

中国

**SAC Unofficial Guidebook
2024**

**Richard U. Light Fellowship
Yale University**

Note from LF Team:

Hello! I'm glad to see that you are all checking this out. Please note that we are still working on updating this as we send more students back to China after the re-opening of post-pandemic borders. We could use your help in updating this, so when you come back or while you're there, please feel free to send us revisions or note them down and join the SAC's efforts to help future students after you get back!

Letter From the Previous Editors

Congratulations on being awarded the Light Fellowship! An amazing adventure awaits you in China; you will learn and experience more than you could ever imagine. From standing atop the Great Wall to having your first conversation with a real local friend, each experience will be new and exciting in its own way.

As you prepare for your summer abroad, we hope that the tips provided in the guidebook below will help you on your journey. China is a large and foreign country, and any reading you can do beforehand will only help you to get the most out of your experience. In this book, we have compiled the advice and experiences of many different Light fellows over the past years -- their recommendations are sure to be of value to your experience.

So go forward with an open mind and a willingness to take in all that awaits you. And read carefully! Many tips below that may seem trivial now will be life-savers when you are actually living in China.

Best wishes for your travels!

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PLEASE NOTE: There are certain risks assumed when using the resources provided in this Unofficial Guidebook. The Light Fellowship Program provides this resource as a convenience, does not vet any of the suggestions, and makes no representations as to the qualifications of any of the recommendations or resources provided. Students must perform their own due diligence and use their own discretion and judgment when making decisions about housing, visas, health and safety etc. Students are also encouraged to ask their language programs directly about additional resources. Neither Yale University nor

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SECTION I

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

A. Packing and Flying

Packing Checklist

Essentials

- Passport
- Cash (Renminbi)
- Debit card to withdraw cash
- Laptop
- USB flash-drive
- Computer / electronics chargers
- Adapter or converter for power outlets
- iPod touch or electronic dictionary (highly recommend Pleco app)
- 1 pencil, 1 pen (buy the rest there)
- Backpack
- Smaller bag for day trips
- Sturdy, comfortable clothes
- 1 waterproof jacket
- Umbrella
- Water Bottle
- Sunscreen/bug spray
- Deodorant/Toothpaste/lotions
- Tums/Pepto Bismol or equivalent
- Band-Aids/Neosporin
- Allergy medicine, cough meds, prescription meds etc.
- Small Gifts
- Camera

Supplementary

- Sunglasses
- Guide book (Lonely Planet has good maps/advice)
- Nutritional supplements (if you're not a meat eater)
- Chinese pocket dictionary (if you don't have an electronic one)
- Two sets of nicer clothes (a tie, nice dress, etc.)
- Tampons (harder to find in China)

Better without

Paper and bulky school supplies

Towels, sheets, pillows

Shampoo/conditioner (if you do not have specific requirements)

Detergent and bulky liquids

Note

Check airline weight limits for baggage, most flights originating in US have 50 lb limits, but others may vary.

Most toiletries and other necessary items can be bought at the Chinese equivalent of a superstore, but if you need a specific brand, buy it in America. Do bring small travel-size toiletries to last until you settle in and get to a store!

You can afford to pack lightly! Keep in mind that you will likely acquire souvenirs or clothes in China that might put you over the limit for the return trip. Try to “underpack” your suitcase for the trip there.

B. Health and Safety

Pre-departure Medical Issues

Medications

It is prudent to procure any drugs, vitamins, or other medications you will need in advance of your trip. You may find it difficult to acquire the appropriate drugs in China. Check the legality of your medication in China. Remember to bring the prescription documents along with your medication.

While in China

Prudence

Exercising prudence is vital to health. Proper attention to food, drink, and activities can prevent a number of accidents and illnesses. Immediate medical attention and English care may be harder to come by in many regions of China. Care should be exercised while hiking, traveling, or working out in hot weather. Excessive alcohol use is strongly discouraged. Illicit drug use is legally dangerous and could lead to far more than health related issues.

Hospitals

Many people survive their time in China with only minor stomach problems, but in case something worse strikes, you can consider one of Beijing's hospitals. If you are ever faced with something your OTC medications and cough syrup cannot handle, go to one of the places listed below. The clinic on your university campus, as well as most local Chinese hospitals, will be very crowded and will have doctors and nurses who speak only Chinese. For referrals, you can call International SOS before or during your time abroad at the numbers below.

If you are in dire need of treatment, it will probably be faster for you to grab a friend and hail a taxi rather than call for an ambulance. Ambulances in China generally respond much slower than ones in the United States and carry much less medical equipment. Please keep this information with you, in addition to your International SOS health insurance and travel assistance cards, and information describing any medical allergies you may have. Also, be sure to alert the administrators of your program, since they may have more updated information on the closest medical facility with English-speaking doctors.

Emergency/Local Contacts

1. Beijing International SOS Clinic

Suite 105, Wing 1, Kunsha Building 16 Xinyuanli, Chaoyang District Beijing 100027, China
Tel: +86 (0)10 6462 9112 / Emergency Hotline: 010-6462-9100

2. Beijing United Family Hospital and Clinics

2 Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang District Beijing 100016
Tel: +86 (10) 5927 7000/ Emergency Hotline: +86 (10) 5927 7120

3. International Medical Center (IMC)

(Formerly known as German-Sino_Lufthansa Center Offices)
Suite 106, 50 Liang Ma Qiao Rd, Chao Yang District, Beijing 100016
Tel: 010-6465-1561/2/3

5. Yale Center Beijing (YCB)

YCB is open to Light Fellows as a space to study during normal business hours. This is an excellent resource if you need to connect to Yale Secure (e.g. if you are experiencing issues with your VPN or Duo). Email yalecenterbeijing@yale.edu 24 hours in advance to stop by.

YCB hosts many lectures and events that are open to the public and could be a great way for you to meet local students. Subscribe to YCB's WeChat account @YaleCenterBJ to receive information about events.

Yale Center Beijing
36th Floor, Tower B, IFC Building
8 Jianguomenwai Avenue
Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

The Center is located directly across from the Jianguo Hotel on the south side of Jianguomenwai Avenue. The closest subway station is Yong'anli. View location on Baidu maps.

SECTION II

LIVING IN CHINA

A. General Information

Money

China is generally a cash based country so plan to carry around RMB and don't assume you will be able to use credit cards. Moreover, as of 2024, most people in

China use WeChat (a Chinese messaging, social media, and mobile payment app) to pay for everything. We highly recommend you set up WeChat pay in the app - you will find that most stores prefer WeChat payment, even more than cash! (You may need a Chinese phone number and/or bank account to access this.)

ATM card – The easiest way to change money in Beijing is to just use an ATM. Bank of China ATMs accept foreign ATM cards, and they are probably the most reliable. ATMs are convenient, but make sure you are using a reliable ATM. Bank of China ATMs are generally a safe choice. If you choose to use ATMs in China, do ask around for the location of a reliable one, and if you can help it, try to use the machines only during hours when the bank itself is open (just in case the machine does choose to eat your card). After you're done using the machine, always remember to press the button to get your card back out of the machine. Many machines have a 30 second timer, after which you will not be able to eject your card. Bank of America (and a few other banks) have an agreement with China Construction Bank (CCB) which allows you to use CCB ATMs without paying a transaction fee!

US Cash – US currency will generally not be accepted by stores (do not plan to use US money), but the Bank of China will exchange the cash for you if you choose to bring US currency. Although you will typically get a worse exchange rate, you may want to get some Chinese RMB in the US before you leave. This way, you can get through the first day or two in China, which are always pretty stressful.

Credit cards – Generally speaking, credit cards are not accepted except in high end restaurants and potentially Western influenced neighborhoods.

Daily Needs

Bathrooms

Most bathrooms in China are squat toilets, but don't worry, you will quickly adjust to this. Many bathrooms do not have toilet paper, so you may find it useful to carry some around. Additionally, soap is often not found in bathrooms so you may also want to carry around hand sanitizer (it may be smart to do this anyway). Public bathrooms in China are an experience and at times can be unsanitary/smelly, but it's not as bad as it seems and you get used to it quickly!

Laundry

Washing laundry in China is quite different from in the U.S. Try not to bring all your favorite outfits, especially if they are delicate or hold sentimental value. Most programs will have laundry machines inside the residential building. Laundry detergent can be readily purchased at a grocery store, but washing machines can be a more difficult mystery to unravel. Be careful of mixing hot water cycles and red clothing; also be aware that washing machines will probably not have a delicate cycle, and will treat clothing much more harshly than you are accustomed to (some might shrink). When in doubt, ask someone who has used your washing machine before.

Many people in China find it easier to hand wash their clothing because it is more gentle and can potentially be easier. You may want to see if this is a better option. You might consider purchasing a basin and some soap for simple hand washing. Even if you have never hand-washed clothes before, you might find it necessary for some less sturdy clothing or at times when all the washing machines are being used.

Most people in China do not use dryers. Clothes have to be removed from the washing machine and then hung out to dry. Be prepared to find places to hang your clothing in your room or buy a drying rack (both are doable).

Sending / receiving packages

If you wish to send or receive packages, ask your program leader to direct you to the nearest post office. They may ask you what is inside (documents, souvenirs, etc.), so you may want to look up how to basically describe the package. Make sure your package doesn't contain food or liquids since they won't ship those! Overall, sending packages back to the U.S. can be very expensive and most people don't do it unless it is an emergency.

Electronics

Electric outlets in the United States supply 110V electricity, but in China they supply 220V. Remember this when packing appliances such as hair dryers, alarm clocks, whatever. Most laptops and cell phone chargers are equipped to take both voltages, but most other appliances require a transformer. A transformer is different than an adapter: a transformer will actually step down the voltage from 220V to 110V; an adapter will generally only ensure that the plug fits in the outlet. In general, it will be easiest if you avoid transformers entirely and instead purchase new any cheap electrical items that you might need while in China.

In any case, you should have an adapter and perhaps a surge protector. This is especially important for laptops, camera, and cell phone chargers. You can buy the adapter in either the United States or in China (psst, it's cheaper over there and you can make sure you are buying the right product—but if you do wait to purchase these items in China, don't forget about the voltage difference and ruin your electronics on your first jetlagged day). Note that outlets in China are often not grounded, though most can accommodate the third prong.

The Internet

Chinese Internet is censored. For example, you won't have easy access to Facebook, blogging sites, google, Youtube, and other sites. The best way to get around the censorship is by using **Yale Virtual Private Network (VPN)**. This can be downloaded from the Yale software download website for smartphones and laptops. **Do it before you get there!**

Food and Drink

Useful terms

烤 kǎo – roast (Běijīng kǎoyā = Beijing roast duck)

炒 chǎo – fried (chǎofàn = fried rice)

烧 shāo – steamed/baked (shāomài = steamed dumpling)

鸡肉 jīròu – chicken

牛肉 niúròu – beef

猪肉 zhūròu – pork

羊肉 yáng ròu – lamb

鸡蛋 jīdàn – chicken egg

西红柿 xīhóngshì – tomato

茄子 qiézi – eggplant

白菜 báicài – bok choy (Chinese cabbage)

青菜 qīngcài – greens

蔬菜 shūcài – vegetables*

米饭 mǐfàn – white rice

面条 miàntiáo – noodles

包子 bāozi – steamed stuffed bun

饺子 jiǎozi - dumpling

串 chuàn – meat kebab

煎饼 jiānbǐng – stuffed pancake

汉堡包 hànǎobāo – hamburger

薯条 shǔtiáo – french fries

番茄酱 fānqiéjiàng – ketchup

可乐 kělè – Coke

雪碧 xuěbì – Sprite

百事可乐 bǎishìkělè - Pepsi

***If you are a vegetarian:**

我是吃素的。

Wǒ shì chī sù de.

I am a vegetarian.

我不吃肉, 只吃蔬菜。

Wǒ bù chī ròu, zhǐ chī shū cài.

I don't eat meat, only vegetables.

Restaurant etiquette

Calling for a fúwùyuán: **Don't be afraid to yell out "Fuwuyuan!"** to get a server's attention. It's not considered rude, and may be the only way you'll get service in many places (it usually is).

Figuring out the menu: When in doubt, look at the pictures. Most restaurants have picture menus (照片菜单 zhàopiàn càidān). Otherwise, use the terms provided earlier in the section to search out familiar characters. Sometimes, asking the waiters and waitresses for suggestions works.

Do not tip: There is no tip culture in China. Waiters will usually not accept tips unless they are working at very Western restaurants.

B. Mindset

General Advice

As a Light Fellow preparing to go abroad, you've already heard about "the W curve" for adjusting to life in a new country. As Light Fellowship alumni, we'll tell you that it's true! But even if your transition is not smooth one hundred percent of the time, there are definitely some attitudes and practices that you can adopt to make the adjustment easier.

1. Prepare to be flexible, in ways both large and small. Bad weather or traffic jams can unravel even the most well thought-out plans, and if you're stressed or homesick, something minor like not being able to find the kind of shampoo you like might unravel you more than you would think. The ability to adapt might be your most important asset for getting the most out of your time.

2. Remember that you're going to be in China for a significant amount of time—during which you'll be engaging in intensive academics—and you should pace yourself. While you may be energetic and eager to do everything when you arrive, you don't need to know Beijing like the back of your hand by the end of your first week. Take the time to get sufficient sleep and become accustomed to the Chinese time zone and culture, so that you'll still be enthusiastic and eager to explore several weeks into your stay.

3. On the other hand, **do get out!** You are only in China for a set amount of time. Try to make the most of it. Your immediate reaction to a foreign environment might be to spend a lot of time talking with family and friends back home, or watching English language television. Try not to do these things excessively so you can immerse yourself into the new culture you will be living in. Going out into the city and talking to locals is an amazing experience that you should take advantage of. You will be spending a lot of time studying, but try to have fun and enjoy the experience. You want to still have fun! **Go explore!!**

SECTION III

BEIJING

A. Transportation

Getting In

For directions to get to your program, please refer to “Getting to the Program” under each specific program section.

Most of the programs arrange shuttle buses to pick you up at the airport (Beijing Capital) and take you directly to your program location. Confirm with your program beforehand to see if this is an option, and if so, what times the shuttles depart from the airport.

There are several other options if shuttles are not available. **Taxis** are the next most convenient way to leave the airport. Follow signs to the official taxi stop outside of the arrivals lobby; look for the man in uniform assisting passengers. **Do know your destination in Chinese.** If you have it in characters, so much the better. A cab ride from the airport costs ¥60-100 and takes about an hour. **Be careful!** Stationed in the arrivals lobby are a number of opportunists that might accost you to take their taxi. **Do NOT take these.** They charge up to ¥400 for a trip out of the airport, much more expensive than official taxis.

A cheaper, but more difficult option is to take the **subway** (地铁). The Airport Express line (机场线) takes you to Sanyuanqiao (line 10) or Dongzhimen (lines 2 and 13), where you can transfer lines and get to the station nearest your program. The Airport Express line costs ¥25, much more expensive than the rest of the Beijing subway system. The subway system as a whole is also quite complicated, so only use the subway to get to your program if you have no other options or if you are very familiar with Beijing already.

A few important notes: Have cash **before** arriving in China—exchange centers at airports charge expensive fees (up to 10 USD!), and cabs take nothing but cash. You may want to contact your bank several weeks before your departure to order RMB; many banks and money exchange centers outside China do not carry large amounts of RMB. Stock up on a few hundred kuai before you go. Once you arrive, you can exchange larger amounts at an ATM—exchange rates at banks like Bank of China and ICBC are standardized and much better than anywhere else within China or abroad.

Another caveat: In order to access the internet in the airport, you either need a Chinese number or to scan your passport in one of several information stations throughout the terminal. Don’t expect to get online before exiting into the arrivals lobby.

Getting Around

Walking – As you'll quickly realize, when you're walking in Beijing, the traffic rules and laws that Americans generally abide by are pretty much entirely ignored. Be extremely careful when crossing streets and understand that there is usually an entirely separate but equally busy and dangerous lane for bikes and three-wheeled vehicles. As far as directions go, Beijing is huge but relatively well organized. It's built on a cardinal axis—in other words, on a north-south east-west basis. That means that you're usually walking in one of four directions: north, south, east, or west. Know where on the map your program is and try to memorize a few landmarks. The Forbidden City is easiest since the entire city radiates from that center point.

Bicycle – Bike-sharing has become an extremely common and convenient way to get around the city. You can download apps from one of the various companies offering bike-shares, or access bike-sharing through Wechat (微信). Note that in order to access these services you will need a smartphone and an online method of payment, such as Wechat or Zhifubao, connected to a Chinese bank account. It is worth setting up Wechat pay and/or Zhifubao and a Chinese bank account as soon as you arrive so you can not only use bike-sharing, but also pay at most restaurants and stores and access services like 外卖 (food delivery) and online shopping.

Bus – The Beijing bus system is incredibly thorough; you can literally get anywhere. The only challenge is figuring out which bus goes where. If you are unfamiliar with the area you are going to, use the official website www.bjbus.com to plan your trip, or use Google Maps/百度地图/高德地图. If you plan on using the bus frequently, invest in a transportation card (available at subway stations) and save ¥0.60 every trip. This card works for subways as well, and it is convenient because you don't have to prepare 零钱 (loose change) each time for the fare. Sometimes, street names and stops can be confusing. Know where yours is and the one before and after. It'll make things much easier!

Subway – The Beijing subway system is extensive, clean, and convenient. For ¥3-7 per trip, you can go from one corner of the city to the other. The entire subway system is English-friendly, and the trains are very regular. Check www.bjsubway.com for train times; depending on where you are and what direction you are going, the subway can close any time between 10:30 and 11:30 PM. At closing, they will eject you from the train regardless of your location. Because the subways close after around 11:30PM, remember that when you go out you will most likely have to take a taxi or Didi home. Sometimes subway stops are a little out of the way: on ring roads or in the middle of nowhere. Know where you're going in relation to the subway stop: it's easy to get lost in a city like Beijing! Don't forget to give arrival some time—it takes an hour to get to Sanlitun from Wudaokou, for instance, and that only requires one subway line change.

Taxi – Taxis are ubiquitous around Beijing, but are often hard to find on Friday and Saturday nights. Typically speaking, taxi drivers know the major destinations in Beijing, but if you need to get to a particular location it helps to have a map on hand, and you should always have the location’s address. Make sure the meter is running when you get in. Taxi drivers generally do not accept tips. Enjoy becoming familiar with the infamous Beijing “errrr,” and try to engage your driver in conversation. It’s great practice. Make a habit of taking the receipt before you leave the cab - you’ll want to know which cab you were in when you wake up the next morning and realize you’re missing your keys/wallet/phone/friend. In most cabs make sure the meter is running while you are driving. There will be a standard starting base price when you get into a taxi. Normal base prices for taxis are ¥8, but during the night and popular hours starting fares for taxis will be around ¥14. A cab to Sanlitun will run you ¥50-80 from Wudaokou—and that’s about as far a distance as you can go in Beijing.

There is one important caveat with cabs, though. Very rarely, they **will try to scam you**. Don’t be scared; taxis in Beijing are for the most part 100% safe and all scams will be completely harmless to everything but your wallet. You probably won’t run into one that does try to scam you. BUT if you do, remember one trick. Every time you’re about to pay a cabbie, especially with ¥100 bills, check the serial number. The most typical trick is that they’ll change the bill without you noticing and return a fake to you, claiming the original was a fake. Tell them that, no, the serial number does not match, and they’ll almost surely accept the original. This happens (again, very occasionally) on Friday or Saturday nights, expecting you to be...less than sharp on your way home.

A competitive alternative to the taxi is China’s Uber equivalent, Didi (滴滴). We highly recommend Didi because you can type in the direct address and it’s way more convenient than standing by waiting for a taxi. Again, you will need some method of online payment to use Didi. Download the app and enter your payment information, and you will be all set. You can also use Didi service on the WeChat app.

Train – For traveling outside of Beijing, try taking a train if you have enough time. Getting a ticket can be a challenge – you have to wait until 6-10 days before your desired departure date for the office to release the tickets, and on that day you have to wait in line early in the morning at the local office to ensure you get a ticket before they all sell out. The best deal is a hard sleeper (6 per compartment), although the more roomy choice is a soft sleeper (4 per compartment). For hard sleepers, there will be a choice between the top, middle and bottom bunks. Top bunk is almost against the ceiling, so it can be very uncomfortable for taller people. Middle bunk is a good compromise. Bottom bunk is culturally accepted as the group seating area, so you will have strangers sitting at the foot of your bed. “Soft seat” and “hard seat” are also decent options for shorter train rides, with standing tickets selling for the same price as hard seats once the latter have run out. For more information, including schedules and connections with foreign rail systems, visit www.seat61.com.

B. Places to Go

Wudaokou

Wudaokou is located near many universities in Haidian district, and does a pretty good job of catering to the tastes of college students. If you ever are in the mood for some “authentic” western (or Korean) food, you’ll have a lot of options here. It’s also a center of nightlife and houses a variety of bars and clubs, with prices catered to college students. On any given Friday or Saturday night you’re more than likely to run into your fellow Yalies from any of the programs here. The center of Wudaokou is a big mall near the subway station. The basement is the grocery store and bubble tea shops. The 1st and 2nd floors are for men’s and women’s clothes, the 3rd floor is for electronics and other miscellaneous goods, and the 4th and 5th floors are primarily where you will find higher-end, but still reasonably priced, restaurants.

Sanlitun

Located in the heart of the Embassy area, Sanlitun has a very strong cosmopolitan feel. Though the restaurants are on the more expensive side as the area has more tourists, it probably has the best selection of non-Chinese food in the city. Home to a movie theatre and Apple Store, Sanlitun is known for its bar street. The more fanny packs and sock/sandle combinations you see in a given venue, the lower the quality and higher the prices everything in that venue will be. Look to the back bar street for some great kebabs and Uighur food. Sanlitun is also home to a number of high-end clubs that charge more than those in Wudaokou—try Elements or Vics for the best time.

Restaurants

老北京炸酱面 (lǎoběijīng zhájiàngmiàn) Located on Qianmen Dajie, this place is famous for old Beijing style Zhajiangmian. What you must try here though is their 印度饼 (yìndùbǐng), a naan-like bread that was brought to China during the Tang period by Indian merchants traveling on the Silk Road. Not quite like naan, but also not quite like Chinese bread, you will be pleasantly surprised!

全聚德 (quánjùdé) – The most famous Beijing Kaoya place in Beijing. There are many locations, but the original restaurant (founded in 19th century) is on Qianmen Dajie. Nearly every famous individual visiting China also visited this place, including Fidel Castro and Kim Jeong-Il. Funny story goes that a few years ago, Kim requested to rent out the original quánjùdé location for a day, only to be politely rejected by the manager. Service was particularly memorable here; in bathroom, a waitperson waits for you to finish and gives you wet towels to wipe your hands.

天福茗茶 (tiānfú míngchá) – A famous franchised tea vendor located throughout Beijing. Biggest locations are in Qiánméndàjiē and Wángfùjǐng. Their tea selections are huge, and quality is exceptional. Try some! Make sure you sit in the shop and act like you know what is going on, and the 服务员 will let you try sip of every single tea that you want. Get some 普洱茶(pǔěrchá) which is produced only in Yunnan province and is good for diet (risk free)! Their 茶饼(chábǐng) are delicious as well.

Parks and Scenery

鼓楼和钟楼 (Drum & Bell Tower) – Ancient timekeeping towers which stand directly north of the Forbidden City and Jingshen park along the vertical axis of Beijing.

北海公园 (Běihǎi Gōngyuán) – Arguably Beijing’s most beautiful park, Beihai features a tall island with the giant White Pagoda perched on top. One can also paddleboat around the lake or simply walk around and take in all the greenery. The north entrance is across the street from the south entrance of the Houhai area, which makes Houhai a convenient evening stop.

后海(Hòuhǎi) – Houhai Lake, located immediately south of the Drum & Bell Tower area, is beautiful day or night. It is packed with bars, restaurants, and vendors who charge exorbitant prices for their wares. Buying souvenirs around here is discouraged, but buying food or drinks is suggested. During the day paddleboats are available, and in the evenings, all the bars light up and put couches outside for patrons to relax.

圆明园 (Yuanmingyuan) — Located a convenient fifteen minute taxi ride from Wudaokou, Yuanmingyuan was once the summer palace of the Qing Dynasty. It was built by Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century, but after the Second Opium War, British and French soldiers raided it and burned it down, spiriting many of its treasures away to London and Paris. All that remains is the park grounds and a few pedestals where buildings once stood—palimpsests of the once great Qing Dynasty. The park is beautiful, framed by mountains, and a great escape from the city.

Cultural and Historic Sites

Changcheng (The Great Wall) – The major sections of the Great Wall in Beijing open to visitors are Badaling, Simatai, and Mutianyu. While Badaling is perhaps the most picturesque, it’s generally very crowded, so Simatai or Mutianyu might be a better option. It might be difficult to get to the Great Wall because it’s so far from the city, but it’s worth the trouble. Many of the study abroad programs in Beijing organize group trips to the Great Wall, so it should be easy enough to visit.

Yiheyuan (The Summer Palace) – Located in the northwest corner of the city, Yiheyuan was built in the Late Qing and therefore, is still in very good condition, despite some damage incurred during the Cultural Revolution. Old-style structures stretch around the

perimeter of Kunming Lake for a variety of political and religious purposes but mostly just for leisure.

Yonghegong (Lama Temple) – At the Yonghegong (雍和宫) subway stop. There are also several interesting places of historical and cultural importance. The namesake of the Yonghegong stop is Beijing's largest lamasery, and nearby is a famous hutong alleyway--between the Chinese and Tibetan style buildings, the religious art, and general historical significance, anyone studying in Beijing should pay a visit.

The Forbidden City – Now incorporated into Palace Museum, the Forbidden City has a lot to see, including imperial gardens, the former residences of Cixi and various emperors, and the place where the highest round of the imperial examinations were carried out. But the Forbidden City also has a number of art exhibits in addition to displays ranging in topic from Qing technological developments to courtesan life in the imperial palace.

The Temple of Heaven – Traditionally, the emperor would come here annually to pray to heaven and perform rites. The temple is located in Tiantan park, yet another relaxing park in Beijing where people go to partake in activities such as taijiquan, ballroom dancing, cards, dominos, Tibetan dance, fan dancing and a host of other activities. If you're lucky, a generous local might explain the game to you and let you have a try. Beijing also has a Temple of Earth, Temple of the Moon, and Temple of the Sun, each located in a different direction from the Forbidden City, but the Temple of Heaven is by far the most important.

Peking University and Tsinghua University – Besides being the leading universities in China, they are also important historic places in their own right, playing a prominent role in the May Fourth Movement and in Late Qing intellectual thought. Peking University is famous for Weiming Lake (未名 means “No name” or “not yet named,” which I understand sounds more poetic in Chinese) and also contains the Boya Pagoda and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology. Tsinghua is famous for its astronomical observatory and another lake, a lake described in prose by Zhu Ziqing in Hetang Yuese.

Ming and Qing Tombs – These are much farther away from the city and require a combination of subway and bus rides, but if you have time it makes a good Saturday or Sunday excursion. The Ming Tombs are bigger, and more frequently visited, but the Qing tombs should also be good. One should note, however, that many of the structures and tombs have been excavated, heavily restored, and nearly all of the important relics in the tombs have been cleared away and sent off to museums.

中华民族园 (Chinese Ethnic Culture Park) – This giant park has exhibits for all 56 of the nationally recognized minorities living in China. One can learn about the different dwellings and clothing found all over China, and even watch some traditional performances.

Beijing Urban Planning Exhibition Hall – Located at the southeast corner of Tiananmen Square, this hall features the development of Beijing from center of an empire to capital of a booming nation. One giant room has basically taken Google maps and placed a bird's eye view of the entire city on the floor.

C. Alcohol and Safety

Though Beijing is safer than most cities of its size, its relative security does not give you a right to do stupid things. It is a big city. The Yale Shuttle isn't waiting to pick you up and take you home. Common sense and moderation are critical.

Never go out alone, and never break off from your group when going out. Do not drink excessively. That 4 *kuai* bottle of bottom shelf *baijiu* may mean you can afford several, but does not mean you should drink several. At the end of the night, you still have to hail a cab home, and drivers are more likely to scam a group of inebriated foreigners who are tired and want to get home. Also, beware of watered-down or "fake" alcohol. Many clubs will sell this to make a bigger profit margin. If you are going to drink, do it safely and from a reliable source.

Be kind and sociable. Some foreigners in China do embody the creepy/arrogant foreigner stereotype. Try to lay that to rest.

SECTION IV

PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Princeton in Beijing

Getting to the Program

PIB program is conducted at Beijing Normal University (北京师范大学, also called 北师大), which is located in the Northwestern corner of Beijing. It is a key school in training teachers in China, and the school has in recent years expanded its research fields into other fields of academia as well. As one of the most prestigious institutions in the country, the campus is very famous, well-known nationwide, so if you get lost, you just have to say “北京师范大学” and you should be set.

Free PIB shuttle

If you are going to arrive in China on normal date as specified by PIB, make sure you sign up for the free airport shuttle that runs from the airport to the campus. Otherwise, the easiest way is to take taxi. From the airport to the campus, the fare should be 80-120 RMB. Ask the driver to drop you off at 北京师范大学 东门 (East Gate of Beijing Normal University).

Subway

If you are a brave soul, you may also consider taking subway to get to the campus. Take the airport express train, and transfer to Line 2 at 东直门 (dōngzhímén), take the train in 雍和宫 direction, and get off at 积水潭 (jīshuǐtán). From here, you just have to walk up north for about 15 minutes on 新街大口街 (xīnjiēdàkǒujiē), and you will arrive at the East Gate. You may also take a cab from 积水潭 station, and it should not cost more than 10 RMB. For general transportation purposes, the bus stop right outside of 东门 (East Gate) closest to the dorm is 铁狮子坟 (tiě shīzǐ fén). Getting off at the stop called 北京师范大学 will bring you to 南门 (South Gate), which is a bit farther away from the dorm but still very close.

Living Situation at PIB

PIB students are placed in the fanciest dorm that the university has to offer: 新松公寓 (xīnsōnggōngyù). Most students will have a roommate, who is most likely going to be from Princeton; in past years, Princeton students have comprised roughly 40% total students. Rooms are fully air-conditioned, and equipped with western toilet and shower facilities. Every day, 服务员 comes and cleans your room and changes your towel, one

small caveat being that they do not change hand towels, so wash your own if you are inclined. Students have expressed mixed opinions and feelings about the overall service, but generally, they are very nice. There are laundry washers and dryers on ground level at 新松公寓, but be cautious about their usage, as students have reported some issues with these facilities in the past, especially the dryer. Many students hand-wash their clothes and hang them up to dry. There is also a small kitchen — most people ignore this room, but it's a great opportunity to cook and chat with the 服务员。

Wi-fi at PiB (Info from Pre-Pandemic)

新松公寓 front desk offers a monthly wifi pass for 60 RMB that will allow you to connect to any on-campus connection; you will have to buy a new login key when the first month is over. Be sure to keep the login key somewhere safe or even better, take a picture of it. Unfortunately, you can only connect one device to your wifi account at a time, so don't be alarmed if you can't get online with your phone and computer simultaneously. Just log out of one device, and the wifi should work just fine. Because connecting to the Internet is a must for finding and completing daily assignments, it is important that you ensure a stable and working method.

Eating, Shopping, Exercising

Eating

There is a whole range of options out there. Of course, if you want to save money, the best option might be to explore cafeterias (the closest to 新松公寓 being the international student “canteen” 留学生食堂 just a minute walk away) or food carts at 北京师范大学 campus. About a five minute walk from 新松公寓 towards 西门 (west gate) is an unavoidable cluster of food stands and cafeterias. Selections from these food stands come in generous portions and are generally below 10 RMB, while the cafeteria allows you to choose from a large variety of dishes from a window and pay as you go. Although these places may not offer the tastiest meals, they are more than satisfactory and will provide opportunities for you to get to know other students.

If you are feeling exquisite, you may also consider fancier options (日本料理, 烤鸭, 新疆菜, 川菜). Many of these, you will be naturally exposed to, via weekly meals with teachers (paid for by PIB!)

MAKE SURE you explore hole-in-the-wall restaurants, as they are often the most well kept secrets of Beijing. Near the campus, try these restaurants on the small street right next to North Gate. Their 麻辣烫, 麻辣火锅, and 朝鲜菜 were fantastic. The small Chinese style bakery on this street has the BEST egg-vegetable bread EVER.

Lunchtime at PiB tends to be hectic. Many other students are on campus as well and will all swarm to the International cafeteria when other cafeterias are closed for the summer. If you have a hard time finding seats, remember that you can always take your food to go

and eat back in the classrooms. A PiB favorite has also been to latch onto someone, perhaps even a teacher, with the ability to 叫外卖(order delivery) from their smartphone. That way, you can try even more types of food (Beijing has an amazing Korean community, hence, great Korean food!).

*Note: the area around BNU is constantly changing — stores would be open one day and demolished the next, without any warning. Always try out new places, but also beware some places mentioned in this guide may no longer exist.

Shopping

The easiest way to change money in Beijing is to just use an ATM machine. Conveniently, there is a Chinese Construction Bank ATM near the East Gate. Just cross the bridge and walk toward your left until you see the Chinese Construction Bank ATM sign. Be wary that some ATMs in the area are notorious for sucking up cards and not properly dispensing money; ask around to verify which ATMs are trustable.

You can buy water and food at various 超市 that you can find inside and outside of the dormitory. The farther the market is, the cheaper the goods may be. But this is not a definite rule, so investigate, and bargain your way out the busy Beijing markets.

About a 20 minute walk away (or a few bus stops) is 枫蓝国际(fēng lán guójì) 购物中心, a mall with tons of restaurants (including 海底捞 a well-known hot pot restaurant), bakeries, KTVs, and shops. This is a fun and easily accessible place to visit with friends on the weekends for a nice meal and some people watching, as well as an opportunity to stock up on snacks from the supermarket below the shopping center.

Exercising

Beijing Shifan Daxue's Gym – Somewhat expensive and unconventional. There are no treadmills or weight machines; rather, they have basketball courts, volleyball courts, and a swimming pool. The gym also offers classes such as Tae Kwon Do, Ping Pong, Taijiquan, etc.

Exercising outdoors – In addition to their lovely gym, Beijing Shifan Daxue has an outdoor track, basketball court, soccer field (it's not grass), volleyball court, tennis courts, and weight machines. Although the New York Times reported that living one day in Beijing is equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes, it's not so bad. Your body is an amazing thing. You will adjust quite quickly. Also, by playing outdoors you will meet many Beijing Shifan Daxue students. Play basketball with them! Practice your Chinese!

Academics

PIB academics may seem tough. Yes, it is true that PIB attempts to be the most difficult summer language program in Beijing. In some ways, this may be true with daily 听写, weekly 考试, 口头报告, and 作文. Some teachers often sleep 3-4 hours a night to prepare for classes, and they stay on campus until late hours holding office hours. Princeton also has the famous grade-deflation policy, which could create an ambience in which students get stressed and get obsessed with grades.

TIP: Your teachers at PIB are not much older than you! Be sure to take full advantage of this fact and spend time with them outside of the classroom. Eat meals together! Go karaoke together! Add them on Wechat! Over the midterm long weekend, plan a trip with them or ask them to show you around Beijing! They are not only smart, but also friendly and energetic, and more likely than not you will find that over the course of the program, you will have developed a relationship that extends beyond instructional with many of your teachers.

So PIB students, do NOT succumb to the horrible peer pressure of stress and self-denunciation, feel free to enjoy learning and exploring. After all, you are in China, not in 新松公寓, so truly take advantage of opportunities to go exploring and making invaluable memories. Go on those weekend trips to nearby venues and historical sites, recommend that really tasty-looking restaurant to your teachers for your weekly meals, and get to know your fellow students, many of whom hail from outside of the Ivy League Bubble. Be adventurous!

B. Inter-University Program (IUP)

Living Situation at IUP

[The following information is from before the pandemic. Many students since then have reported that it is difficult to get a spot in the dormitory.]

Students at IUP have three options: dorms, or off-campus housing. The pros and cons of each are listed below. Some students who are staying in Beijing for an academic year choose to spend half of their time in one place and half in another.

Dormitory

Pros

- Singles and doubles available
- Daily rate about 80 RMB for a double, 160 RMB for a single
- Five-minute bike ride away from IUP
- Many school cafeterias nearby
- Easy to find Chinese/international friends to play basketball, speak Chinese or learn about different cultures
- Very close to the northeast gate, where you can take the bus to the commercial area just south of Tsinghua

Cons

- The bed mattress is about three inches thick and hard as a rock
- Although getting maintenance and repair on various little objects in your room won't be difficult, the quality is questionable
- Far from subway/nearest coffee shop (about a 10-minute bike ride)
- In a noisy area of Tsinghua campus, with trains and cars constantly passing by
- Some dorms only have hot water during certain hours of the day

Off-campus housing

Pros

- The apartments close to Tsinghua (ex. Huaqing Jiayuan) come with basic furniture as well as those left by former residents
- Generally, apartment quality decreases as you get farther from Tsinghua, but no stark differences
- The neighboring universities, like the Forestry University and the Language and Culture University also have decent furnished apartments for reasonable prices
- You have the experience of learning to rent an apartment in China. This could come in use in the future!
- For prolonged stays in Beijing, it can be important to have a clean, tranquil space of your own.
- Have the possibility of sharing a flat with other IUP'ers
- Great opportunity to explore Beijing's the public transportation system and new bike-sharing apps like Mobike and Ofo

Cons

- You are on your own: apartment maintenance, utilities, rent, food, etc. (IUP provides a handy guide that will help you negotiate your lease with the landlord as well as register with the local police station)
- Your bargaining skills will be tested
- If you decide to get an apartment-mate, you'll have to deal with their needs
- Often slightly more expensive than the dorms, depending on location
- Also, leases for shorter time periods (like two months) generally have higher monthly rent rates

Recommendation

If you're looking for independence and want to get as close to having a "real" experience abroad, live off-campus. Don't be daunted by the tasks of finding an apartment, negotiating rent and registering with the local police. If you need help, have your teacher help you. You'll save money by living off campus, learning to cook fried rice and scrambled tomatoes and eggs, and inviting people over for small get-togethers and parties. Before the beginning of every semester, departing IUP students are looking to pass on their apartments to incoming IUP students! This makes the process extremely

smooth – there are some apartments that have been passed down by IUP students for years. Also, try short-rental apps like 蚂蚁短租 to find furnished apartments at very reasonable prices for the summer without worrying about paying a deposit!

Academics

IUP's strength is in its low teacher-student ratio. For group classes, the ratio is set at one teacher per three students. As far as individual classes go, you'll have at least one hour of independent tutorial each day. You can use this time to practice your grammar, experiment with vocabulary and joke using Chinese idioms without worrying. Each semester, you will have a maximum of an hour of one on one classes, and three hours of three on one classes. As you become more advanced, you will tend to cut down on the three on one classes, and have more one on one classes. Typically, once a student reaches a higher Chinese language ability, they will have two hours of one on one classes per day.

IUP has a set of 5 core reading classes. If you have finished two semesters of level 5 Chinese at Yale, you will typically be placed into the 1st or 2nd level of these core classes. Once you have completed the 4th or 5th level of core classes, you will be as literate as a well-educated Chinese. There are 4 core listening/speaking classes, of which you will typically be placed in the 1st or 2nd level.

In addition to core classes, there are electives in various topics. These include, but are not limited to: Classical Chinese, Idioms, Newspaper Chinese, Business Chinese, Modern Chinese History, Basics of Chinese Law, and Ancient Chinese History.

Finally, once your Chinese is strong, you will be able to take a one-on-one “材料课”。 In these classes you will work with a teacher and design your own curriculum. This may involve reading through a book, working with selected essays or articles, or reviewing previously learnt Chinese. As an example, a previous IUP student's 材料课 was about the history of quantum mechanics. Every day he read around 15 pages, created vocabulary lists, explained key physics experiments, and discussed various concepts with his teacher. Another student used his 材料课 to study about the law system in China and where it stood in comparison that of the United States.

In the midst of your classes, IUP will organize one speech contest and a final presentation/project. These activities are great opportunities to use the Chinese skills you've learned in class and show it to your fellow classmates and IUP teachers.

Outside of IUP, you also have the option of enrolling in or auditing Qinghua courses. This can be a great way of improving your Chinese, meeting Chinese students, and understanding more about the Chinese education system. For some students, it has even provided an opportunity to conduct physics research in one of Qinghua's physics laboratories. Qinghua is the leading university in China (along with Beijing University), and it can be a very enriching place academically.

IUP also has a very extensive alumni network. The average age of its students is 25. Although Light Fellows are usually among the youngest in the program (being undergraduates or recent grads), hanging out and talking with classmates who have already had crazy life experiences is amazing. IUP'ers range from PhD students thinking about being historians to NGO leaders, consultants, investment bankers, public health researchers, musicians and professors. You'll be in good company.

Miscellaneous

Cafeterias at Qinghua – Qinghua is renowned for its affordable and excellent cafeterias. For as little as 5-10 RMB, you can get yourself a relatively nutritious, tasty, and filling meal. It can, however, be challenging for those with allergies or dietary restrictions.

Extracurriculars – At the beginning of the fall semester, Tsinghua hosts its own extracurricular fair in the north side of campus. IUP will usually notify students of when that takes place. The groups at Tsinghua are quite diverse, ranging from archery to a cappella, from breakdancing to volunteer work. Joining a group can really help you make some close Chinese friends and improve your speaking/listening skills!

Field Trips – IUP typically organizes 1-2 field trips per term where the teachers will take IUP students to a tourist location like the Great Wall. In addition, IUP holds regular Chinese tables in which students and teacher go eat out at a local restaurant and have a conversation over great food!

Language pledge – IUP's language pledge applies only within the wall of 文北楼, the classroom building. Though it's more relaxed than other programs, it's 1) necessary because of how many professionals attend the program and thus would be unable to keep the pledge at their internships or jobs and 2) much easier to keep in this manner, since usually it only applies from 8am to 2pm. On field trips, the pledge is all-encompassing. If you do this outside of the classroom with your friends, you might find it easier to make local friends as well.

Teachers – The teachers at IUP tend to be very open-minded and always willing to spend time with students outside of classes, schedules permitting. This can be a great way to improve your Chinese and learn more about Beijing.

C. CET Beijing

Getting to the Program

CET Beijing is located at Capital Normal University (Shōudū shīfàn dàxué) in Haidian Qu. CET provides a free bus from the airport to campus that students can sign up for, but this option is only available if you arrive within a certain time frame, so be sure to coordinate your flight's landing time with the shuttle information given by the program

coordinator. If you miss the pick-up time, getting a taxi to the campus is pretty easy and costs ~150 RMB. The closest subway station is Huayuanqiao on Line 2.

Living Situation at CET Beijing

In the summer of 2016, two buildings were used, 中国房子 on the main campus, and an international dorm/hotel at 北一区 (north campus). Placement decisions were roughly based on language levels, with L3+ students located on the main campus, and below-L3 students located on north campus. Both buildings function like hotels and provide wi-fi, air-conditioning, and shared laundry facilities, with each room containing its own bathroom and basic furniture (a desk, lamp, wardrobe, and bedside table come standard with each room, while refrigerators and other appliances can be rented from the front desk of the dorm building). The University is conveniently located near subway and bus stops as well as many restaurants and small markets.

Eating, Shopping, Exercising

Eating

On main campus, there is a restaurant right across the street from 中国房子 that has very tasty and affordable dishes. There are also small noodle, and fruit vendors along the street that leads to the dorm. On the north campus, there are many restaurants across the street as well including a Biang noodle house, pizza place, and a Café Bene. Both campuses have their own dining halls, where most students eat lunch before heading over to afternoon 1:1 sessions. There is also a kitchen in the basement of 中国房子 and kitchens on each floor of the dorm building on north campus. Dining hall food is safest, cheapest, and pretty convenient options, but it is also worth going out of your way to explore other restaurants in the city such as 南京大排档 (Nanjing cuisine), 那家小馆 (Beijing cuisine), 西贝面村 (Inner Mongolian cuisine), etc.

Banking

There are a few banks and ATMs on or near campus. Right across the street from the dorm building, there is a conveniently located Bank of China ATM. There is a China Construction Bank ATM near the 中国房子 as you walk toward the classroom buildings. It's kind of tucked away, so don't be shy to ask a CNU student how to find it. There's also a large bank that's walking distance from the dorm building. The CET program takes everyone there during the first few days of the program to give students the opportunity to convert money or make withdrawals.

Shopping

There are a few grocery stores and stands where you can get fresh fruits and vegetables right near campus. There is also a large supermarket, shopping complex that is a ~10 minute walk from the dorm building.

Exercising

There is one gym on campus and another that is a ~15 minute walk away from the dorm building. There are membership fees for both, but more details about gym information can be found in the CET student handbook. CNU also has an outdoor track and basketball court on campus.

Extracurricular Activity & Travel

CET offers a variety of excursions throughout the duration of the program. Every week, there are organized trips to most of the tourist destinations in Beijing - the Great Wall, Peking Opera, the Summer Palace, Chinese acrobats show etc. In addition, there will be an overnight trip during the latter half of the summer to a city of historical significance in China. The trip destination changes every year, but it usually serves as an opportunity to see another side of Chinese culture that is different from Beijing.

Weekly Wushu, calligraphy, and Chinese painting classes are offered to students. CET is also very open to requests and suggestions for activities; this past summer we had a ping pong contest, sunflower seed eating contest, and chopsticks skill contest.

Language Pledge

CET has a well-enforced language pledge where upon the first warning, your school might be notified and after 3 warnings, you face the risk of being dismissed from the program. CET takes the idea of creating a proper, immersive experience for every student very seriously. There are teachers who live on each floor of the dorm building and will give warnings to anyone caught speaking English. The language pledge seems pretty annoying in the beginning, especially if you only have a year of Chinese under your belt, but sticking to it is definitely worthwhile in the end! It helps to befriend and hang out with people who will take the pledge as seriously as you do so definitely make an effort to befriend your local roommate and your friends' roommates.

The handbook CET gives out at the start contains a lot more information, so don't worry that the section for this program is so short. Do some preliminary research on places to visit, download 高德地图 (map/yelp app) and use your afternoons to explore!