your getting a replacement. It may also be a good idea to take down your credit/debit card numbers, passport numbers and insurance policy numbers and leave them with a trusted person back home (i.e. mum) so that if you lose any of these or have them stolen you can more easily get your cards stopped and get replacement documents. Alternatively, think about setting up a Card Protection Policy (CPP) before you go so you can cancel all yours cards and order replacements with one phone call, rather than 5.
- If you're on prescribed **medicines** make sure you get a prescription to last you the time you're in China. Also bring paracetamol/ibuprofen as these are hard to get hold of. Things like **plasters** can be purchased very easily in Watsons, so you don't need to take loads and loads, but you might want to carry a few just in case. See the *Health* section for information on medicines, mosquito repellents and sanitary products.
- A *Lonely Planet, Rough Guide* or similar **guidebook** is definitely worth investing in, especially if you are intending to travel in China. These are hard to get hold of in China and can be confiscated at the airport. Most people manage to bring copies in from England but if you're desperate, try the Bookworm in *Sanlitun* (三里屯). Both guides massively underestimate the price of stuff and sometimes the information in them is a bit outdated (particularly for more unusual destinations) but they're rarely completely wrong.
- Whilst in Beijing get a copy of "*the Insider's Guide to Beijing*" (available in The Bridge, the Ó Sun bookstore and most places in *Sanlitun*) – everything you need to know about expat life in Beijing. Copies of *Time Out*, *That's Beijing* and *City Weekend* come out on Thursdays, are in most western coffee shops, and are a really good way to find out about stuff going on in the week.
- Bring your **books from Oxford** for the year abroad (as of 2011-12 these were the red literature and classical book, the orange newspaper reading book and T'ung and Pollard). You can buy stationary really easily and cheaply here, so for the very beginning bring a couple of pens and a notebook.
- You will almost definitely want a **Chinese mobile**. Your mobile from home will work with a Chinese SIM if it's unlocked, but you'll need to buy a phone in China if you want to text in 汉字. See the *Communications* section.

- Another helpful item is a **phrase book**, or a dictionary with phrases in. Gǔbō and Pàlánkǎ don't teach you the word for "towel" or "cockroach" and other useful vocab that you'll need to get around. Phrasebooks also often have useful vocab for visits to the doctor, which can save you from launching into bizarre medical charades. There's a good one that goes with the *Insider's Guide*, and can be bought in the same places.
- Think about other things that will make your time there more fun. Cameras, digital or otherwise are fun to have to document your time out in China. MP3 players can make an 8 hour bus journey more fun. English books are available in Beijing but will cost a few pounds. Bear in mind that while travelling there is the chance that things will get stolen, or more likely, broken so either don't take anything you're too fond of, or make sure it's covered by insurance.
- Many students have found **electronic dictionaries** to be indispensable language resources. Simple ones that use pinyin input are cheap and common, but require you to know the pinyin for the word you're looking up; more useful for students of Chinese – and well worth the extra money – are translators that allow you to write a character on the screen. These can be quite expensive, about 2000 元 on average. “Besta” (好易通 *hǎoyitōng*) is a good brand. Look in the electronics superstores around Beida and compare different translators and different prices. If your heart is set on the idea of getting one, they are available in Carrefour, Zhongguancun. It's good to have an idea of your needs before you look – some have more complete and accurate dictionaries and English translations, while others have useful databases like Chinese proverbs and Tang poems.
- An alternative is the **iPod Touch** – not only can you download various dictionary applications, but whenever you have Wi-Fi, you can also have Skype, Facebook and email (VPN is easy to sort out). If you don't have any real need to do any typing or if your laptop is the size of a small whale, an iPod Touch could be the replacement you were looking for (you can buy cheap USB chargers from Amazon). You will be able to draw characters on the screen, search for pinyin and for English, and it generally requires less button-pressing than one of the cheaper electronic dictionaries. However, the dictionary applications available from Apple are not particularly developed and will not be as all-encompassing as the resources on an electronic dictionary. As with all electronics in China, it is important to make sure you're getting the real deal. Amazon China sells iPods for around the same cost as in the UK but sometimes cheaper, and works on a pay on delivery basis. If you know Amazon's layout well enough, you should be able to navigate the website and buy what you want.
- If you're a **contact lens wearer**, don't bother packing lots of bottles of solution as it's available everywhere. There's an eyecare store beside the *Chaoshi* Supermarket and an optician on the ground floor of the U-Centre (next to the Metro).

REMEMBER:

- Repeat the mantra: 'The less I take with me, the more I can bring back.'
- Go through your wallet and leave unnecessary cards at home. (If it gets stolen at least you won't have to replace your Tesco Clubcard.)

- You may want to bring the charger for your UK phone so you can call your parents at the airport when you get back.
- If you're bringing large amounts of medication into the country, ask your doctor to print a copy of your prescription, keep this with your medicine in its original packaging.
- Don't forget to tell the bank you're going away.
- And sorry if this is patronising, but do check your passport hasn't expired...

Here's a more concise checklist of things you might want to bring:

- Passport; plane ticket
- Chinese RMB; Bank cards; Travellers Cheques
- Photocopy of passport/bank cards/travellers cheques
- Copy of insurance information/certificate; Beida admission letter
- Hotel/Hostel/Beida address in Chinese
- Guidebook, phrasebook
- Money belt
- Padlock (for lockers, bags, etc.)
- Camera; MP3 Player; CHARGERS/CABLES
- Laptop, charger, ethernet cable, microphone (for Skype, if you don't have an inbuilt one)
- Adaptor plug
- Clothing
- Accessories- sun glasses, hat
- Toiletries
- Medicines- plasters; paracetamol/ibuprofen; Imodium; hand sanitiser, Pill
- Books, notepad and pen

Health

Vaccinations

You should have been registered with a doctor when you started University, each College is affiliated with a particular surgery, three of the main ones are:

19 Beaumont Street:
Balliol
Green Templeton
Exeter
Harris Manchester
Kellogg
Linacre
Nuffield
Pembroke
Queen's
St John's
University College
Wadham

The Jericho Health Centre:
Blackfriars
Brasenose
Merton
Oriol
St Anne's
St Benet's Hall
St Cross
St Peter's

28 Beaumont Street:
Hertford
New College
Overseas Students

Which vaccinations you need for China will depend on your travel plans. If you don't know where you're planning to travel, it may be best to be prepared rather than end up vomiting blood. In particular, malaria remains a problem in Yunnan, so if you are planning on travelling there, make sure you have obtained tablets or some other form of medication.

The following information was accurate as of 2010 and came from 19 Beaumont Street. We are currently in China and so have not been able to obtain more up-to-date information; obviously what your surgery says goes, with regards not only to price but also to course schedules. :

Rabies course- **requires 28 days**, costs £100 for 3 jabs. (Most of us don't have this, having opted for a strategy of avoiding foaming-mouthed dogs).

Hepatitis B- **requires 21 days**, costs £60 for 3 jabs. If you only need a booster, it'll be £20.

Japanese Encephalitis- **requires 14 days**, costs £150 for 3. This is very dependent on where you're headed.

Malaria- 3 different types, one of which requires a trial. Varying costs. Need to discuss with a travel nurse.

Yellow Fever- **requires 10 days**, again location dependent, costs £50.

Hep A/Typhoid injection is free if you haven't had it yet.

DT+P (Diphtheria, Tetanus + Polio) is also free (most people will have had this at secondary school).

If you don't know what you need it doesn't matter, just ask the receptionist about vaccinations and you should get an appointment with a Travel Nurse who can check out your records and advise you as to what you may or may not need.

Medicines

Paracetamol (醋氨酚 *cù ān fēn*) and Ibuprofen (布洛芬 *bù luò fēn*) are both available in China, but make sure you check the strength of the tablets. If you require any vitally important medicines then make sure you are prescribed enough for the full amount of time. Generally speaking, medicines can be a difficult thing to get across to shop assistants, so save yourself some embarrassing mimes and bring some with you. One other point is that a lot of people develop a cough in the first couple of weeks in Beijing due to the adjustment to air laden with carbon particulates, so it is a good idea to bring a bottle of cough medicine with you in particular.

Mosquitoes

For some people, mosquitoes can be the bane of existence. Beijing may not be a hotspot for these munching miseries but if you are usually popular with them, they will find you. The local alternative to Deet is 六神花水 (*liùshén huāshuǐ*), a green liquid that evaporates almost immediately, leaving you cool and tingly as well as pungent enough to ward off mosquitoes (but pleasantly scented to the human nose). The stuff is cheap and available in supermarkets, and even better- **it works**. (It is also soothing post-bite).

Tiger balm or an equivalent is also good for easing the itching. Just show the assistant the bite and talk about itching (痒 *yǎng*) and mosquitoes (蚊子 *wénzi*). They will hopefully give you a little pot of stuff that looks like Vaseline and smells like Vicks (i.e. burns your sinuses).

If you head south, you'll encounter many more mosquitoes. The best advice is really just to cover up in the evenings; once you get bitten, it gets a whole lot worse if you later have fabric rubbing the bite. Otherwise, try to hang out with someone who you know gets bitten a lot. Hopefully the mosquitoes will go for them instead.

Sanitary Products

Ladies: - sanitary products are available in the big cities but when you're travelling, finding them can be another hassle to think about (tampons are especially problematic). (I must confess that I am updating this as a male, so I'm not too clear on these matters, but I've seen sanitary pads in shops in most places I've been to hear). "Femmecups" or "Mooncups" may be a good alternative. Not only are these silicone cups healthy and convenient, they're better for the environment and they'll also save you a lot of cash over your lifetime. It may be worth asking your College Welfare Officer/Women's Officer whether they have any money available to provide them. Otherwise, they're available online, as is plenty of information:

Liù shén huā shuǐ-
Repellent extraordinaire



<http://www.femmecup.co.uk/>

NB. In terms of sterilising, it turns out the denture baths you can buy in chemists are the perfect fit. Add cold water and one of those sterilisation tablets used for baby equipment, and leave the cup to soak overnight. (Saves you from having to explain what exactly you were boiling in your housemate's saucepan...)

Drinking water

Drinking tap water is a bad idea (and we're not just saying that. You **will** spend time getting friendly with the toilet). Keep a supply of bottled water at home (some flats will have water dispensers with big barrel things, ask your landlord). Boiling tap water in your kettle is also perfectly safe, so that's an option as well. Also, either carry bottles with you, or remember to buy them when you're out and about. Dehydration isn't fun either.

Rinsing your mouth out with tap water is also very unlikely to result in any ill effects. (Pardon the pun).

Sunburn and heat stroke

The Beijing sun has a habit of hiding behind clouds, composed either of H₂O or CO₂. Whilst it may seem impossible to burn in such weather, UV thinks otherwise. Wear sunscreen of a high enough factor to avoid a peeling nose and wincingly painful shoulder blades. Most of us aren't used to consistently hot weather so the summer months can come as a shock, take all the usual precautions (sunglasses, hat, etc) and keep an eye on others in your group who may be flagging. Frequent breaks are wise and take advantage of the watermelon vendors at the roadside- a messy but tasty way to keep up your water levels.

Toilets

These are legendary. In general, Chinese public loos are pretty unpleasant. They almost never have loo roll, so get used to taking **packs of tissue** with you, and may not have soap, so it's a good idea to carry **hand sanitiser** (available from the Lotus Centre).

The crouching toilet is allegedly more hygienic than our sit-down loos, which is a thought to comfort you as you try and maintain balance whilst avoiding all surrounding surfaces. Whether at home or out in about, try to remember not to flush toilet paper down the loo; plumbing here generally can't take it. That said, some of the newer flats, for example in Huaqing Jiayuan, are up to the task. Experience suggests that the same is not true of Dongshengyuan or Beida.



Food hygiene

The university will advise you not to eat food purchased from street vendors, but it can be difficult to resist when faced with the mouth watering reality- not to mention the bargain prices. Likewise, a lot of the local Chinese restaurants look sketchy from a hygiene point of view. But again, prices and food quality are hard to resist, so don't worry too much – none of us have contracted particularly bad cases of laduzi at this sort of establishment. We did once have complimentary maggots in our order of hongshao niurou, but we will let you discover this restaurant for yourselves. The basic rule of thumb in China is to eat where other people eat – if a restaurant is empty, this can be a sign not only of bad food but also of poor hygiene.

What to do if you are ill:

- Use common sense to determine whether you can look after yourself or if you need to seek medical attention.
- Let a friend know and consider informing the **course coordinator** at Beida.
- If you're going to miss class time, inform your class representative who can make sure you are marked ill, not just MIA.
- Remember that you can still access the NHS Direct Website, which can provide helpful advice (see below).
- If you get a stomach upset, drink lots of (clean) water, as you'll be losing a lot of liquid...

Pre-existing Conditions

If you have a pre-existing condition, such as an allergy, make sure you:

- **Carry your insurance details and any relevant medication with you at all times.**
- **Inform the International Office .**
- **Tell your friends what to do if there is a problem.**
- **Ensure you always have credit on your mobile phone.**
- **Keep a spare 100 yuan note tucked away in your wallet or purse just in case.**
- **Carry a note that briefly explains your condition in Chinese.**

For example:

我对花生和果仁有严重的过敏反应。
万一引起过敏反应，本人携带肾上腺素注射药，和
抗过敏的（抗组胺）药片。
请立即将我送往就近医院。 非常感谢。

I have a serious peanut and nut allergy.
If I have an allergic reaction, I carry epinephrine injection drugs and anti-allergy
(antihistamine) tablets.
Please take me to a hospital immediately. Many thanks.

§

Where to find more useful information:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/>

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/china/health>

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

Travel guides such as *The Lonely Planet*, *The Rough Guide to China* etc.

Beida International Student Office can offer good, reliable advice and help you explain what you need.

Medical Emergencies - 急诊 (jí zhěn)

Cross your fingers that it won't happen but on the off chance that it might, **pay attention to this section.**

Ambulances in Beijing are, according to most sources, slow and inefficient (one study in 2005 showed the median response time to be 16 minutes). The emergency number is **120**, but be aware that you will have to speak in Chinese, know your location and that you will be expected to pay for the service afterwards.

A better option may be dialling the **Beijing United Family Hospital's** emergency line. This hospital provides English translation and has a hotline to ambulance services so you can be picked up more quickly (see below for more information on this hospital).

Dial: +86 (10) 5927-7120
(Add this to your phone)

You can also ring the emergency room at Beijing United Family Hospital for emergency medical advice.

In cases where the individual can be moved and needs to get to a hospital quickly (as in the case of an allergic reaction), the best bet is to **hail a taxi and ask to be taken to the nearest hospital.** (There is a Chinese hospital in *Zhongguancun*.)

Chinese hospitals will demand that you pay as soon as you enter, staff may also seem frustratingly unbothered. Try to clearly and concisely inform them what has occurred. Shouting at them won't help (we tried that).

In cases of emergencies and medical treatment, you should be able to claim back the money under insurance but treatment will be costly and you may have to pay by card, depending on the amount.

Hospital Contact Details & Locations

Beijing United Family Hospital

2 Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang District

Telephone: (0)10 6433 3960

Emergency telephone (24/7): (0)10 64332345

<http://www.unitedfamilyhospitals.com/en/bj/>

北京和睦家医院，
朝阳区将台路 2 号

The hospital is clean and modern with English speaking staff. They are available to contact by telephone (very useful in an emergency) and very familiar with foreign health and travel insurance policies. The service and care received is of a very high standard and the staff members are very friendly (even allowing some of us to order McDonalds whilst we waited for a friend). However, this hospital is very expensive. Ensure that you have your insurance details with you.

Beijing International SOS Clinic
Suite 105, Wing 1, Kunsha Building
No 16 Xinyuanli, Chaoyang District
Telephone: (0)10 6462 9112

http://www.internationalsos.com/en/about-our-clinics_china_38.htm

国际 SOS 北京办公室,
朝阳区新源里 16 号琨莎中心 1 座 105



Bayley and Jackson Medical Center

7 Ritan Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

Telephone: (0)10 8562 9998

Emergency telephone (24/7): (0)10 8562 9990

<http://www.bjhealthcare.com/>

庇利积臣医疗中心，
朝阳区日坛东路7号



Student Finance Reimbursement

Although you won't be going to China until the summer, you can get your hands on this form right away and 准备好!

The exact name of the form is: Claim for reimbursement of travelling expenses for study periods abroad 2011/2012

It is form reference **SFE / SAEX / 1112**

You can claim for:

- up to 3 return flights within the year period (also, get receipts from your taxi rides to and from the airport! It's a good Y100 either way...)
- any bureaucratic, registration or Visa-related fees, incurred in the UK or China
- the medical portion of any travel insurance plan (typically 40%)
- the foreigner health check (which is, of course, necessary to attain a residence permit)
- any season tickets for travel to and from your home and place of study (it is unlikely you will have such a thing as we all walk or cycle to and from Beida).

Make sure you have scanned/electronic copies of any UK receipts and have your parents send the originals of those off to SFE in Darlington, but **don't** trust the Chinese post system with the originals of any Chinese evidence receipts: scan these in, hold on to the originals, and have your parents just send SFE printed-out copies (SFE understands that you don't want to risk sending off the originals – plus, the post will take time).

How much you can claim back does depend on how much your parents contribute to your student finance: if you have any means tested grants, you will only have to pay an excess which amounts to the first £303 of expenses, and if you're not means tested, this amount increases. Only UK citizens can apply for this (sorry other-EU kids).

You must have stated in your SFE application for your second year that you are studying abroad, and submitted the 'evidence' of the obligatory year abroad, and got your dept. to fill in another form to prove this. For 'evidence', I asked Dr Meyer to write me a nice headed letter confirming that, yes, students definitely **do** have to go to Beida in their second year. SFE should also send you a form to pass on to the Chinst to fill out (Rosanna [bless] did mine for me). You'll want to get the dept to sort out these 2 bits of paperwork for you in TT (when you're actually in Oxford, duh).

The form lists everything you can claim for, but keep receipts for **anything** you reckon you can swindle some eligibility for, it's worth trying.

You leave the form at home for your parents to sort out as you accumulate Chinese receipts and send scans of these for them to collate alongside British receipts, so bear in mind that, given the form itself requires the physical signature of the student/claimant, you should sign the blank form before you leave in the summer!!

You can start claiming at any time, but bear in mind that for each separate list of claims you send off, that £303+ excess applies, so if you can, it's worth waiting until you've collated **all** the things you'll want to claim for once and submit just one big claim and pay that excess just once. For us, this last piece of the puzzle was in early Spring after we'd booked our final flights home.

Plus scour your inbox to make sure you still have the invoice from your flight over here, too, so you can claim for that (same goes for any flights home this winter, as they can be claimed for too). Equally, details of insurance plans for this year, as you can claim for the medical portion of this plan (typically 40% of cost).

Good luck and I (Corina) am the SFE Travel Expenses 专家 who can answer any more queries you have about it. It is complicated and SFE will likely let you down at several points, so keep on your toes: remember, sort out as much of this as you can **before** you go to China, and be diligent in collecting receipts etc.

Arriving

Your dates of arrival in Beijing will be communicated via Mr. Kan to Beida. Although the turnaround from finishing your Prelims to arriving in Beijing is very short and you might feel like you want some time to relax in between, many find that it's good to get to Beijing as soon as possible to sort out your accommodation and settle into your new life! In fact, we **strongly** recommend that you arrive here at least a fortnight before your lessons start (1st of September). Otherwise, you're likely to struggle with getting over the shock of being in China, lots of bureaucracy and health care checks, adapting to Chinese teaching methods, sorting out all you need at Beida, dealing with estate agents and *fángdōngs* (房东 – landlords), moving into your flat and cleaning it all at the same time! Sounds pretty tough, doesn't it? So, unless you want to emulate us during our first weeks in China, do get to Beijing before September.

If you don't already have some Chinese currency, get some before you leave the airport to pay for cabs and hostels, etc. There are ATMs at the airport. Check the exchange rates, but at the moment, it's about 10 or 11 RMB to a pound.

(Also, don't bother taking bread off the plane. The sniffer dogs get suspicious and your first conversation in China will be, "It's just bread! You know, *mianbao!* Honest!")

Methods of transport

To get from the airport to wherever you're spending your first few days, you may take the Airport Express and then the metro, and overall it will take you at most 45 min to get there. It's very well signposted, and you'll be able to get to Beida and Wudaokou both with just two transfers. Beware though, in the heat of summer and with all your worldly possessions on your back, it may not be the comfortable option to battle through the crowds. There is a Beijing Subway map at the end of this guide to help you plan your route.

Alternatively, you may want to take a cab. **Only use the official taxis outside the airport and not the drivers who hang around inside.** These *hēichē* (illegal taxi) drivers are uninsured, illegal and will charge you phenomenal prices. We did in our jet-lagged confusion and were charged 600RMB for a shorter trip. They may try to pull you in by claiming you have too much luggage to fit in a regular taxi, before ushering you to a larger people carrier. When exiting the airport, follow the signs for the taxi rank. Legitimate taxis are recognisable by their broad yellow stripe on a red/blue/green base. Look out for the yellow stripe, plenty of official-looking certificates and driver IDs inside the cab, a registration plate bearing “B 京” and a “TAXI” Toblerone-thing on top. The taxis are really cheap compared to British ones, so it should only cost you just under 100RMB (£10) to get to Beida. You can usually spot it because you'll see a congregation of half-yellow-half-green/purple cabs with a queue of people being directed into them by a warden. Be prepared to queue for quite a while and ignore the random people who will be coming up to you and offering you a ride.

Where to stay

Beida

If you are planning to arrive before Beida's official arrival date – and we've already advised that you really should do so – then you will obviously need to sort out your accommodation. Beida did not provide us with any accommodation for the extra days, but if you're truly interested in this option it is worth giving it a try, since they may have realised by now they need to adapt their policy to the new Oxford program's needs (ask Mr Kan to help you get in contact with the International Office). If it still remains the same, then Beida will only give you accommodation for the first two weeks of your course at most (that is, from the 1st September to the 15th). You need to check in and pay at the main reception of *Shaoyuan 7* (big white building with revolving glass doors and shiny chandeliers) so you will need your RMB and passport. The place costs around 100 元 per night per person, and the rooms are generally 2 or 3 bedrooms with a shared living area and bathroom.

If you are headed for Beida, tell your driver to go to 北大西门 *Beida Ximen(r)* (in taxi-speak) on Yiheyuan Lu, and then tell him you want *Sháoyuán Bīnguǎn* 勺园宾馆 in the Beida campus – he can drive you right to the hotel, and just make yourself known at the desk. If you are forced to get out and enter on foot, when you get to the gate the security guards will want to see your letter of admission to prove you should be let in, otherwise they might do a Gandalf the Grey

on you. Hereafter, your Beida student card will serve as your security guard patronus. (Oh yes, folks, a LOTR reference followed swiftly by some Potter. You love it, really – anyone else liken Ede & Ravenscroft to Ollivander's? "Hmnm, a 32" – perhaps this..."). If you choose to take the subway, the nearest station is East Gate of Peking University on Line 4. Note that this is on the other side of campus to Shaoyuan (where you'll be put up), so be prepared to approach someone knowledgeable-looking and ask for directions across campus.

You will then be the proud resident of a bedroom no better or worse than your last college room – unless anyone's been admitted to St John's in your year, in which case they will be met with a marked step down. And... collapse gratefully, for the next morning brings Registration, which will have been outlined in your preliminary emails from Li Ke, the overseas coordinator.

If you don't happen to have RMB on you at the time, note that the ATM in the lobby of Shaoyuan does not accept Visa. To use a Visa card, go out of Shaoyuan, turn right and keep walking until you reach the Wumei minimart. To the right of the minimart is a bank with ATMs, all accepting Visa and other international debit cards.

Alternatives

You may want to reconsider staying in Shaoyuan. All the estate agencies are in Wudaokou – a good 30-35 min away on foot from Beida – and your flat will most likely also be in Wudaokou. Therefore, even though *Shaoyuan 7* bedrooms are reasonably comfortable, staying in a hostel in Wudaokou may turn out to be a better option, since it will make contacting estate agents and moving into your flat a lot easier. Bear in mind that renting a flat involves a lot of comings and goings with money, passports and so on (see *Accommodation* section) and the same apply to moving in. Moreover, your flat will probably be in the need of a two-day cleaning session, so being already in Wudaokou can be a considerable advantage (unless you want to get tone legs!)

Wudaokou has a nice range of hotels and hostels, all of them relatively cheap. Beware though of the Peking University International Hostel, which is on Chengfulu next to the *Chaoshifa* supermarket. We tried that and had to leave sooner than expected, as it was dirty and uncomfortable, with some rooms lacking windows.

On the 1st September, or whatever date you're told by Beida, you will have a welcome session. You should thereupon be given a welcome pack including a Beijing tourist map, a Beida map (all in Chinese and fairly unhelpful, but you'll find your way around just fine) and a Beida handbook. Beida International Office – and your course coordinator, Li Ke – will process your Residence Permit (外国人居留许可), but in order to do so they'll need you to do a couple of things (which is another reason to get to Beijing earlier). They will request the following:

- a) **The exact date you want your Residence Permit to end.** The Residence Permit allows you to get in and out of China during its validity. We know you're unlikely to know in September what are you doing on summer next year, but again, this is China, and they love planning in advance. Do give it a thought, as this is the only time the International Office and Li Ke will help you deal with visa-related bureaucracy (which translates as: if you don't know what you're going to do, tell Li

- Ke to get you Residence Permit up to the 30th September next year, even if you know for sure you're not going to stay for so long)
- b) **A healthcare check.** (See the *Documentation* section.) Probably your first experience with Chinese bureaucracy. Get up really early in the morning to be at the healthcare check centre (which happens to be 30-40 min away by taxi from Beida) at their opening time, so that you only have around 200 people queuing before you. You'll spend the morning doing blood tests, heart test, X-ray, sight test, hearing test, and any single kind of stupid, health-related test you can imagine except AIDS test and pregnancy test. You need to be done before 1pm, when they stop doing tests (hence why you better just have 200 people before you). They'll ask you for money, and ask you to come back a week after to pick up results.
- c) **Passport pictures.** Get A LOT of passport pictures before leaving the UK and make sure they are simply the best quality passport pictures you can possibly get. They can be really picky about the background not being bright white and so on, and you don't want to have to queue a second time after you manage to get new passport pictures.

As said, during the first few weeks, the International Office and Li Ke will be really helpful. Don't miss out the chance and ask whatever question you may have; as the term goes by they will lose interest in helping you.

The Beida Course

[Disclaimer: The course make-up may change slightly for second years 2012-13]

Shortly after you arrive, there will be an introductory meeting with the Beida International School programme organisers. There will be around 14 hours of class time a week, divided into five kinds of class, three according to Beida material, and 2 based on the famous 'red book' (a collection of classical and literature passages set by Oxford tutors) – oral (*kǒuyǔ*; 1 classes per week), newspaper reading (*bào kān*; 2 classes per week), and translation (*fānyì*; 2 classes per week). Classes are made up of two 50-minute halves with a ten-minute break in the middle. They are scheduled at 8.00am-09.50am, 10.10am-11.50am, 13.00-14.50, or 15.10-17.00 Monday–Friday. Classes for us were all held in the Russian building (*éwénlóu*), though you may have some in the *Sháoyuán* 勺园 buildings.



The classes are conducted purely in Chinese, which can be a bit daunting at first, but you'll find that your listening ability improves rapidly and you won't feel behind. The Chinese teaching style will be different from what you're used to, it relies on textbook focussed teaching and plenty of repetition. Rather than receive a list of 50 characters and be

expected to know them by the following lesson, you will see the same characters cropping up again and again in different texts and different classes, before you know it, you'll have mastered the most common (and the most bizarre).

Both Classical and Literature lessons are based on the second-year material that previous years would have studied in Oxford. Our teachers began the year quite confused over how to deal with the material that they didn't themselves prepare, but we have now settled into a comfortable routine whereby they explain the text in Chinese, translating into English those characters which we don't recognise. Homework in these classes has mostly been translation into English (and occasionally from Classical Chinese into Modern Chinese when they are feeling particularly mean), and the occasional role-play of the literature pieces.

As for Translation class, this is based on a Beida textbook brimming with exciting content [*please note the irony here*]. The texts are English magazine-style articles to translate into Chinese, ranging in topic from 'The Population Bomb' to 'Bike for a Better City'. These texts are difficult, no word of a lie, but the trick is to use what you know and what you are learning in other lessons to translate it as well as your language allows. Approach it with an open mind and don't be afraid to be manipulate what you've got.

Newspaper lessons are not approached in an Oxford-style analytical way, and in all honesty, have been much more current affairs or sociology-like than newspaper reading. They have been informative, but not useful to the study of the Orange Book (which has to be learned alongside the Beida course in preparation for the collections at the start of third year). **Warning:** the first few weeks will feel like a barrage of new vocabulary (which you should not attempt to learn all of, but instead pick the useful items) and may feel like the articles are above your level, but stick with it and you will quickly become more comfortable with the course as a whole.

The oral classes are also vital to extend your vocabulary and bring your spoken Chinese to a higher level. You will be required to do oral presentations every few weeks based on topics from the textbook (which is the best of all the textbooks we have encountered); it has a weekly vocabulary list, and lists some idiomatic and common phrases (like 萝卜青菜各有所爱 - lit. carrots and cabbage have their own loves – each to their own). The topics can feel a little mundane, including football and clothing, but the vocabulary is useful and the lessons have been the best prepared of the lot.

In everyday conversation with Beijingers you often only get as in-depth as the, "I'm from England, I study at Beida, I live in Wudaokou" conversation, and generally speaking you won't have much of a chance to discuss your views on smoking or the political situation in China. Language partners are also a good way to have more complex conversations but be aware that they are not become your BFF (unless you are REALLY lucky). Beida does prepare you with a language partner, but many of us found we had little in common with them and thus turned to the Beijing (www.thebeijinger.com) for a more well-rounded language partner, with whom we thought we might have more in common. **Warning:** This is a very hit and miss method, some us have been lucky (moreso if you reply to ads placed by others than placing your own); nightmare scenarios include: stalkers (both male and female), those looking for more than a coffee once a

week and those whose English is so good that the chance to practice your Chinese is nul. Having said that, it can be an amusing journey on the way to finding the language partner of your dreams.

Fluency (well, relative fluency) is best achieved by the above and having plenty of mundane, everyday conversations, so get out and speak as much as you can. Don't worry about sounding stupid – the Beijing people are generally very friendly and kind to foreigners. And remember- they will have heard much worse speakers than you.

If you find it awkward to randomly initiate conversations with strangers, try chatting to taxi drivers, go to a hair salon/barber and chat to a hairdresser, or girls go and get your nails done and chat to the nail technician (there's a salon in the basement of the *Wumei* supermarket, between the photo store and the bookshop.) After 9 months, you may end up bald and with 3-inch blood-red talons, but you'll also be a whole lot better at Chinese. These are all situations where silence can be more awkward than talking, so you'll hopefully find it more natural to chat.

Beida has a rule that you must attend 75% of all classes in order to pass and **not only do teachers take attendance every lesson, they'll be telling Mr Kan whether or not you're going.** Whilst they may not tell you off or even appear particularly critical, you may get a nasty awakening in the future... The same applies to homework.

Technically the course has exams halfway through the semester and at the end. Note that, unlike Oxford exams, your participation in class, homework and attendance record counts towards your final exam mark. Fortunately, our year's exam system was a little different, and thus we only have final exams (and an Oxford-set collection on returning in February).

Holidays

You'll get a few days off for National Day, *qingmingjie* and May Day. These are great opportunities for travelling. Shànghǎi, shānxī and shǎnxī are both readily accessible by train, and internal flights allow travel to just about anywhere. Bear in mind that China is huge and it often takes a day just to get to a place so try not to be over-ambitious with your plans to avoid disappointment. **Also, book early, tickets are often available from up to 10 days in advance!** The holidays are nightmare times to travel, so booking tickets as early as possible is a must. It has also been known to have an *wǔzuòpiào* standing ticket for long train journeys during these periods (12 hours or more).

International Language Competitions

Although this is billed as a competition, it's really more of an "everybody wins" occasion. The first one of the year occurs before Christmas, around November time, and consists of one member of the class having to make a speech (which will be decided by a mini speech contest between the class in oral lessons). The premise is that each international class does a 3/4 minute slot in



Chinese, on pretty much any topic pertaining to China.

However, the BETTER competition takes place at the end of April and is an opportunity to warm up the old creative cogs. Most people do mildly entertaining and generally incomprehensible plays, and a very few do something funny *and* good (this is recommended).

The audience and judges have to watch group after group give rather grave and rather lengthy 'sketches' and so it might be an idea to organise something that will give them a break. If the whole class is involved, it takes the pressure off individuals and helps avert the dreaded desperately-shuffle-notes-and-try-and-find-your-place moments that occur when one person alone is facing an avid audience.

Whatever you do, aim for fun rather than fear- it's nothing to worry about.

Class Representative (班长)

Just a quick note for those of you who get roped into doing this job. This isn't a particularly weighty responsibility – you aren't expected to do much but rather the job is as much as you wish to make of it. The main task is to give a speech at the welcome dinner. A few of the university bigwigs may be there, along with your future teachers, fellow Oxford students and students from the Cambridge cohort (third years who will be spending their time in China concurrent with you). The speech has to be in Chinese, and if you're nervous about it, email it to Mr Kan beforehand so he can check it over. Go for things like, 'building bridges between our countries', 'heartfelt thanks' and 'enduring memories' – it'll go down a storm and really is nothing to worry about.

Once you've done the speech, your job basically consists of liaising between the International Office and the Oxford students. If there is any communication that needs to take place between the central International Students Office and the class, you will be the messenger. It's a chance to speak some more Chinese and an opportunity to improve the reputation of Brits abroad. You will also be asked to coordinate the updating of this lovely guide which you are reading now. Have fun.

Probably the most exciting aspect of assuming the coveted title of 班长 (at least for the 2011-2012 cohort's representative) was the opportunity to take part in the **Beijing Forum**. This should take place in November, with materials having to be submitted throughout August and September. This series of discussion panels (with topics related to any contemporary issues) is attended by professors, academics and generally important people from all over the world, and the 班长 may be invited to represent and uphold the intellectual reputation of Oxford University. You'll just be participating in the Student Panel, which is almost entirely separate from the rest of the panel. You will be required to prepare first a brief summary of your arguments pertaining to certain topic, and then a speech on the subject. It seems daunting at first and it seems like there's a lot of work involved, but once you've written the speech, all you have to do is deliver it and then have an relaxed, impromptu discussion. Above anything else, it is a nice opportunity to see other students from all over the world (in 2011 this included Australia, South Africa, US, Israel, Mexico, Cuba, Japan...), and you all will relate to each other about the slightly dubious Chinese concept of "academic discussion". Wait for information to be emailed from Li Ke before worrying about it.

At the time of writing we don't think there will be a closing ceremony, but it may be best to check that you don't have to do another speech at the end of the course. Be prepared to do some running back and forth to Beida and the International Office, as you may be called on to deal with certificates, student cards, etc.

Enjoy...

Extracurricular Beida

Although you will be going to Beida Monday to Friday it's a really good idea to involve yourself in other activities when you're out there, not only to have fun but to enrich your experience of Chinese culture and hopefully improve your language skills.

It is difficult to get involved in Beida's extra-curricular activities – the website is in Chinese and so poorly organised that the Chinese students must have trouble too. Beida may seem relatively keen to keep you separate from Beida students. The best way to get involved in Beida activities is to ask the students what's going on around campus. Alternatively look for things outside of Beida by checking magazines such as *Timeout* and *That's Beijing* although these are likely to be classes run for ex-pats and are often in English.

Since you are out here for a year, it is recommended, once you've settled in, to get involved in something in Beijing. Some people choose to teach English to children (the money is pretty good), volunteering opportunities are quite common or internships (if you have one free day a week). The first term in Beijing is spent acclimatising to Beijing life and trying to get your Chinese to a level where simple conversations now flow easily, the second term is the one to go wild with extracurricular things.

The sports facilities at Beida include a gym and a pool, but are not really open to foreign students, no matter what they tell you. The tennis courts, etc. are free but you have to sign up for them. There are several gyms in *Wudaokou*, BLCU has a cost-efficient gym, costing around £70 for 3 months.

It is generally worth seeing if you can bargain with gyms as they may be willing to cut you a deal, especially if several people want to join together.

Unfortunately, there are no venues at or around Beida to practice musical instruments. If you sign up for music lessons, though, your music teacher might be able to provide or direct you to a place where you can practice.

You can join the Beida library (see *Communications- Internet*) and borrow books, although most people don't bother, as it's a confusing place. The library is rated as the best in Asia and has a surprisingly well-stocked English language section with some material in controversial areas, although don't expect to find anything unusual on Taiwan, Tibet or Tiananmen. Because China has very lax intellectual property laws you can take borrowed books and have them photocopied whole. This can easily be done on campus and costs about 15 元 so you can build up a good library of material to bring back with you.

Accommodation

Location:

There is plenty of reasonably priced and very pleasant accommodation not far from the Beida campus. The most popular place to live in is an apartment complex called Huáqīng Jiāyuán, 华清嘉园, which is about 30 minutes walk from the East Gate of Beida and is situated very close to the Wudaokou metro station. To get there from Beida go out of the East Gate and walk straight up Chengfulu 成府路 (as in Cheng Fu Road) until you reach the set of pink buildings that has a

McDonalds in them. Behind this complex is another one called DongShengYuan 东升园, which tends to be a little cheaper but is just as nice. There are also apartments further down Chengfulu, near the former Geography University, and there are often flats available in Beijing Language University (语言大学). If you don't like Wudaokou, you can try near the southwest gate of Beida; this is closer to campus but not as convenient for public transport.

Apartments are generally 2 or 3-beds (there are a few 4-beds but these are rare and expensive).

Rental Agencies:

There are a number of rental agencies who can show you around apartments but be prepared for stress and frustration- it's a competitive business. Some of the all-male agencies find it difficult to take all girl groups seriously, so if you're getting nowhere you can try and take a guy along with you. You may also find that the agencies try to play you off one another, as it's likely you'll be the only groups moving in at this time and the agencies are desperate to get the commission. Keep a good sense of the ridiculous and be prepared to store up some grin-worthy anecdotes and affectionate pet names for flats (think "Poo House", "Crack House", etc.)

The area around 华清嘉园 is covered in rental agencies, you can just walk in, tell them what you want and they'll immediately start taking you around flats. Century 21 is highly recommended, and Blue Sky agency has a man who speaks some English if you're struggling with Chinese. 我爱我家 (WoAiWoJia) are probably the most professional agency. They will take you seriously and do their best to find you a flat, but will charge both you and the landlord a month's rent in commission for finding you the flat.

Huáqīng Jiāyuán, Wǔdàokǒu



If you want to deal directly with the owner, there are lots of adverts in windows and on notice boards in cafés. Be aware that this may give you very little security if things go pear-shaped. Also, if you know anyone in Beijing, it's worth asking around to see if they know any private agents, these guys appear out of nowhere and seem to have access to a huge range of flats.

Alternatively, check www.thebeijinger.com to find people looking for housemates, you can then contact people by email or telephone.

When viewing apartments, have a good look around and make sure it has all the necessities such as a working shower and toilet, secure locks, air-con, working electric sockets, a TV (you can get DVD players for £10-£15) and a fridge. It's also good to ask your landlord about internet access- our landlord was willing to sort out wireless for us. If there's anything that needs fixing or installing (e.g. air con –YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT) bring this up when viewing the flat before you sign anything. Be aware that the flat is not likely to have been cleaned when you get it, but your landlord might be able to arrange a cleaner for you, or the Lotus Centre provides lots of high-chemical goodies for your cleaning pleasure.

Look around a few places and be prepared to **bargain** to get the rent lower – but don't go OTT and try to keep it friendly. You'll probably be shown the same apartment by several agencies and this can give you bargaining leverage. It is often easier to bargain face to face with the landlord, as agents are taking a cut and generally want to rinse you. Be sure to take your time in viewing flats and considering different agencies. Agents will try to make you seal the deal within a day and will be very pushy about it, so just keep your cool and say you will come back tomorrow. There are plenty of flats for rent in September, so even if the agents tell you the flat will be rented out immediately, there is no need to worry.

You will be asked to pay all your rent up-front (often 3 months' rent plus a deposit of 1 month's rent) so you should take money out from ATMs over a couple of days to ensure you have enough as the daily withdrawal limit is about 2000 元. Do think about drawing cash out as soon as you get to Beijing, or come with a lot of money, because the agencies and landlords often do not understand why foreign students cannot pay everything upfront within three days. Be sure to explain the withdrawal situation to them clearly. Obviously, be careful about carrying large sums of money around and leaving lots of money in an insecure place. A money belt that you can wear under your clothes, padlocks and lockable bike-chains for your baggage are a good idea, especially when travelling around. Rents in Beijing seem to range from 2000 元 a month to 3500 元 a month per person. If you want to live somewhere nice, be prepared to pay a little more.

No matter what happens, discuss the fees you will be paying up front and before you commit to ANYTHING. If the agent makes noises about paying a commission, they are trying to rip you off (they should be receiving their cut from the landlord). Our agent kept on insisting that we pay him commission right up until we threatened to walk out completely. Do not get pressured into paying obscene amounts – there will be other flats available.

If you aren't comfortable being blunt, find someone who is – it'll save you money.

Living in an apartment:

Once you have your apartment, you may have bills through your door for water and gas. You can either take these to the bank and pay them or else collect them and your landlord will ask you to pay them at the end of your tenancy. If you have paid them throughout, **KEEP THE RECEIPTS** so you can prove you've paid.

Electricity often runs off a top-up-able card, if you have a nice landlord, you can text him when your lights and laptop go dark and he'll go and top up the card for you. Otherwise, you can take the card to a local bank and put more money on it. Air-conditioning eats money (and the environment) so it's a good idea to remember to switch it off when you go out, for all that you want a cool house to come back to.

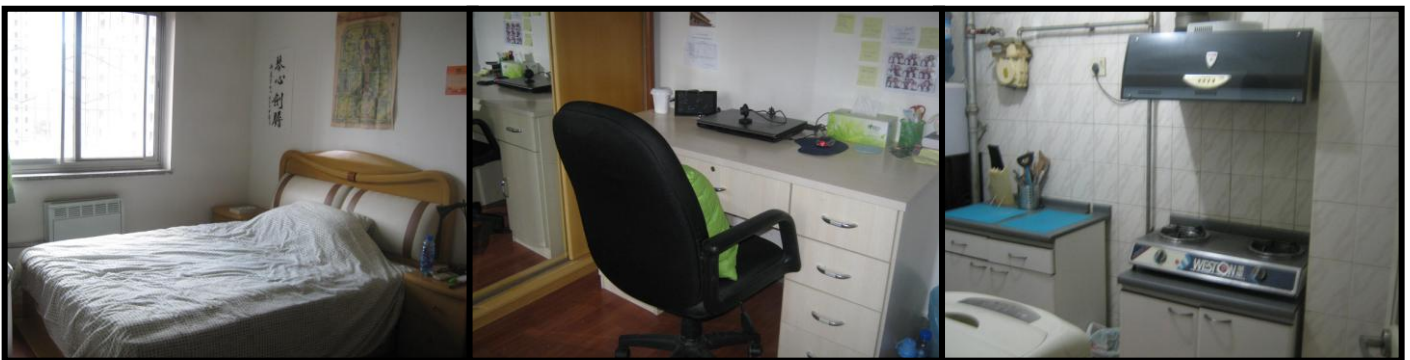
Cockroaches (蟑螂 zhāngláng) and mosquitoes are potential visitors. If you don't have mosquito screens on your windows, make sure to shut them well before sunset to keep the mozzies out. You can also buy cheap anti-mosquito, plug-in scent devices from the Lotus Centre. If you get cockroaches, tell your landlord. If you don't receive help, you'll probably find cockroach poison in supermarkets. If you have cockroaches, turn on the lights before entering rooms at night in order to avoid crunchily unpleasant consequences. In killing cockroaches, do not squash them as they let off odors which will attract other creepy crawlies; cockroaches are into necrophilia... So you should preferably poison or drown the beasties. In general, cockroaches don't do much harm but they do have an annoying habit of exponentially increasing in number. They like damp places (bathrooms) and will be attracted to any food that gets left out or any unclean surfaces. This is a true incentive for cleanliness.

To give you some idea of what to expect, here are some details for 2010-

东升园- 2 bedroom apartment (+ Christmas tree), 5000 元 per month (2500 元 per person):



东升园- 3 bedroom apartment, 6000 元 per month (2000 元 per person):



语言大学- 3 bedroom apartment, 5500 元 per month (1833 元 per person) + 1500 元 PSB registration (see below):



Alternative Accommodation:

If you run into trouble finding a suitable apartment, it may be possible for you to **continue living on the Beida Campus**. This isn't a cheaper alternative, but it can save on a lot of stress. If you are interested, it would be best to talk to the course coordinator in the International Office.

Some students lived in a Chinese **student dorm** with Chinese students. The university prohibits international students from living in the Chinese dormitories. However, other options are available such as living in dormitory-style accommodation with students and other people from outside the university. Chinese people from outside the university generally have more time and tend to be more interested in learning English -- and helping you with your Chinese. The main disadvantages are SERIOUSLY inferior living conditions (some dormitories do not include air-con, mosquito nets or internet, have communal shower and toilet facilities, tend to be very small and come with house cockroaches), security issues (especially with respect to valuables), and the reduced privacy that stems from having several room-mates. With regards to privacy, however, roommates do tend to be respectful of personal space, and many people hang curtains around their bunks for added privacy.

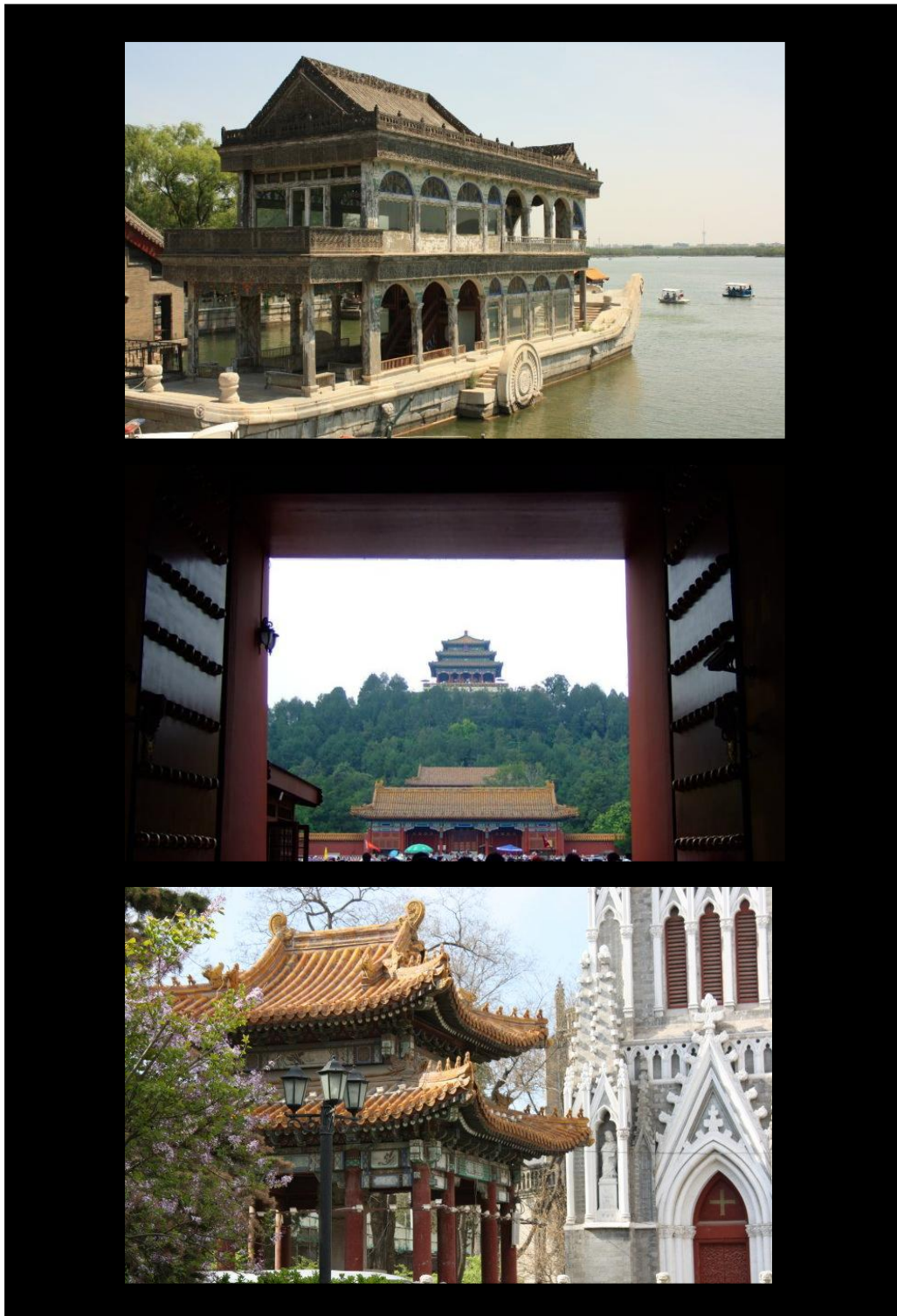
In the words of someone who actually did it:

'As it gets towards July/August the heat when sharing a room is absolutely unbearable, and landlords are usually stingy with the air-con. I had to move out after about 4 1/2 months as I nearly went mad... Oh, and the worst thing is that people will smoke in the room and genuinely not realise that it's inconsiderate, even while you're asleep. Apart from that it was good fun.'

The money saved (rent can be as little as 300元 a month) and, more importantly, the opportunities for language-learning and cultural exchange can make this option worthwhile. You have to be brave to opt for this, and self-evidently the more Chinese you know the less difficult things are initially. The best person to help you out if you're looking for a dorm is your language partner at Beida.

Homestays are possible but fairly difficult to find. You'll have to organise it yourself, so if you have your heart set on living with a family, try to set it up before you go. "Connections" (关系 *guānxi*) are important to the Chinese – mention to your Chinese friends in Oxford that you're looking for a homestay near Beida and you might just end up with a friend of a friend of a friend of theirs! There are plenty of benefits- a true immersion in Chinese culture, greater opportunity for language development and the potential for lifelong friendship. There are however, also some potential problems to think about- if you don't get along with the family it can be hard to extract yourself from the arrangement; Chinese families may be strict about curfews and rules; and you may find yourself a long way from your classmates and therefore slightly isolated. You could potentially opt for staying in a family for half the year and live on Beida campus for the other. Talking to some of the Cambridge students who have been living with Chinese families, it seems as though it is very tough in that there is no place for escape or a break from the constant Chineseness. Moreover, you might end up being the unpaid English teacher of your host's

children, neighbours, and other relatives.



Registration at the police station

Once you have found a place, you need to **register with the Police station** to gain a temporary residence permits within 24 hours of moving in. This is not only a legal necessity but

also required if you need to claim anything on insurance or change your visa. Your landlord should take you through this process and foot the bill, but if they do not then the police station for 华清嘉园 and 东升园 is in 东升园. If you are living near the south gate of Beida, you'll probably go to the police station down the street from Carrefour (Jia Le Fu). Take your passport. Don't panic if you've left it over a day before registering; they have no idea when you've moved in.

Don't be persuaded into not registering with the police in order to save on rent as, although it's highly unlikely you will be discovered, if there are difficulties such as theft of belongings, which requires insurance documentation from the police, you will run into problems and could be heavily fined.

Do not be surprised if your landlord asks for your passport, he generally wants to make sure you are under the correct visa permits. Make sure to have photocopies of your passport to give to your landlord and to keep for yourself when you hand your passport over to your university coordinator to change your visa to a temporary residency permit.

Communications

Internet (& VPN)

If you cannot get internet in your apartment then there are several alternatives:

- There are quite a few internet cafes in the area surrounding Beida. There are several in *Wudaokou* (largely in mini-Korea on the other side of the railway tracks near the cinema). Internet cafes generally charge 2 元 per hour and require you to leave a deposit from which the amount you spend is deducted. Foreigners are often asked to produce passport identification. There are also quite a few cafes in *Wudaokou* that have free wireless access, including Helen's, Lush, La Bamba, Bean Tree and The Bridge Café.
- The other way to access the internet is in the Beida library. You can join the library once you have been given your student card by Beida (you should be given it during the week of your arrival, if not, please ask the course coordinator). Go to the library and go to the library card desk to register (it's 10 元). You will also need a passport photo (yes, again). Once you have a library card you can use the internet in the library. Simply hand your card over to the internet desk, write your name in the logbook, and the librarian will give you a number for a computer you can use. The library also costs 2 元 per hour but doesn't require a deposit, although it seems to get blocked faster than most other places. Also, finding a free computer may be a little bit of a challenge.
- *Shaoyuan 7* has a computer room next to the post office, opposite the shop. You can pay to access the internet but be aware that if you want to print it can be quite expensive.

Note that if your bank accounts are online it is best not to check them in internet cafes, as security is questionable. The computers in the Beida Library are the best bet for any financial transactions if you don't have internet in your apartment. Alternatively, get somebody at home (ie. mum) to do it while you're in China. You might even consider setting up and enduring power of attorney that allows somebody else to give signatures on your behalf. This does not give them control over your life, but it means that they can sign your loan application form, sort out bank issues and sort out insurance claims, etc. on your behalf.

It can be a good idea to set up **Oxford VPN** before going to China, this will give you all-important access to Facebook and Youtube, to say a few.

Go to <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/network/vpn/> for more information on sorting it out.

You may need the following information to set up VPN on iPods/Linux:

IPSec gateway: vpn.ox.ac.uk

IPSec ID: oxford

IPSec secret: osiris

Username: (your Oxford username)

Password: (your remote access password)

NB. Kaspersky Internet Security software can cause problems with Cisco VPN.

The solution to this problem and others can be found at:

<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/network/vpn/faq/anyconnectfaq.xml>.

However, the best option still remains to get Internet in your apartment. This will involve more dealing with Chinese bureaucracy (another reason for coming earlier), but once you're done you can connect at home and it is reasonably cheap.

Phoning

To phone abroad, **Skype** is your best option and although few internet cafes have the software, you can usually install it. They will generally have headsets. Headsets, etc. can be bought from the electronics market or from the Lotus Centre.

Another possibility is to use an IP card (called *IP ka* in Chinese) which charges you a cheaper rate. These can normally be bought from street-corner kiosks. Although the price on them is 100 元, they are never bought for face value so try bartering. About 35-40 元 is reasonable.

The best possibility of all, though, is to get a Chinese phone. Speaking over the phone can be challenging at first (so many homophones...), so get your landlords/estate agents/language partners to text you instead until you're confident in phone calls. Your mobile from home will work with a Chinese SIM if it's unlocked, but you'll need to buy a phone in China if you want to text in 汉字. *Wudaokou* is full of phone shops, but your best bet is to go into the Lotus supermarket and ask for the cheapest deal, cheaper SIM cards have lots of 4s in the phone number. You can also get SIM cards and top up vouchers (充值卡) here – but make sure you know which network you're on (usually it's 中国移动 aka China Mobile, generally the cheapest option). Be aware that you have to pay to receive phone calls as well as make them, but it's worth asking

in Lotus if there's any way you can stop this (for about 4 元 a month). This also gives you a chintzy piano ring.

The Lotus Centre may not be especially cheap (the cheapest phones in 2010 were around 180 元) but you can return the phones if you have problems. If you are tempted to buy a cheap, second-hand phone from one of the electronics markets, be aware that you can end up with un-rechargeable phones, phones that won't let you press certain keys, or phones that just plain don't work. Whilst the sellers will generally help you if you bother them enough, it can take various trips to solve the problem. Remember that you can use the same phone the next time you travel to China. Also, ask the phonemongers to set it to English menus (for speed, by all means change it back later when you can read all the options!)

The phone itself can cost you as much as 15 元 + 100 元 credit and you'll get the nice experience of going back to a cell phone that is basically that, a cell phone (no camera, no music, no polyphonic tones – so *vintage!*). Chinese mobile companies will send you daily jokes or daily inspirational text messages and Chinese people will ask you why on earth you have such a brick in China if you have an iPhone in the UK.

You can buy more **credit** from newspaper stands on the street, but your first wodge should last a few weeks.

Post

The post (*youju*) in China is secure and generally reliable. Packages from home will get to you if your address in *pinyin* is on it but you can always type up your address in Chinese so that your family can print it out and stick it on. There is a post office on the Beida campus but all your packages and parcels will go to the main post office near BLCU at the other end of *Chéngfúlù* to Běidà. You can get there on the bus from *Wudaokou* – unless they open a new post office in *Hua Qing* compound. If you just want to send postcards, you can go to the mini post office in Shaoyuan 7 and ask for stamps, they can then be posted in the green boxes outside the front of the building.

Letters will generally end up in the mailboxes on the ground floors of apartment blocks. If you miss a delivery of a parcel, the deliveryman will sometimes leave it outside your door, give you a call or leave it with the porter – in which case you'll get an angry porter at some time... why foreigners don't pick up their parcels?

The Chinese can be very particular about what can be posted and how. For example, they often require only paper to be posted in envelopes; if anything besides paper gets put in and they find out, the post office staff will have to often give you a box or jiffy bag to repackage it with. There is also a size requirement for letters – an envelope which would pass regulations in Britain may be “too small” for posting in China. You'll find out through trial and error what's allowed and what isn't. Much better to “ask for forgiveness, not permission” – in other words, if there is something you'd like to send home and which you can fit in a normal envelope, go ahead and package it up and don't ask them whether you're complying with their rules. They'll let you know if you're not!

As regards posting parcels, the pricing system is near unintelligible, it is probably easiest to take things along to the Post Office and see what they charge.

In 2010, a 13kg(ish) box sent SAL (Surface Air Lifted) cost £70 and took 1 month to arrive. SAL is generally the compromise option (Airmail being much more expensive and Surface Mail being much slower).

If you are sending parcels they usually need to see the contents so they can give it the official okay, so to avoid all this kafuffle, just take whatever you want to send down to the post office unpacked, and buy a box there. Or you can let them put it in a jiffy-bag for you, which is cheaper than sending things in a box.

- NB.
- You cannot place unopened medicine in your package.
 - They don't offer insurance to the UK

On a side note, anyone interested in stamps should go along to the **Beijing National Post and Postage Stamp Museum** to check out its 'abundant and fine postal antiquities':

<http://www.czyypm.com/>

Transport

Bike

Although Beijing traffic looks the stuff of nightmares, it is real fun to cycle – though it starts getting boring by the hundredth time a double-storey bus is hurtling headlong towards you. You can usually get a bike for about £15, making them a cost-efficient and time-efficient way of shuttling between Beida and home. A good bike place can be found behind the Lotus Centre, past the train ticket shop. From here, two bikes, with locks and baskets included, cost 300 元 (after some hefty bargaining). Although the quality can be slightly dubious, this bike shop will pump up tires for free and give you low cost/free repairs. Otherwise, there are plenty of repairmen by the side of the roads who will pump up tyres (often for free!) and fix them for you for a nominal fee. You can also spend a pleasant day cycling around the city and sightseeing if you can stand the fumes. Welcome to the jungle!

Travelcard

You can buy these at any metro station, or at any of the designated kiosks. The system is called 一卡通, and works just like an Oyster card. You pay a 20 元 deposit on it, which you can get back when you leave, and top it up whenever you like. It's valid for buses and the metro.

Subway

(地铁): The metro/subway/underground in Beijing is very cheap – you can get anywhere in the city for 2 元. There is a metro stop in *Wudaokou*, which makes it easy to avoid the traffic when going across town. But be warned, though it is sometimes quicker than a taxi over long distances, in rush hours you often won't find a seat. Actually, if you manage to find a seat at *any* time, please let us know. It takes around 40 minutes to an hour to get from *Wudaokou* to *Wángfǔjǐng* and Tiananmen on the metro.

Bus

The buses are extremely cheap and go everywhere though they can take a long time if you're making a long trip across town. Have a look at the bus timetables in *Wudaokou* on *Chéngfúlù* and around Beida to see where they can take you. There are buses that go to the Summer Palace, Xiang Shan (mountains outside Beijing), Qiánmén (bottom on Tiananmen Sq, not far from the Forbidden City), BLCU and many more. They usually cost 1 or 2 元 – just swipe your travelcard once you get on the bus and it will display how much has been deducted, or ask the conductor how much cash to give for the ticket. The buses can be a fun way to take a trip around the city to see what it's like if you're not in a hurry. From *Wudaokou* to Beida, bus 731 is the one to take.

Taxi

Taxis in China are pretty cheap. Beijing's and Shanghai's taxis are a bit more expensive than those in other cities, but you can generally get across the city for about £4-£5 depending on traffic. If there are a few of you it works out really cheap, and if you just can't be bothered to get the metro or the bus, it's a nice option as they all have air-con and you're guaranteed a seat and a nice chat regarding the four standard questions: where are you from? where are you studying? who pays your tuition fares? how much is a car in the UK? When getting a taxi at night-time don't wave your hand; instead keep your arm straight and pretend to look as sober as you can, as that is exactly the kind of clients taxi drivers are looking for. You'll be surprised at how many taxi drivers don't take you just because you're foreigner and they think you'll probably drunk.

A general note on taxis: on the dash board in front of the passenger seat there should be a laminated card with a photo of the driver, his driver number, and the taxi company on it. This is the taxi licence. If you take a taxi without this, it is probably an illegal one, and even if it has a meter you are likely to get ripped off, either by being driven round in circles for hours, or because their meter has been tampered with and runs at twice the normal rate. Make sure the drivers use their meters (ask them to 打表) – this isn't usually a problem. Taxis in Beijing are fairly cheap, though during rush hour it's quicker to take the subway if you're going on a long trip across town.

Long Distance Buses

Long distance buses between cities are sometimes quicker and easier to get tickets for than the trains. The sleeper buses are no joke when the road looks more like a sandpit than a road and you may end up sleeping rather too close to comfort with total strangers. But for daytime journeys, or if the route takes you on a nice bit of sealed highway, they can be great. You can also see a bit more of the countryside than from the train. There is a long distance bus station at

Xīzhímén, which is on the metro. *Liuliqiao* long distance bus station is another option, and can be reached on Line 9 of the metro.

To buy long distance bus tickets, it's probably best to go a few days in advance to the bus station itself, as often bus tickets sell out.

Train

Though a great long distance option, train tickets are not always easy to get, especially if you want a sleeper ticket. In order of ease of purchase from easiest to hardest: **standing ticket** (the hardcore option, you basically stand wherever you can), **hard seat** (the best value option, you sit on a chair for the duration of your journey), **soft sleeper** (costs a lot more than a hard sleeper, 4 beds to a compartment and a door between the compartment and the corridor), **hard sleeper** (best value for money, you get a comfy, clean bed for the night but a fairly cheap fare. 6 beds to a compartment, no door). You can sometimes upgrade your ticket once you are on the train but not always, so don't count on it. The hard sleepers have three bunks: top, middle and bottom. The top gives you more privacy and is the cheapest but you can't sit up – it's too close to the ceiling and pretty claustrophobic. The bottom one is big enough for you (and your friends) to sit on during the day but is less private and is the most expensive. The middle one doesn't give you privacy or room to sit up. If you're travelling in twos getting one upper and one lower can be a nice compromise. The Chinese usually snore a lot due to emphysema, so earplugs come quite useful.

You can buy train tickets on campus, ask your language partner for help finding the ticket office. There are also ticket vendors around *Wudaokou*, look for 火车票 signs; there is one opposite the entrance to *Huaqing Jiayuan*. The main train stations, *Běijīng Zhàn* or *Běijīng Xī* (West) have a special foreigner's desk. If you want to get the international train to Hong Kong, you have to go to Beijing West station to buy tickets.

The time tickets go on sale varies from ten to four days ahead of the travel date. Sleepers are certainly recommended for overnight travel, and hard sleepers are pretty decent. If you want to save money, choose a seat section but be aware that the lights stay on all night, people are generally crammed into every gap (including the aisles) and that you'll be surrounded by smokers. This gets less and less fun with every hour.

If you're doing a round trip hoping to take in lots of places in a limited space of time, try not to cut it too fine with the timing. You might not be able to travel on the days you want, so leave a few days spare to cope with delays. If you are travelling during busy periods like national holidays, it is vital that you go and buy tickets as soon as they go on sale, this can mean travelling to the ticket office several days in a row, but otherwise you may end up stuck in Beijing, or even better, travelling overnight for 12 hours with a standing ticket (don't ask).

Plane

Though still more expensive than the train, internal flights are getting cheaper in China and it can save you a day or two in travel time, for example, Beijing to Chengdu is 27 hours on the

train, but the flight is only an hour or so. Also, bear in mind that you may not be able to go directly between two places on the train.

E-long: <http://www.elong.net/flights/> **is highly recommended.** They sell internal flights in China as well as flights to Hong Kong and some over-seas destinations often at discounted rates. If you book in advance, you can often get tickets as much as 70% off which can make it cheaper than the soft-sleeper and potentially save you days of messing around with trains. When you book tickets with E-long, arrange to pay the courier in cash when they are delivered, that way you don't have to give out credit card details, and you will have the tickets in your hand and can check them before you hand over the cash.

China Highlights: <http://www.chinahighlights.com/china-flights/> is also tried and tested. They will email you with confirmation details and you'll end up with a sheet to print off. Though it doesn't look much like a ticket, don't panic, the airport will wave you through. If you run into trouble, the customer service is really good.

If you don't have too much luggage, the **Airport Express** is a great way to get to the airport. It runs to both terminals and costs 25 元. See the Metro Map at the back of this guide.

Around Beijing

The easiest way to navigate Beijing is to picture it as a series of concentric rings. Beijing has 5 ring roads, the innermost of which is the 2nd ring road 二环路, which encircles an area roughly equivalent to central Beijing – the old city – with the outermost ring road at present the 6th ring road 六环路. There is no 1st ring road, instead the boundary of Tiananmen 天安门 square and the Forbidden City 故宫 forms the centremost of these rings. Within this system of rings, Beijing is laid out like a grid.

Almost all roads and streets in Beijing go north-south or east-west, so if you're keen on exploring the city, a compass can be pretty useful. No joke!

The 北大 campus and 五道口 areas lie between the 5th and 4th ring roads, in the 海淀 district to the north-west of Tiananmen. 五道口 has a huge student and international population, a large number of bars, clubs, boutiques, cafes and restaurants offering all manner of cuisine (see relevant sections of this guide).

To the south of the 北大 campus, just across the 4th ring road is the 中关村 area, which offers bigger buildings with more shops and restaurants in a shinier setting: skyscrapers, shopping malls, a few cinemas and humongous, cheap as chips electronics stores.

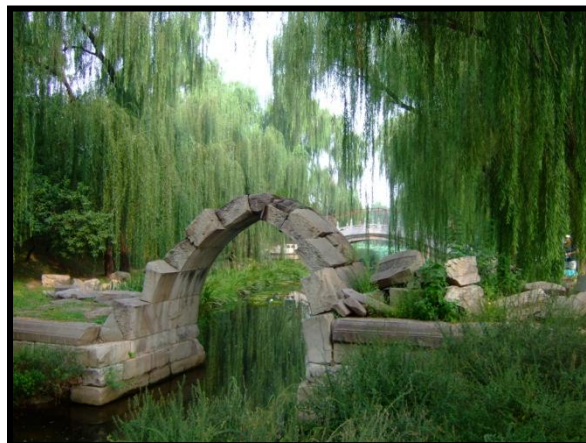
Within the 二环路, to the north of 天安门 and the 故宫 are the hutong 胡同: the home of grassroots Beijingers and grassroots Beijing culture. Most of the hutong in this area remain residential and are therefore a perfect place to get away from the crowds, go for a stroll or get a meal. Some hutong areas like *Nanluoguxiang* 南锣鼓巷 and 后海 have been renovated with trendy bars and boutiques. On the south side of 天安门 are the 前门 and 王府井 areas: big pedestrianised shopping streets where you'll find department stores, more restaurants (!), a reconstruction of an old Chinese town and some flea markets.

The *Chaoyang* 朝阳 district in East Beijing is perhaps the most glitzy cosmopolitan part of the city, with the CBD (Central Business District), and *Sanlitun* 三里屯. The CBD has the biggest, shiniest and most interesting buildings (if you're into that), whilst *Sanlitun* has the biggest, shiniest and most expensive bars and clubs.

On top of all this, there are all manner of – for want of a better word or phrase – 'specialist streets' for book stores, for music stores, for calligraphy supply stores, for minority communities, for gay bars, for cooking utensils, and for pretty much anything you can imagine a special street for.

Some recommendations:

- The **Forbidden City** and **Tiananmen Square** are the obvious places to visit. If it takes your fancy, you can go and see dead Mao...
- If you want Western-style malls and shops, try 西单 (where you'll also find frozen yoghurt. Amazing).
- Go down to *Jiùgǔlóu* (旧鼓楼) area for interesting bars and restaurants, namely BED, Dali and anything on *nanluoguxiang* (南锣鼓巷).
- *Sānlǐtún* has lots of lively ex-pat bars and clubs with dangerously cheap drinks and large screens for watching sport.
- Beijing has many lovely parks including the old and new **Summer Palaces**, and **Fragrant Hills** (*Xiāng Shān*) which has an awesome cable car to get you up the mountains, all of which are near Beida. *Jǐngshān* Park has beautiful views of the Forbidden City, and *Běihǎi* Park is full of attractions. *Rìtán* Park is much smaller and quieter (and cheaper). More locals go here; if you're interested in martial arts, some pretty eminent teachers teach here and you can see people doing *taiji*. Chaoyang Park is a great place to hangout in the summer- with a fake beach, monkey-zip wires, an amusement park and pedalo boats to keep you occupied! *Zizhuyuan* (Purple Bamboo Park) is another great place to go, and is a bit of a quieter destination compared to Chaoyang; plus it's free entry!
- There are lots of interesting temples. Favourites include the **White Cloud Temple**, *Bāiyúnguǎn*, and the **Lama Temple**, *Yōnghégōng*, which has its own subway stop.
- The **798** 艺术区 (*Yìshùqū*) is a fascinating **art district** in Chaoyang. It can be a little hard to find, so look it up on the net before venturing forth. It's made up of a complex of old warehouses (some of which still bear communist slogans on the walls) now made into a variety of galleries and workshops.
- **Beijing Natural History Museum** is worth a visit if only to see the very dilapidated dinosaurs (when we visited there was a small child hanging off a diplodocus tail). In 2010 there were also some amusing stuffed animals (and also halves of stuffed animals), a follow-the-sperm trip around the reproductive system, an exhibition on dinosaur eggs, and a pot-noodle stocked café. Who knows what the future may have in store...



- If you're a really busy bee, Beijing's a good place to pick up some work experience – don't expect to be paid though! In the past people have worked at the China Britain Business Council, Time Out and Beijing Kids magazine.

Food

Be prepared to throw away any stereotypes you might have about Chinese food- each region in China has its own specialities and styles of cooking, and Beijing not only brings together regional cuisines, but is a melting pot for international styles too. Selecting dishes is generally as much about luck as anything else- sometimes it pays off, sometimes it doesn't. Below you'll find a few tips about places we discovered and liked but really, this is an opportunity for intrepid exploration.

Firstly, a few hints regarding food problems:

As mentioned in the Health section, **DO NOT drink the tap water** unless you've boiled it first. Water coolers usually dispense hot water as well as cold, so you can make tea. In the Beida accommodation, they will give you flasks of hot water.

We have found that **vegetarianism** is not too much of a problem. There may however still be times when however good your Chinese, the idea that you do not eat meat does not compute in the minds of Beijing's restaurant owners. It is likely more of a challenge as you travel further away from main cities. 吃素 is 'to be a vegetarian', and 我不吃肉 seems to work equally as well. Look out for Indian restaurants and the occasional Chinese Buddhist restaurants for top quality food. There are also plenty of vegetable variants of *baozi* available for snacking. Worst comes to worst, the Lotus Centre will provide you with all the ingredients necessary to cook your own meals.

It's very possible to get **food poisoning** if you're not careful. The vast majority of places are fine but be aware that some small places selling Western-style fast food (i.e. fried chicken) may not cook things properly – avoid bloody, poorly reheated chicken drumsticks. A lot of restaurants will give you a doggy bag for leftovers; **DON'T EAT THESE!** The boxes they use are often not clean, and a couple of us got hospitalised this way. No, really.

Beida campus

北京大学 campus has a variety of good places to eat, a mixture of cheap canteens and restaurants, with various foods on offer. The restaurant-style places with table service generally accept cash as payment, and the canteens generally use a food-card method of payment. You buy your food cards and put money on them from a bureau on campus, your language partner will probably take you to get one in the first week or so, and if they don't then just ask! 100 元 credit is fine for a term of eating on site a few times a week – the food, especially in the canteens, is remarkably cheap (and delicious!).

To buy food in the canteens, take your tray and ask for whatever dishes you want (you can usually just point and smile). After giving you a dish, the dining hall staff will key the amount into a box and then you'll insert your food card, which will take off the right amount.

There are canteens, restaurants and cafes everywhere you turn, but a few worth mentioning are:

- A really good 饺子 canteen where the flavours of dumpling available are hanging up from a hook at the hatch. Portions are quite small so it's a good idea to ask for two (or three...!)
- 家园餐厅 canteen – this is a huge canteen, where each hatch serves food from a different region in China.
- Slightly pricier is a very nice Korean restaurant in one of the Shaoyuan buildings (Shaoyuan 1, we think) here they do really good sweet and sour, and savoury mini-potato pancakes.
- Another place we ended up in a lot was the 咖啡厅 in Shaoyuan building number 7. This is pricey and not particularly great, but it doesn't get much more convenient. Among other things, it serves sandwiches, french fries and some quite bland Chinese dishes. Can be good for those craving western comfort food.

There are also loads of nice restaurants just outside the gates on the west side of 北大, and depending on the weather/season vendors selling fried snack food at the east gates.

BLCU Campus

BLCU, or 语言大学, is also another really good location to explore for nice foods. Walk down 成府路 past the metro station until you come to the gates on the left hand side.

- '**BLCU Muslim**' is an amazing 新疆 (Xinjiang) restaurant, THIS is the place for roasted bread, 烤馕, and lamb 串. They also do a pretty yummy 红烧茄子, and special noodles called 丁丁削面. Really do make the effort to find this place and eat here, it's 新疆 food at its best!
- BLCU also has a pretty nice Japanese restaurant that does good value sushi.
- Another reliable place for comfort eating is **Hope Cafe**; pasta & pesto, garlic bread and hot chocolate are among the highlights on the menu, and the place also has free Wifi if you can work out how to use it.
- There is also a fantastic little 饺子 place tucked away just outside the gates. If you walk down 成府路 and turn down a little road on your left just after a pink shop named Sicool. Keep walking down this road right to the end where there is a little shop selling fruit & veg on the left. At the bottom end of this shop, you will find some delicious dumplings!

五道口:

Chinese style food

Many, many places to eat here – again impossible to list them all and it can be really fun to explore and find your own favourites. Some firm favourites are listed:

- Two really great places for a meal can be found around the back of the Lotus Centre, head down 中关村东路 road then turn down a small alley on your right, just before a bike stall. The first is a great little dumpling place – the 小笼包 here is especially good, don't forget

the soy sauce and chill. The second is a typical everyday-restaurant, with a huge menu of all the usual standard foods: noodles, rice, vegetable and meat dishes... All super cheap, and beer is only a few 元 here too. Especially good here is the 刀削面.

- Another reliably good value restaurant with a delicious menu is found on 成府路, on your left-hand side if you are walking from 五道口 to 北大, just a bit beyond the unmistakably glaring hairdressers on the crossroads with 中关村东路 (you'll understand when you see them). The sign on the shop says 拉面/拉洲, and it is actually on the corner of a side street food of nice little places to eat. This restaurant is a great place to ask for 串 (don't forget the Beijing 儿!) and they also do very nice grilled bread, 烤饅 *kao nang*. In the summer, they have tables outside and if you're well-protected against mosquitoes, this is a great place to eat.
- A great **vegetarian** restaurant is located in a very unsuspecting place round the back of the TusPark commercial development. It's called **Tianchu Miaoxiang** restaurant, 1F, Chuangye Building, Tsinghua Science Park. Approaching from Chengfulu, you have to walk past the Google headquarters, and then it is on the left-hand of the lawn. It's not too much pricier than regular restaurants, and the quality of the food is excellent for meat-eaters and vegetarians alike.
- Somewhere nice for something a bit different is a small Korean restaurant found next to the 'Green Tree' shop; despite being in both Korean and Chinese, the menu is practically incomprehensible but they do good soupy noodles with plenty in the bowl, and a nice tonkatsu-style curry. It's not too obvious from the street because it's underground, but the doorway is signed and then you go downstairs.
- A good place for sushi is **Isshin** (一心). This is tucked away round the back of the Tous Les Jours building. Alternatively, the sushi place on the ground floor of the Lotus centre does good sushi with a bit less atmosphere.

Western style food

Beijing, like any other city, has the usual McDonalds, KFC and Pizza Hut for those fast-food fixes, all of which can be found in 五道口. Other, slightly less greasy, places to go when you've had enough of noodles include...

- **Bridge Cafe:** Open 24 hours a day, with free Wifi and good breakfast deals (pancakes are excellent), also does salads, sandwiches, pasta etc but definitely one of the pricier places to get your western food fix.
- **Lush:** Also open 24/7, they do lunch deals and serve burgers and cocktails in the evening. The banana yoghurt here is amazing.
- **La Bamba:** Dark and smoky but cheap. This café is found above **Propaganda**, and offers a different deal every day of the week- Wednesday 10 元 sandwiches, Friday 10 元 burgers, etc.
- **Helen's Café:** Definitely worth a visit- good value pizza, pasta, and sandwiches (plus fresh-baked apple pie!). Also a nice place for drinks in the evening, especially if you get a table outside. Much cheaper than the above two places, with friendly staff and daily meal deals.

These four places are found in the centre of *Wudaokou*, along the *Huaqingjiayuan* block. Helen's is a little further down than the other two (past the side entrance for *Dongshengyuan*).

- Another good place for pizza is **Red House**, just on the corner of 王庄路 and visible from 成府路, which also does cheap drinks in the evening.
- Also worth a mention is the **Tous Les Jours** bakery, which offers some slightly odd pastries, but their baguettes are nom.
- The supermarket in the Lotus Centre has a fairly average supply of Western foods, cereal and chocolate but you can go a little further afield to Carrefour supermarket in *Zhongguancun*, which sells bread, cheese, pasta etc.
- For a Western-Chinese "fusion", try **Element Fresh** in The Village, *Sanlitun*. The lamb here is unbelievably good. And the smoothies are also amazing.

Beijing Roast Duck

北京烤鸭 – has to be done. A great place to experience this is the 大董烤鸭店 – there are three branches in Beijing but the one we tried was in the *Chao Yang* district. (Find it in the Lonely Planet). Not cheap at roughly 100 元 per person, but totally worth it. The vegetables here are AMAZING and they usually give free ice cream and lychees for dessert too. It gets extremely busy so unless you want to queue for hours/not get in, reserve in advance. They'll probably only have slots left for earlier in the evening, up to 6pmish.

Korean BBQ

Again, another must-try in Beijing.

- Most local/convenient is a restaurant on one of the floors within the Lion King building. A little expensive, but very nice, order combo platters and they cook the meat right in front of you.
- Another great place is found down 王庄路– walk down the road (it's at least a ten minute walk) until you come to a Korean BBQ restaurant on the right side of the road, next to a bar called Peppers. Order meats and vegetables off the menu and then cook it yourself on the grills in front of you.
- The U-Centre has another very average place with very average prices.

Street food

Beijing street food is delicious, varied, and cheap; aim to try out as much of it as possible!

- **MUST TRY:** 包子. Please do not leave Beijing without having eaten *baozi*! They are 2.5 元 maximum, come in loads of different flavours and are super-filling. There are loads of stalls about – we found a great *baozi* place on 成府路, about halfway between 五道口 and 北大 and next to a hairdressers called 'Eskimo Hair' (I know.) This stall also sells 烧麦 (*shāomài*) - little addictive bundles of sticky rice- 4 for 3 元.
- Another handy snack/breakfast to grab on the way to class is 油条, long chewy dough sticks, best enjoyed with soymilk 豆浆. Yum! Also found along 成府路.
- You'll probably see some stalls selling a 1.5 元 wrap with egg, salad, meat and chilli in it. Tastes better than it sounds... :)

- As the weather gets warmer more and more stalls will appear selling sticks of grilled meat, 串, you can ask for spicy, '辣' (là) or not spicy, '不辣'.
- Lots of the little stalls selling drinks will also sell little clay pots of yogurt and honey. Tasty, but watch out, the proprietors might expect you to hang about to finish your drink so you can return the clay pots.
- If you can, try to get hold of some 奶茶. There are various forms available but its best manifestation is when served in a plastic sealed cup with a straw, and 珍珠 in the bottom. In the winter, you can get it cold and in the summer with ice in it. After having drunk this elsewhere in China, we were a little disappointed not to see it more readily available in Beijing BUT in the summer, places around the city start to crop up. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.
- It's Time To (鲜果时间). Despite the silly name, this chain offers really good cooling drinks and milkshakes which are well worth checking out in the summer months. There is one on the southern side of Chengfulu just by Huaqing Jiayuan, one by the south exit of the Wudaokou subway, and another on the basement floor of the U-Center.
- 臭豆腐... you'll smell it before you can see it... give it a taste if you dare...

Places that Deliver (Lazy Food)

All the fast-food places deliver 24/7 (a guilty McDonalds breakfast arrives in less than 20 minutes...) and their numbers are available online. They are all pay on delivery.

Some of the other popular places that deliver include:

- **Pyro's Pizza:** Good pizza, try the mozza sticks and the cheese bread sticks. The chicken wings are mediocre. Menu on website:
<http://www.lushbeijing.com/pyro/index.htm>
(010) 8286 6240
- **Pie House:** With a near irresistible website, the Pie House offers American-style pies with amazing flavours and great ingredients. They're pretty expensive but definitely worth it, two favourites are key lime and pumpkin. You need to order at least 5 hours in advance; an adorable granny will then deliver to your building and screech "我有你的 PIE" through the intercom.
<http://www.piehouse.com.cn/>
010-51664464
- **Tonkatsu & Curry Rice 双马餐厅 (shuāng mǎ cān tīng):** Cheap and somewhat addictive curry. One sauce fits all. Try the banana yoghurt. It's situated just past KFC, and you should be able to retrieve a delivery service number from a menu or a flyer.

Must-try foods

- 北京烤鸭 běijīng kǎoyā Beijing Roast Duck. Essential.
- 宫保鸡丁 gōngbǎo jīdīng Hot and spicy chicken with peanuts
- 干煸豆角 gānbīāndòujiǎo Twice fried string beans with chilli.

- 红烧茄子 hóngshāo qiézi Stir-fried aubergine
- 大白菜 dà báicài Stir-fried cabbage, with vinegar (醋 cù) or garlic 蒜 (suàn)
- 鸡蛋炒米饭 jīdàn chǎo mǐfàn egg-fried rice
- 羊肉串儿 yángròu chuànr lamb kebabs

Special Dining Outside of Wudaokou

Fine Dining: Chinese

Made in China 长安

Wangfujing/Dongdan 王府井/东单

1/F, Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1 Dongchang'an Jie, Dongcheng District

东城区东长安街 1 号东方广场北京东方君悦大酒店 1 层

Dongdan L1 A

8518 1234 ext 6024

Contemporary Northeastern, offers a great 烤鸭, Perennial Reader's Favourite Chinese restaurant for The Beijinger, **reservation required 200+pp**

Da Dong Roast Duck 北京大董烤鸭店

1. 5/F, Jinbao Dasha, Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

东城区金宝街金宝大厦 5 层 Dengshikou L5 8522 1234

2. 1-2/F, Nanxincang International Plaza, 22A Dongsishitiao, Dongcheng District

东城区东四十条甲 22 号南新仓国际大厦 1~2 楼(立交桥西南角)

Dongsi Shitiao L2 5169 0329

3. 3 Tuanjiehu Beikou, Dongsanhuan Lu (southeast corner of Changhong Qiao)

朝阳区团结湖北口 3 号楼东三环路(长虹桥东南角) Tuanjiehu L10

6582 2892/4003

Winner of Beijinger's Best Chinese; **reservation required 120-200pp**

Duck de Chine 全鸭季

1949 – The Hidden City, Courtyard 4, Gongti Beilu (opposite the south gate of Pacific Century

Place Mall), Sanlitun, **Chaoyang** District 朝阳区工体北路 4 号院 (太平洋百货南门对面)

Tuanjiehu L10 C

6501 8881

Peking Duck, **reservation required 200+ pp**

Fine Dining: International

Capital M

3/F, 2 Qianmen Pedestrian Street, www.capital-m-beijing.com

前门步行街 2 号 3 层

Reservations can be made online 6702 2727

Overlooks Tiananmen, contemporary world fusion, **reservation required 400+pp**

Temple

23 Shatan Beijie (off Wusi Dajie), **Dongcheng**

东城区 沙滩北街 23 号 (五四大街向北)

<http://www.temple-restaurant.com/> 8400 2232

High-end fine dining, Winner of The Beijinger's Best Newcomer for 2012, **reservation required**

Vegetarian: Chinese

Pure Lotus 净心莲

Tongguang Bldg, 12 Nongzhanguan Nanlu, **Chaoyang** District

朝阳区农展馆南路 12 号(通广大厦内)

Tuanjiehu **L10 B**

6592 3627, 8703 6669

Famous mock meats and nice setting, **120-200 pp**

Lily/Baihe Courtyard 百合素食

23A Caoyuan Hutong, **Dongzhimennei** Beixiaojie, Dongcheng

Beixinqiao or Dongzhimen **L2/13**

6405 2082

Chilled out hutong setting, **50-80 pp**

The Veggie Table 吃素的

19 Wudaoying Hutong, **Yonghegong**

6446 2073

First ever vegan in Beijing, **50-100pp**

Chinese regional and speciality

Yunnan

Haney Restaurant 哈尼个旧云南餐吧

107 Baochao Hutong, **Gulou Dongdajie**

东城区鼓楼东大街宝钞胡同 107 号

6401 3318

50-100pp

Middle 8th 中八楼

R17, Zhongguancun Pedestrian Mall, 15 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian District

海淀区中关村大街 15 号中关村广场步行街 R17

Walkable from the **S or E gate of PKU**

Affordable Yunnan, **50-80pp**

Dali Courtyard 大里院子

67 Xiaojingchang Hutong, **Gulou Dongdajie**

东城区鼓楼东大街小经厂胡同 67 号

8404 1430

Renowned décor, particularly stunning outdoor terrace, **reservation required**, **120-200pp**

Beijing

Fangshan Restaurant 仿膳餐厅

1 Wenjin jie, on **Beihai Park's** Qionghua Island (It's the only big island)

Dishes created for Dowager Cixi and the Qing court (very interesting), no idea of price

<http://www.kinaballoo.com/bh9.html>, can't find phone number; a long walk from public transport

Beijing Palace 北京宫正味大酒楼

130 **Chaoyangmen** Neidajie, Dongcheng District

东城区朝阳门内大街 130 号

Chaoyangmen **L2**

6523 6320

True 'old Beijing' cuisine, **80-120 pp**

Duck de Chine 全鸭季

1949 – The Hidden City, Courtyard 4, Gongti Beilu (opposite the south gate of Pacific Century Place Mall), Sanlitun, **Chaoyang** District 朝阳区工体北路 4 号院 (太平洋百货南门对面)

Tuanjiehu **L10 C**

6501 8881

Famous Peking Duck, **200+** pp

Huajia Yiyuan 花甲怡园

Dongzhimennei and Gui Jie 东直门内簋街

235 Dongzhimennei Dajie, **Dongcheng** District

东城区东直门内大街 235

Beixinqiao **L5 B**

6405 1908

Beijing/Homestyle contemporary Chinese, lovely décor and hutong garden, consistently a Best Restaurant contender on The Beijinger, **100-200pp**

Najia Xiaoguan 那家小馆

Shijingshan 石景山

1 Yikesong (south of **Botanical Gardens** crossroad), Fragrant Hills, Haidian District

海淀区香山一棵松 29 号(植物园十字路口南)

8259 8588

Manchurian Beijing cuisine, one of The Beijinger's favourites.

80-150pp

Or

Yonganli / Silk Market 永安里秀水街

10 Yonganli (south of the LG Twin Towers, west of 119 Middle School), Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District

朝阳区建国门外大街永安里 10 号(双子座大厦南侧, 119 中学西侧)

6567 3663, 6568 6553

Southern

No Name Restaurant 无名云南餐吧

Houhai Yandai Xiejie Di'anmen 后海烟袋斜街地安门

1 Dajinsi Hutong, Xicheng District

西城区大金丝胡同 1 号

Contemporary southern Chinese, hip, rooftop/outdoor dining, **80-120pp**

Speciality Northern

Made in China 长安

Wangfujing/Dongdan 王府井/东单

1/F, Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1 Dongchang'an Jie, Dongcheng District

东城区东长安街 1 号东方广场北京东方君悦大酒店 1 层

Dongdan **L1 A**

8518 1234 ext 6024

Contemporary, offers a great 烤鸭, Perennial Reader's Favourite Chinese restaurant for The Beijinger (**reservation recommended!**), **200+pp**

Xinjiang Islam Restaurant (Provincial Government Restaurant) 新疆伊斯兰饭庄

Xizhimen 西直门

Xinjiang Provincial Government Office, 7 Sanlihe Lu, Xicheng District

西城区三里河路 7 号

Beijing Zoo L4 D, though I reckon you could get there on the 319

The Local BLCU Muslim Canteen is, however, an excellent alternative that is walkable from home.

50-80per person

Non-Chinese Asian

Purple Haze 紫苏

Dongsi and Dengshikou 东四灯饰口

1, Dongsi Liutiao (east exit), **Dongcheng** District

东城区东四六条 1

Dongsi Shitiao **L2 D**

6501 9345

Acclaimed Thai, Live Jazz on Wednesdays, **80-120pp**

or

Sanlitun 三里屯

Opposite the north gate of the **Workers' Stadium** (in the small alley behind the ICBC Bank),

Chaoyang District

朝阳区工体北门对面胡同工商银行后

Dongsi Shitiao L2 B

6413 0899, 8774 6387

50-80pp

Susu 苏苏会

Dongsi and Dengshikou 东四灯饰口

10 Qianliang Hutong Xixiang, **Dongcheng** District

东城区钱粮胡同西巷 10

Dongsi L5 A

8400 2699

Vietnamese, Gorgeous and famed courtyard hutong setting, **80-120pp**

Le Little Saigon 西贡在巴黎

Gulou / Beiluoguxiang / Jiugulou Dajie 鼓楼北锣鼓巷旧鼓楼大街

141 Jiugulou Dajie, Dongcheng District

东城区旧鼓楼大街 141 号

Gulou

6401 8465

Whimsical French-Vietnamese in the hutongs, **50-80pp**

Beijing - Nightlife

Clubbing

Clubbing in Beijing can be quite a surreal experience. It is rather different from clubbing in Oxford, and there is lots of fun to be had. The clubbing scene is fairly fast-evolving, so keep your ear to the ground for new places to go – guides such as *Time Out* and *The Beijinger* can be helpful for this and are available free in many of the cafes around Wudaokou such as The Bridge, Lush and La Bamba. In general, you will find a range of places very different in style - some are much more expensive than others, but things can be done cheaply. Many clubs have special offers on drinks or entry on various nights, such as the infamous 'ladies night' where girls can get free drinks and/or free entry. These are good fun, but watch out as ladies night can also attract some fairly creepy men...

五道口: Keeping it local

- **PROPAGANDA**- known to some as the Clems of Beijing, has to be tried at least once. Ladies night is Wednesday, 30 元 entry for girls and 70 元 entry for guys then unlimited drinks at the bar for all. Good music and sweaty dancing.

- **La Bamba** – bar just above Propaganda, does drink deals – the earlier you go the cheaper (50p tequila shots anyone?) a good place to start off a night out. (Also does food: sandwiches, burgers, fries etc. See *Food* section.)
- **Sensation**- newly opened club just next to Propaganda, and is by all intents and purposes an exact replica of it. It remains to be seen whether this will sink or swim in the face of the original's formidable reputation... The night to go however is Thursday, when entry includes a voucher for 5 free drinks (for girls).
- **Wu**- another new Propaganda. Located under the U-center, just past Wudaokou station. Cheap drinks and good music. Definitely a must try!
- **Helen's**- located a short distance past Propaganda and La Bamba, this place is another great student hangout. It has some great drinks deals such as various different 'drink buckets' and just generally good value for money! Helen's also does food such as burgers, pizzas, pasta etc, but beware that the service can be pretty slow-a good place to go if you're not in a rush. You're guaranteed to bump into some other Beida students here.

三里屯: *Sanlitun*, this district is full of bars and clubs. Some tried and tested include:

- **Kokomo bar** with roof terrace – this gets seriously popular in the warmer months and for good reason. It's a great place to enjoy a relaxed drink on a warm evening, and there's even occasional live music. Located in TongLi Studios.
- **Blu bar**– just a few floors below Kokomo, this is a popular choice for moving on, as things tend to really get going a little later on at around 12 or 1 am. Drum and bass, house and minimal tech music provide what could be a welcome break from the cheese that can otherwise seem overly prevalent...
- **Smugglers**- located, just off the main bar street, (next to the fish & chip shop!). A small, pub type venue which does amazingly cheap drinks. A great place to start the night off!
- **Q bar** – located on the top floor of the Eastern Inn Hotel towards the south end of Sanlitun Nanlu, this is another bar with a good rooftop terrace and 2 for 1 martinis on a Wednesday.
- **Mix and Vics** – these two clubs are located opposite each other and are rumoured to maintain a fierce rivalry. Vics is the more Western of the two, generally reckoned to be a good place for a dance; Mix is frequented by more local Chinese, and also has more authentically ineffective air conditioning. They are situated near the Worker's Stadium, and get a mention in the Lonely Planet so have a look for them there.
- **Migas**- located in Nali patios, Migas is a more sophisticated destination compared to a lot of the other bars in Sanlitun, this place is complete with its own roof terrace (with pods- but you do have to pay for these), which is great in the summer. But beware that drinks don't come cheap, so if it's somewhere to chill out with a cocktail, then this is the place to come.

后海: *Houhai* district is a great place for a wander and has multiple bars lined up along its two lakes. These all offer pretty much the same thing (some with the additional benefit of Live Music, ahem... which you may want to steer clear of). Prices listed on the menus can be rather expensive, but promoters outside will often offer some sort of deal, and they can also often be bartered down – the lowest we saw was Y10 for a beer and Y15 for a cocktail, but settle for whatever you're happy to pay. Try the small and grimy Huxley's for 12 shots for 100 元.

Other:

秀吧 **Xiu bar** – beautifully decorated with soft lights and an outdoor roof terrace with water features (less tacky than it sounds), this stylish spot is located on the sixth floor of the Park Hyatt hotel. Drinks aren't cheap, but Thursday is ladies night with vodka mixers free at the bar from 10pm to 1am. Live music adds to the atmosphere though can be of variable quality, and there is also a small dance floor. The queue can be nightmarish, so arriving pre-11pm is advisable.

KTV

Another absolute must-try in Beijing is 卡拉 OK!

- '**Lion King**' KTV bar is inside the same building as the Tous les Jours bakery in 五道口 (both have massive signs that are pretty unmissable). One of the cheapest, with a good song selection, and is conveniently situated.
- '**Melody**' is further into the centre of town, rather expensive but very swish inside. (Again, check your Lonely Planet guide.)
- If you're feeling up for a challenge, some shoddy Chinese and claims of being a poor student (and possibly some batting of eyelashes) can sometimes get you discounts.

Cinema

There is a cinema on 成府路 just opposite the U-Centre, but it is rather expensive with a rather small selection. A better option is Megabox in the 中关村 mall. Check the website for times and for special offers (with your 北大 student card you can get super cheap tickets (18 元 before 4pm, Tuesday – Thursday). Foreign films will usually be shown in their original language with Chinese subtitles.

<http://www.imegabox.com/index.html>

Music Festivals

Keep an eye out for these around April and May in Beijing – here are a few from 2011:

- MIDI festival – this ran over a long weekend in *Haidian*, so pretty convenient for *Wudaokou*. Tickets could be bought at the gate on a daily basis. A real mix of music from all over.
- INTRO festival – a one-day electro festival, located in the super-cool 798 Art District, great dancing.
- Strawberry Fields Festival

Beijing and Beyond

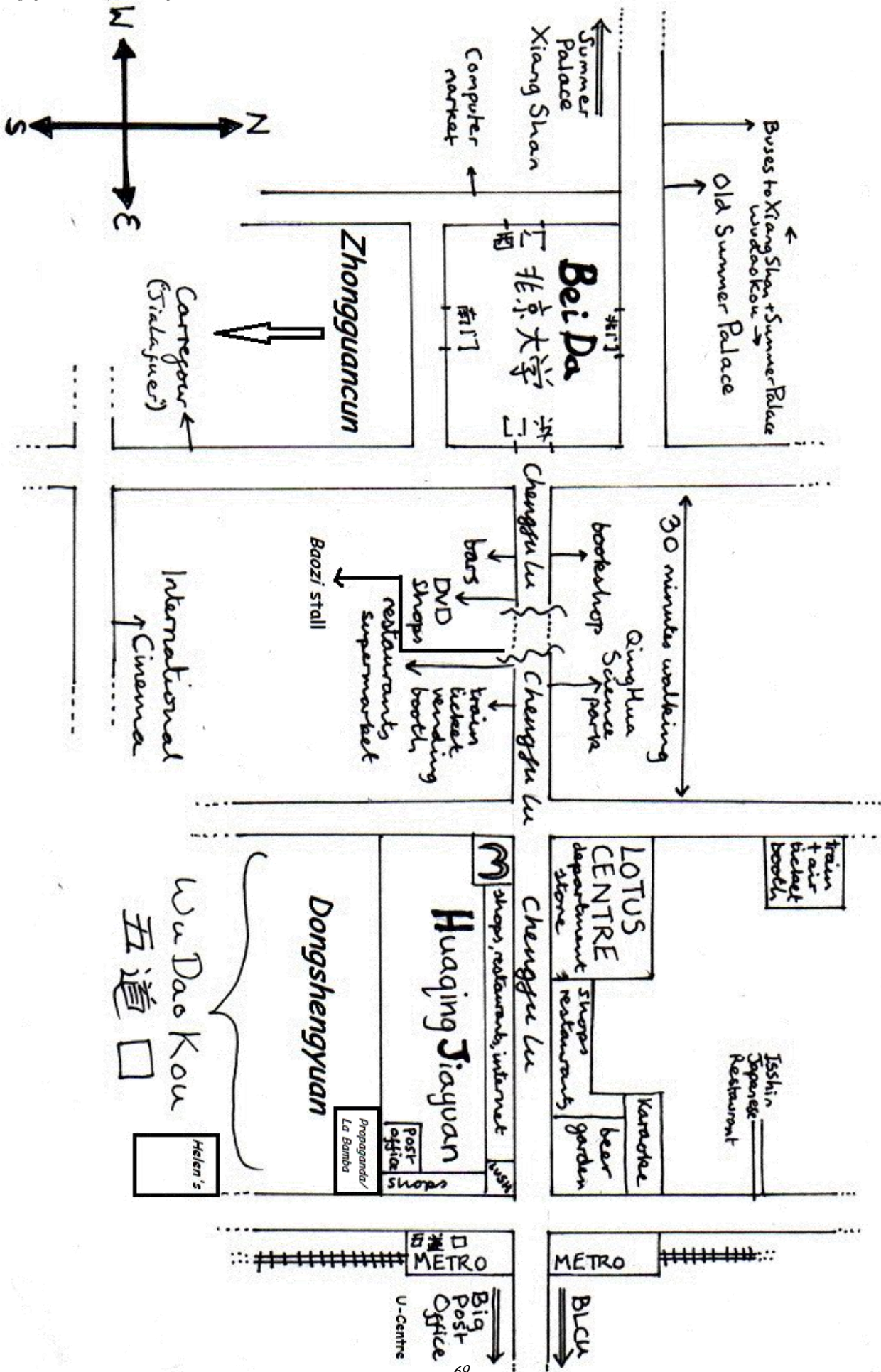
Once you've finished the Beida Course, the rest of the summer is a perfect opportunity for travel. The possibilities are virtually endless and you'll probably be best served by flicking through your travel guides, by searching on Wiki or by chatting to people. One thing you'll realise is that your opinion of a place probably won't match other people's, so take all the information you read with a pinch of salt (including the stuff in here!). Stay safe and enjoy your travels.



Incidentally...

A map of the area around Beida can be found at the back. Places seem to come and go in a flash in Beijing, but it should give you a rough idea of where things are. Hopefully this guide was in some way useful to you (if only as reading material on the plane) but if you've discovered that anything is inaccurate then please delete, add and edit away.

Have an amazing time in China!



Beijing Subway

