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CITY LANDING GUIDES

BEIJING



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The University of Auckland and Kea, an organisation supporting New Zealanders living overseas, have combined forces to provide you with this City Landing Guide. It is packed with insider knowledge essential to know before you take flight.

With its rich cultural atmosphere, opulent palaces and seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, Beijing is an awe-inspiring city to visit and live. There's more than 3,000 years of history waiting to be explored by travellers who want to step outside their comfort zone.



Key industries

- Beijing's 798 Art District, or Qi jiu ba, is renowned for its fantastic art scene. Housed in old military factories, it has become a popular place for radical artists to create their work.
- Zhongguancun is often referred to as China's Silicon Valley, with information technology and biotechnology on the rise in this area. Many world-renowned technology companies have built their Chinese headquarters and research centres here including Google, Sony and IBM.
- Beijing is the political centre of the country and regularly has international summits and government meetings, particularly in the Xicheng District, which is the base of Zhongnanhai, the central headquarters for the Communist Party of China and the State Council of China.
- Beijing also has a strong educational sector, with 91 universities and tertiary institutions to choose from, including the prestigious Tsinghua University and Peking University. Beijing is also known as the cultural centre of the country thanks to a history dating back more than 3000 years and being home to more than 7000 cultural relics and historic sites.



Insider hints

- Go to the local police station within 24 hours of your arrival to apply for your temporary residence registration. Failure to do so may result in a fine and a negative record. You will need a range of supporting documents to do this,
- including your passport, a copy of your visa and a health certificate. However, check the requirements closely well before arriving in China.
- If you are looking for a cosmopolitan neighbourhood then Chaoyang is the place to be, especially Sanlitun, where there is a great mix of fine dining, food trucks, nightlife and shopping.
- A green light on the pedestrian crossing doesn't mean it's safe to cross the street. Vehicles making a right turn are not required to wait for the red light and drivers in Beijing rarely give way to pedestrians. The zebra crossings are mostly for decoration – there's a high chance that no one will stop for you. The safest way to cross is to follow the pedestrian crowd and squeeze in between them.
- Credit cards don't work well in Beijing and most restaurants and shops will reject them. You will need cash, WeChat and Alipay. It is best to have both apps because many businesses only accept payment from one of them. You can then pay for almost anything with a QR code – even your electricity.



- Don't worry about your phone battery running low because a lot of restaurants, cafes and public spaces have a mobile power supply (Charge Pal) for rent, payable with WeChat and Alipay.



Essential apps

WeChat or Tencent QQ

Popular messaging platforms.

Alipay

Mobile payments platform. Cash is being replaced by mobile payment options and credit cards are not widely accepted.

Pleco

Chinese dictionary. The premium version will even translate menus.

Astrill

Virtual Private Network (VPN) which enables users to get around China's highly effective firewall that blocks the likes of Facebook, Google and a range of other western websites.



Know before you go

Visas

China doesn't offer a visa on arrival service, so before you go, you'll need to arrange your visa well in advance. Due to strict requirements you should check your visa category with the Chinese embassy or consular office to ensure you apply for the right one.

Employment

Before you sign on the dotted line make sure you have done your homework. While most New Zealanders enjoy their experience, some have reported arriving under contract with promises of generous salaries and bonuses which never came to fruition.

Cost of Living

While the cost of living in Beijing is around half that of London or New York, the average incomes are only a third of the Big Apple. Expect to pay around NZ\$2,800-\$3,000 a month for a furnished 85sqm one-bedroom apartment in a nice area of Beijing. For those who don't mind a commute, small one-bedroom unfurnished apartments outside the city can be rented for around NZ\$1,000 a month.



Where do Kiwis flock to?

Alumni networking events are hosted by the University of Auckland across the world. Be sure to keep your contact details up to date so we can notify you of upcoming networking opportunities in your city.

The University also has an international network of Volunteer Alumni Coordinators (VACs) who organise informal events and provide advice for alumni who are new to the area.

To update your details go to alumni.auckland.ac.nz/update and to find your local VAC contact go to alumni.auckland.ac.nz/networks

Checking out Kea's website, keanewzealand.com, is another excellent way to connect with fellow Kiwis. For events, job listings, business networks and more, Kea supports a prospering community around the globe.



Top tips

Don't forget that China has a BYO toilet paper policy, so keep some handy when you are travelling.

Many hospitals demand payment before treatment, so ensure you have sufficient funds in case of emergency – especially since not all international medical insurances are accepted.



Advice from local alumni

“Head to the China Art Museum (Zhongguo mei shu guan). This museum gathers a range of Chinese arts, including contemporary arts. The location is close to the centre of the city. The nearby places also worth a visit include Nan lu gu xiang (Beijing Hutong Street) and Wang Fu Jing.”

– Amina

“The Forbidden City is a symbolic place for Chinese history – it’s forbidden not to visit!”

– Simon

“I recommend a visit to the entrepreneurship museum, located in Zhongguancun’s innovation hub. You can feel the creativity and passion for business.”

– Dawei

“Visit the Temple of Heaven, it’s beautiful and not as crowded as other tourist spots.”

– Tina

“Xi He Ya Ju is my favourite place to eat. It’s located in a traditional Chinese courtyard and has tasty Beijing duck for a reasonable price.”

– Wei

“The public transportation system is easy, cheap and quicker than a taxi. Get a subway map as soon as you arrive.”

– Guoying



Instagrammable locations

- Summer Palace
- The Place
- Jingshan Park
- Gubei Water Town
- Longqing Gorge



Please note the information in this guide is intended as general information only.