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## Ten Top Tourist Routes for High Summer

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# Ten Top Tourist Routes for High Summer

Text by Gao Yuan

Beijing, a globally renowned city rich in history and culture, boasts a wealth of distinctive and compelling intellectual property (IP) rooted in its profound cultural heritage and thriving tourism resources. These elements, serving as emblematic expressions of the city's identity, enhance Beijing's international profile and prestige.

Beijing's cultural tourism IP has evolved into a rich tapestry, spanning from UNESCO World Heritage sites along the Central Axis to the city's vibrant hutongs and traditional courtyard homes, and from the refined performances at the National Centre for the Performing Arts to the cutting-edge creativity of the 798 Art District. These diverse cultural and tourism assets play a crucial role in conveying China's narratives, promoting Chinese culture and enhancing Beijing's appeal and competitiveness as a global travel destination.







International tourists at the Forbidden City



Grand Canal Forest Park



Simatai section of the Great Wall



Dongsì Hutog Museum



International tourists try on traditional Chinese costumes



The Beijing Service area at Beijing Capital International Airport provides 24/7 "one-stop" services



International tourists shop for Beijing-themed souvenirs

Beijing's soft power. They provide international visitors with a direct experience of China's broader strengths in openness, inclusivity, digital innovation and service excellence.

The level of inbound tourism development is widely regarded as a key measure of a country's cultural soft power and its openness to the world. As more international visitors shift from "brief visits" to seeking "in-depth experiences," Beijing is rolling out a comprehensive set of practical measures through an upgraded "full-chain" inbound tourism service action plan. This initiative focuses on product development, publicity and promotion, and service assurance, aiming to raise the city's tourism service standards and enhance its global competitiveness.

As a storied destination on the global tourism map, Beijing invites exploration, offering visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in its rich history and striking beauty—from lotus flowers in full bloom to the gentle ripples on rivers and lakes at the height of summer.

As the number of international visitors to Beijing continues to grow, their expectations for a "Beijing Tour" have shifted, with a greater emphasis on personalised and immersive experiences. At the 2025 Beijing Inbound Tourism Development Conference, the Top 10 themed routes under "Beijing's New Discoveries" were unveiled. These thoughtfully curated itineraries showcase the city's most compelling cultural tourism IP resources, offering attentive, detail-oriented services that present a more welcoming, convenient and vibrant Beijing to global travellers.

The Top 10 themed routes cater to a wide range of interests. Travellers seeking deep cultural immersion can choose from options such as Beijing Central Axis: Enjoying Local Flavours or Ancient Trails: Living Heritage. Those looking to experience authentic local life may opt for Future Traditions: Scenes of Urban Renewal or Hidden Alleys: Unveiling Hutong Life. For the tech-savvy, artistically inclined or trend-conscious, there are tours like Leisure and Art along the Grand Canal or Trendy Fun:

Riverside Nightlife. Nature lovers in search of a relaxing retreat can enjoy Cool Summer: Forest Escapes or Discovering an Ancient Town near the Great Wall. Finally, outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers can find appeal in the Mountain Discovery: Hiking and Stargazing or the Emerald Ripples: Lake Adventures.

These routes feature both iconic landmarks and hidden gems, spanning cultural sites and popular social media hotspots. Each itinerary highlights distinctive elements of the city's cultural and tourism IP. Whether visitors are staying briefly or for an extended period, and whether their interests lie in cultural immersion, urban exploration or cutting-edge technology and contemporary art, they will find an ideal entry point for their "Beijing tour" among these offerings.

In addition to the 10 themed routes unveiled at the 2025 Beijing Inbound Tourism Development Conference, the *Special Action Plan for Optimising Inbound Tourism Services in Beijing* introduced 22 targeted and convenient measures. These include a "one-stop" inbound customs clearance process, instant tax refunds and the establishment of 24/7 "Beijing Service"

centres at both Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport. Beijing has also taken the national lead by launching a new city-wide tax refund model for overseas travellers, allowing refunds to be processed at any authorised location. Through the continual enhancement of inbound tourism services, the city is presenting a renewed vision for its tourism industry, drawing increasing numbers of international tourists through visitors' positive experiences.

Tourism is a pillar industry in Beijing's urban development, and its success is closely tied to the city's overall economic growth. With supportive policies such as the 240-hour visa-free transit, regional visa exemptions and "instant tax refund" upon departure, Beijing is drawing increasing numbers of international visitors. Data show a marked recovery in inbound tourism since 2024, with strong growth in both visitor numbers and industry revenue. In 2024, the city welcomed 3.942 million international tourists—an increase of 186.8 percent year-on-year—generating 34.94 billion yuan in foreign exchange income, up 150.6 percent.

From January to June 2025, Beijing received 2.467 million inbound tourists, a 48.8 percent year-on-year rise and an increase of 15.2 percent increase over 2019. By the end of June 2025, the city's inbound tourism spending reached US\$3.2 billion, a 51.3 percent year-on-year increase. These figures reflect a growing global interest in Chinese culture and a rising demand for more immersive and meaningful experiences in Beijing. This robust tourism performance is the direct result of the city's ongoing efforts to enhance its cultural and tourism offerings and improve service quality.

In June 2025, Beijing hosted a series of major tourism events, including the 2025 Beijing Inbound Tourism Development Conference. These events provided high-level platforms for international exchange and cooperation across the global tourism industry, presenting a renewed vision of China's cultural tourism that highlights openness, innovation and vitality.

Recognising its role as a vital gateway for cultural exchange between China and the world, Beijing has made the development of

"grand cultural tourism" as a strategic priority. The city is actively guiding a shift in inbound tourism from basic sightseeing to immersive, multi-dimensional experiences, shaping a new model of cultural tourism with global appeal. This approach is designed to reinforce Beijing's status as a premier international travel destination and as the top choice for inbound visitors to China.

In response to the evolving expectations of international tourists for greater convenience, personalisation and digitalisation, Beijing is accelerating the integration of technology into its tourism services. Innovations include AI-powered tour guides offering real-time commentary in multiple languages and the ability to "tap to pay" at subway gates using international bank cards such as UnionPay, Mastercard, VISA, JCB and American Express. These technological upgrades and service innovations greatly enhance the experience for inbound travellers, while underscoring Beijing's capabilities as a world-class destination.

Beyond their practical advantages, these technology-driven service initiatives exemplify

## Convenient Codes for Beijing Tour

Tips

- The 240-hour visa-free transit policy applies to citizens of 55 countries.
- "Temporary Entry Permit" service zones provide one-stop issuance to streamline customs clearance.
- Comprehensive and round-the-clock "Beijing Service" centres operate at both Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport.
- Beijing's subway system allows international visitors the "tap to pay" option using any of the five major bank cards (UnionPay, Mastercard, VISA, JCB and American Express).
- More than 1,400 stores provide instant tax refunds for international visitors, including 22 that offer immediate in-store refunds.
- Beijing pioneered a city-wide tax refund service model, with three centralised tax refund locations.

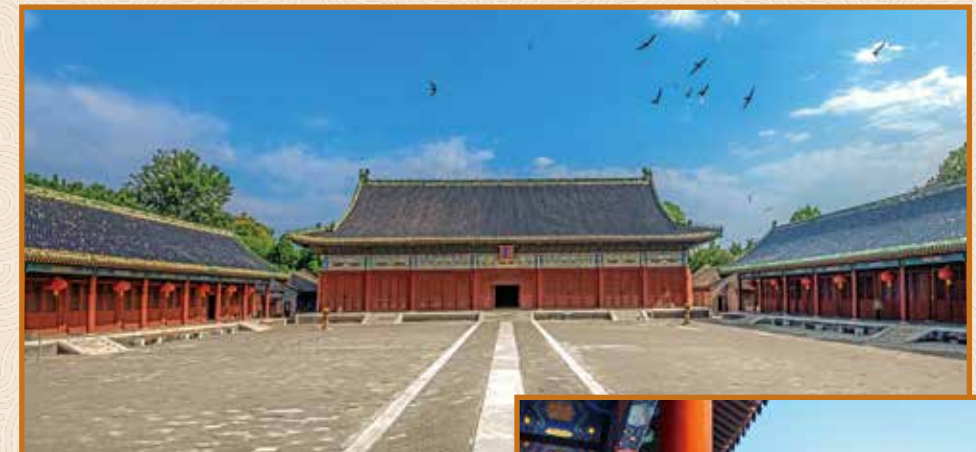


## Route 1

# Beijing Central Axis: Enjoying Local Flavours

Text by Gao Yuan

Photos by Tong Tianyi, Hu Shengli, Li Xiaoyin, He Rong, [Russia] Vladimir Proshin, [Czech] Jan Pohribný



▲ The Altar of the God of Agriculture

Dubbed Beijing's backbone, the Beijing Central Axis is one of the city's most renowned examples of cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP). Stretching 7.8 kilometres, the axis plays a central role in the urban planning of Beijing's old city and links several iconic cultural and tourism landmarks, including the Bell and Drum towers, the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Gate and the Temple of Heaven.

For tourists, it is nearly impossible to visit all the scenic attractions along the Central Axis in a single day. The route recommended here combines architectural splendour with the warm, lively atmosphere found along the axis. Visitors begin at the Altar of the God of Agriculture, where emperors of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties made offerings and held farming ceremonies. They then proceed to the Temple of Heaven, where they can enjoy the imperial ritual music *zhonghe shaoyue* at the Divine Music Administration. These two sites offer insight into ancient imperial formalities. Next, they head to the restaurant Qianjude to savour Beijing's most famous dish—roast duck. After nightfall, a stroll along vibrant Qianmen Street reveals a blend of century-old, time-honoured brands and trendy new elements.

The route allows visitors to take in the majesty of imperial rituals, the warm, lively charm of old neighbourhoods and the city's modern vitality.

## A 600-Year-Old 'Starry Sky' Caisson Ceiling

The Altar of the God of Agriculture stands opposite the Temple of Heaven on the southern section of the Central Axis. Built in 1420, it is the



▲ The Temple of Heaven

highest-level, largest and best-preserved ancient site in China dedicated to the God of Agriculture. As the layout has been almost entirely preserved, the altar complex still retains the architectural characteristics and artistic style of the Ming Dynasty.

The most striking structure within the complex is Taisui Hall (the Hall of the God of the Year), which now houses the Beijing Ancient Architecture Museum. At the museum, traditional Chinese architectural crafts are showcased to highlight the essence of Chinese architecture. Visitors can explore a range of architectural marvels, including *dougong* (a structural element formed by interlocking wooden brackets), the principles behind the layout of *siheyuan* (courtyard residences) and finely crafted models of classic temples, halls and Buddhist pagodas from across China.

The most valuable item in the museum is a caisson ceiling from the Ming Dynasty, originally from Longfu Temple and famed for its "starry sky" motif. Known as "China's most beautiful caisson ceiling," it represents the finest of Ming folk craftsmanship. Its layout features a circle within a square and a square within a circle, reflecting the ancient Chinese belief that "heaven is round and earth is square." The six-level structure includes elaborately carved cloud motifs on its round framework. The first, second, third and fifth levels are decorated with celestial palaces, where deities stand among vibrant clouds. Painted figures of the Twenty-eight Mansions appear on the second and fourth levels. At each corner, statues of the Four Heavenly





▲ *Zhonghe Shaoyue* performance at the Divine Music Administration of the Temple of Heaven



▲ From a rooftop space of Hongqiao Market, visitors can admire the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at the Temple of Heaven



▲ Cooking Beijing roast duck at Qianjude Restaurant

Kings impress visitors with their ornate detail and masterful design.

The most dazzling feature is the ancient star chart at the centre of the caisson ceiling. Set against a deep blue background, more than 1,400 golden stars create a breathtakingly lifelike image of the Milky Way, shimmering under the lamplight.

As an old saying goes, “People shall well manage their own one *mu* and three *fen* (approximately 800 square metres) of farmland,” meaning that everyone should diligently fulfil their own responsibilities. This saying is closely linked to the Altar of the God of Agriculture. Emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties not only offered sacrifices to the God of Agriculture but also personally cultivated one *mu* and three *fen* of land at the altar, reflecting the imperial court’s emphasis on agriculture. This plot lies just south of the Farming Observation Terrace.

## A New Vision from ‘Guantan’

The Temple of Heaven is located to the east of the Altar of the God of Agriculture and is the world’s largest architectural complex dedicated to worshipping heaven. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, emperors held ceremonies there to offer sacrifices to heaven and pray for blessings and abundant harvests. As the foremost of Beijing’s altars and temples,

the Temple of Heaven was used exclusively by the imperial family in ancient times. Today, it is open to visitors from around the world as a public park. The expansive grounds are home to a wide range of greenery, including many trees that are between 500 and 600 years old.

Morning is the ideal time to visit the Temple of Heaven, as the park comes alive with people doing their daily exercises. Visitors can learn to practise tai chi, kick shuttlecocks and play diabolo, or watch calligraphers use oversized writing brushes and water to create Chinese characters on the ground.

The Divine Music Administration, located in the southwest corner of the Temple of Heaven, was responsible for performing music during imperial sacrificial rituals and ceremonies during the Ming and Qing dynasties. A Taoist temple was initially built on the site during the Ming Dynasty, which was later expanded into a training ground for musicians and dancers serving imperial rites. To experience the kind of music once played during heaven-worshipping ceremonies 600 years ago, this is the place to visit. The music, known as *zhonghe shaoyue*, is regarded as an elegant tradition passed down through thousands of years in Chinese culture. It symbolises harmony and good fortune.

Exiting the Temple of Heaven through its eastern gate, visitors can reach the

popular shopping destination Hongqiao Market by crossing a pedestrian bridge. This bustling market is a haven for pearl and accessory lovers, offering a wide array of goods at reasonable prices.

The market is divided into different sections based on categories of goods. The area for clothes and accessories is filled with eye-catching fashion items, ranging from stunning traditional Chinese garments to avant-garde outfits, along with accessories like handbags and scarves. For the latest high-tech products and electronic appliances, customers can head to the electronics section on the first floor, where items such as smartphones, tablet computers, earphones and chargers are available. The section dedicated to handicrafts, artworks and souvenirs is a treasure trove of traditional Chinese craftsmanship. Shoppers are drawn to the wide variety of cultural items, including intricately carved wooden sculptures and elegant porcelain tea sets.

There is a rooftop garden-style leisure space named “Guantan” (literally, “viewing the Temple of Heaven”). It offers a perfect vantage point for admiring the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. While enjoying the scenic view, visitors can also indulge in a delectable afternoon tea. By ordering a small cake shaped like the hall and a latte featuring its motif in the foam, tourists can relax and take

in the city skyline at sunset. As dusk falls, the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests is bathed in golden light. It is an ideal spot for an aerial view of the Temple of Heaven.

## The Most Popular Roast Duck Restaurant

Just like climbing the Great Wall, tasting roast duck is a must for every visitor to Beijing.

Qianjude on Qianmen Street is undoubtedly one of the most popular roast duck restaurants in Beijing. The sign reading “original store of Qianjude” reflects the long history of this time-honoured brand. The restaurant’s premium roast duck is sure to satisfy the palate of every diner.

The roast duck served at this Qianjude branch is prepared using the *gualu* (hanging oven) method, which involves roasting the ducks over an open flame. The fuel wood used in the process comes from fruit trees. First, a fire is lit inside the oven to heat it thoroughly, allowing the walls to absorb a high level of heat. The duck is then placed inside and cooked using the radiant heat from the oven walls. Thanks to the fruit tree wood, the finished roast duck has a rich red colour, with crispy skin, tender and juicy meat, and a subtle fruity aroma.

Eating Beijing roast duck is a richly ceremonial experience. The dish itself takes up nearly half the table. Diners use

chopsticks to pick up slices of duck meat, dip them lightly in sweet bean sauce, add strips of scallion or cucumber and wrap everything in a thin flour tortilla. Alternatively, the duck and scallions can be placed into a sesame seed pancake with a touch of sweet bean sauce. The duck is tender, rich and slightly sweet, and one bite is often enough to leave diners craving more.

Along Qianmen Street are numerous Beijing-style food shops and restaurants, including the renowned hotpot restaurant Donglaishun, the historic Liubiju Pickle and Sauce Shop, the *shaomai* (steamed dumpling) specialist Du Yi Chu and the popular Jinfang Snack Shop. Anyone

strolling along this street should come with plenty of room in their stomach to enjoy the array of mouth-watering local dishes.

At night, Qianmen Street becomes even more enchanting than it is during the day.

Qianmen is not only home to a cluster of time-honoured brands, but also offers visitors an immersive experience of intangible cultural heritage crafts. Inside each of these historic brand shops, visitors can explore different aspects of Beijing’s intangible cultural heritage. For instance, at the museum established by Silian Hairdressing and Beauty Salon, a well-known local brand, visitors can learn about the historical evolution of Chinese hairstyles. At the Rongbaozhai Research and Education Centre, guests can take part in hands-on activities related to traditional woodblock printing techniques.

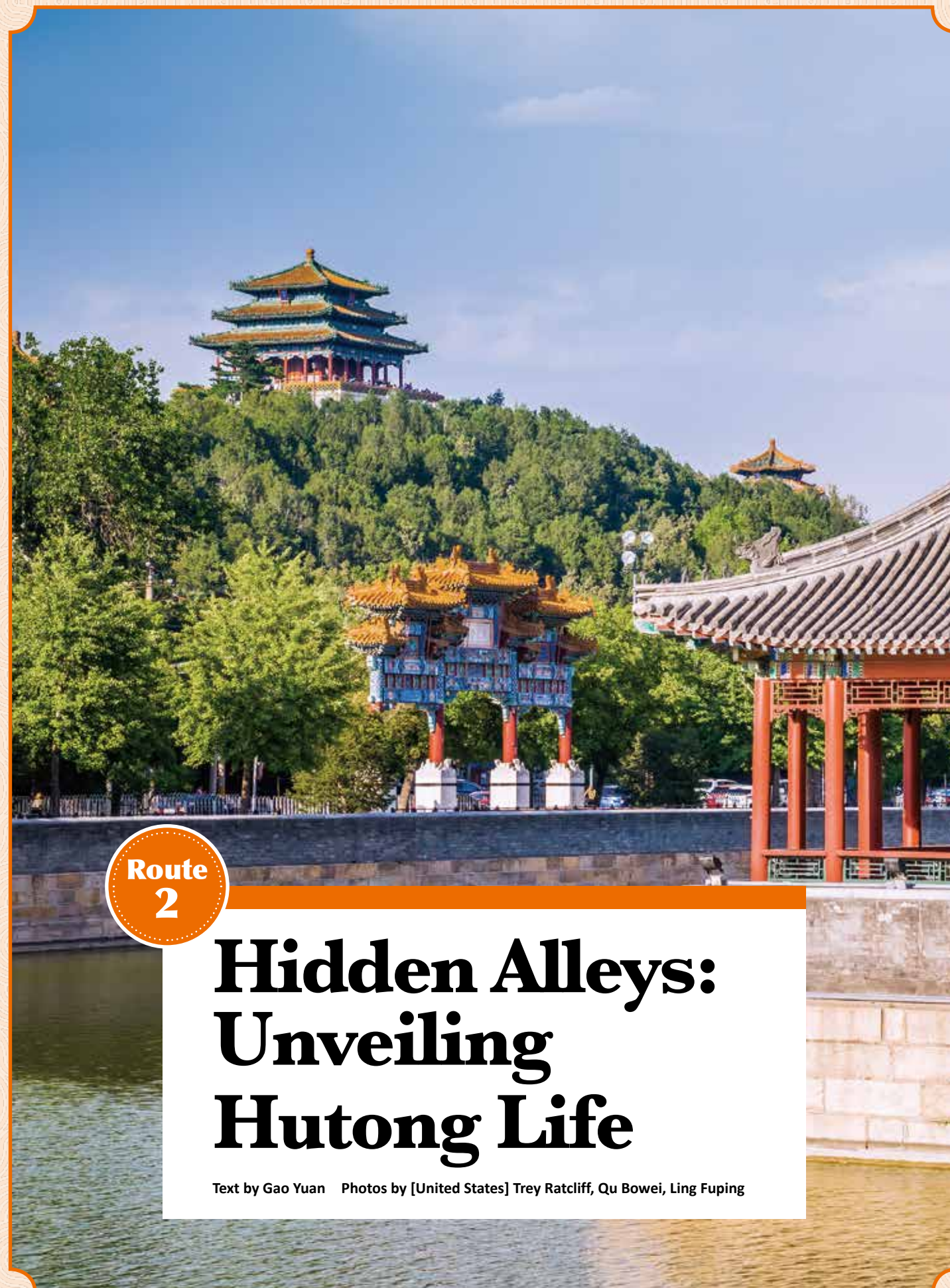
Additionally, the street occasionally hosts cultural events such as traditional Chinese dance performances, *hanfu* (traditional clothing of the Han Chinese) parades, live demonstrations of crafts and skills, and fairs showcasing intangible cultural heritage.

Along the Beijing Central Axis, visitors will encounter not only grand imperial buildings but also the everyday neighbourhoods of ordinary people. A journey along the axis blends history, culture and folklore, offering tourists a rich and immersive experience of the city’s cultural heritage.



▲ Qianmen Street





Route  
2

# Hidden Alleys: Unveiling Hutong Life

Text by Gao Yuan   Photos by [United States] Trey Ratcliff, Qu Bowei, Ling Fuping

Beijing is an ever-changing modern metropolis, blessed with skyscrapers designed by celebrated international architects, which are full of fancy and a sense of future. However, a real grasp of the city requires visitors to step into the time-honoured hutongs in person, observe the quadrangle dwellings and daily life of Beijingers on both sides, hear the sounds of Old Beijing, comprising vendors' hawking and pigeon whistles, and try the unique flavours of Beijing snacks. In the ordinary alleys of Beijing, they can enjoy a panorama of the ancient capital.

Wherever visitors go, enjoying authentic local food comes first. The same is true in Beijing. Huguo Temple Snack Bar along Huguo Temple Street is one of the representatives of Beijing-style snacks. It is a good option to try Beijing specialties. Beijing snacks feature a wide variety, including over 100 nameable snacks. If visitors prefer desserts, they can try *aiwowo* (steamed rice cake with sweet stuffing), *wandouhuang* (pea flour cake), *ludagunr* (soybean flour cake) and *tangerduo* (fried sugar cake). Those who prefer salty flavours can try *dalian huoshao* (pouch-shaped baked wheaten cake), meat-stuffed pancake and *miancha* (seasoned millet mush).

*Douzhir* is one of the best-known Beijing snacks, fermented from the dregs left when making mung bean vermicelli. Through their wisdom and skills, Beijingers make it a delicacy with a special taste. Indeed, it tastes somewhat strange and smells sour, as if it had gone bad. Taking one sip of *douzhir*, people unable to help frowning. Yet if people taste it carefully, they would find tartness in sourness and a sweet aftertaste. The taste of *douzhir* is reputedly only enjoyable for senior Beijingers who are used to drinking it. Most beginners find it challenging to appreciate at first, but after drinking it for a while, they find it difficult to stop. Nowadays, Beijingers have increasingly diversified and delicate cuisine. Yet their zeal for *douzhir* remains high, which has long been part of their daily life.

Another feature of Beijing snacks is distinct seasonality, which stresses a diet varying with seasons. For example, it is recommended to eat mild and fine *wandouhuang* in early spring, best in the third lunar month, drink cool and refreshing bean jelly in midsummer, enjoy tender and crisp *baodu* (fried tripes) on a sun-soaked autumn afternoon and have a bowl of hot *miancha* to warm up the body in a chilly winter. "Snacks are served in small sizes, but with many intricacies. Cold, hot, sour, sweet, the seasonable is the best." This saying by senior Beijingers not only reveals Beijing snacks' relation with solar terms and the intricacies, but also Beijingers' art of living to pursue quality.

Huguo Temple Street, where Huguo Temple Snack Bar is located, is only a 5-minute walk from Ping'anli Station along Beijing Subway Line 4. The historic street less than 600 metres (m) long has been a famous commercial area in Beijing since over a century ago. Nowadays, there are not only Huguo Temple snacks but also a variety of Beijing-style delicacies. Therein Fuhuaizhai Bobo Shop is the most featured. *Bobo* refers to Qing court pastries. Later they spread from the court to the city's ordinary people, leading to the development of many relative shops. They specialised in making and selling traditional court snacks, known as *bobo* shops. The ancestors of the founder of Fuhuaizhai once served in the imperial kitchen of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Rose chestnut pastry



▲ Fuhuaizhai Bobo Shop



▲ Pastries from Fuhuaizhai Bobo Shop



▲ Wandouhuang, or pea flour cakes





▲ Shichahai



▲ Drumming performance at the Drum Tower

and Manchu-style milk cake are exclusively reproduced according to the secret recipes handed down from ancestors. In addition, some of its special seasonal delicacies are favoured by senior Beijingers. They include dried fruits, watermelon jelly and court cheese, served in summer and Chongyang flower cake, served around the National Holiday. In the hottest season of Beijing, it is enjoyable to sit in the antequely decorated Fuhuazhai, drink a bowl of watermelon jelly and feel the refreshing coolness.

Leaving Huguo Temple Street with the lingering aftertaste, visitors can head east and enter Shichahai Historical Scenic Area, the most typical hutong landscape in Beijing. Shichahai is the translucent crystal inlaid in

the urban areas of Beijing, comprising three water areas: Qianhai, Houhai and Xihai, along with the places of interest, dwellings, folk custom and daily life along the banks. The scenic area boasts the best-preserved Old Beijing landscape. It keeps the original alley texture and lifestyle, nestles the quadrangle dwellings in old-fashioned layouts, where most dwellers are native Beijingers. Along Shichahai, crisscrossing hutongs resemble a maze, where the residences witness the hustle and bustle of daily life, and where the former residences of luminaries hide silently. The best way to explore the area in depth is to ride a bicycle in zigzag hutongs at ease. Visitors may as well choose a quiet afternoon, when they are sheltered by the

lush canopy and enjoy the passing scenery. Such pleasure can only be felt when they travel through it.

When passing the Bell and Drum towers, tourists always stop to pay them a visit. As the northern start of the Beijing Central Axis, the historic buildings boast the best-preserved of their kind nationwide, with the largest bulk and the largest scale of timepieces. In the Drum Tower, there are one large drum and 24 small drums, therein the large drum represents a year, while the small drums represent 24 solar terms. In the Bell Tower, there is suspended a large bronze bell weighing 63 tons, cast in the Yongle period (1403–1424) of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Today, on every lunar New Year's Eve, the bell rings 108 times. The nearby hutongs retain many historical memories for senior Beijingers. The Bell and Drum towers have become popular photogenic spots for social media users. A must-do for young visitors is posing for photos before the nameplate at the Drum Tower intersection, with Bus No. 107 in the background.

Heading south from the Bell and Drum towers along the Beijing Central Axis, visitors will arrive at Jingshan Park, which served as an imperial garden during the Ming and

Qing dynasties. The top of Jingshan Hill in the Park has been a peerless observation point to overlook the Forbidden City since its opening to the public in 1928. The five pavilions at different locations on the hill not only constitute the urban skyline but also echo various magnificent and gorgeous buildings along the Beijing Central Axis, making the city all the more splendid.

The history of Jingshan Hill dates back to the 12th century when Wanyan Yong, Emperor Shizong (reign: 1161–1189) of the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234), had a detached palace built to the northeast of Zhongdu or Central Capital of Jin. The earth left behind here was heaped to form a mound, known as Qingshan Hill. In the mid-13th century, Kublai Khan, Emperor Shizu (reign: 1260–1294) of

the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), included Qingshan Hill into the imperial city when Dadu, the capital of Yuan, was being built. As a result, it became part of the palace. In 1420, the Ming Dynasty finished the grand project of capital reconstruction on the basis of Dadu. The earth from the demolished imperial city and the mud from newly excavated moat along the Forbidden City covered the former site of Yanchun Pavillion (a Yuan structure) to form a mound, known as Wansuishan Hill. Emperor Shunzhi (reign: 1644–1661) of the Qing Dynasty renamed it Jingshan Hill. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1735–1796), five pavilions were built on the hill. Taking advantage of the terrain, the five pavilions line up with tremendous vigour. Wanchun Pavillion in the middle enables

a great view of the majestic Forbidden City, hence makes an optimum location to appreciate the panorama.

Shijia Hutong near Jingshan Park is one of the oldest hutongs in Beijing. Located in the heartland of the old city, with the Forbidden City one kilometre (km) away to the west, and Chang'an Avenue one km away to the south, Shijia Hutong is more than 700 m long. Having existed since Yuan Dadu, it witnessed the vicissitudes of 700 years. There were over 80 quadrangle dwellings, where a great many luminaries lived, which formed rich and unique Shijia Hutong culture. Courtyard No. 20 once served as a dormitory of celebrated Beijing People's Art Theatre, where cultural figures including Cao Yu (1910–1996) and Jiao Juyin (1905–1975) worked. Courtyard No. 51 once served as the Beijing office of Ta Kung Pao (HK). Courtyard No. 24 is also worth mentioning. It was once the former residence of Ling Shuhua (1900–1990), a modern Chinese writer. Now it serves as Shijia Hutong Museum. The museum is a garden courtyard with two halls and eight galleries, demonstrating the changes of the hutong in physical objects, images and miniatures. The most amusing exhibition is about old objects, including a semiconductor receiver, a black-and-white TV set and a monthly bus pass. All sorts of exhibits revitalise the hutong life of more than half a century ago. Most of the old objects were collected from dwellers. They are like witnesses to history, and recorders of Beijing residents' daily lives. In the "Era Memory" Hall, a small studio like a recording studio is equipped with professional equipment. By simply clicking the touchscreen, visitors can play more than 70 hutong sounds from different eras and seasons. For example, with the hawking of a goldfish vendor in summer, there are constant cicada chirps in the background. The sound of raking fallen leaves in autumn is mixed with approaching hawkers, and the ethereal and clarion pigeon whistles. These sounds that accompanied daily life are significant historical materials of Beijing folk culture, and cultural symbols to show the unique charm of the ancient capital's cultural tourism.

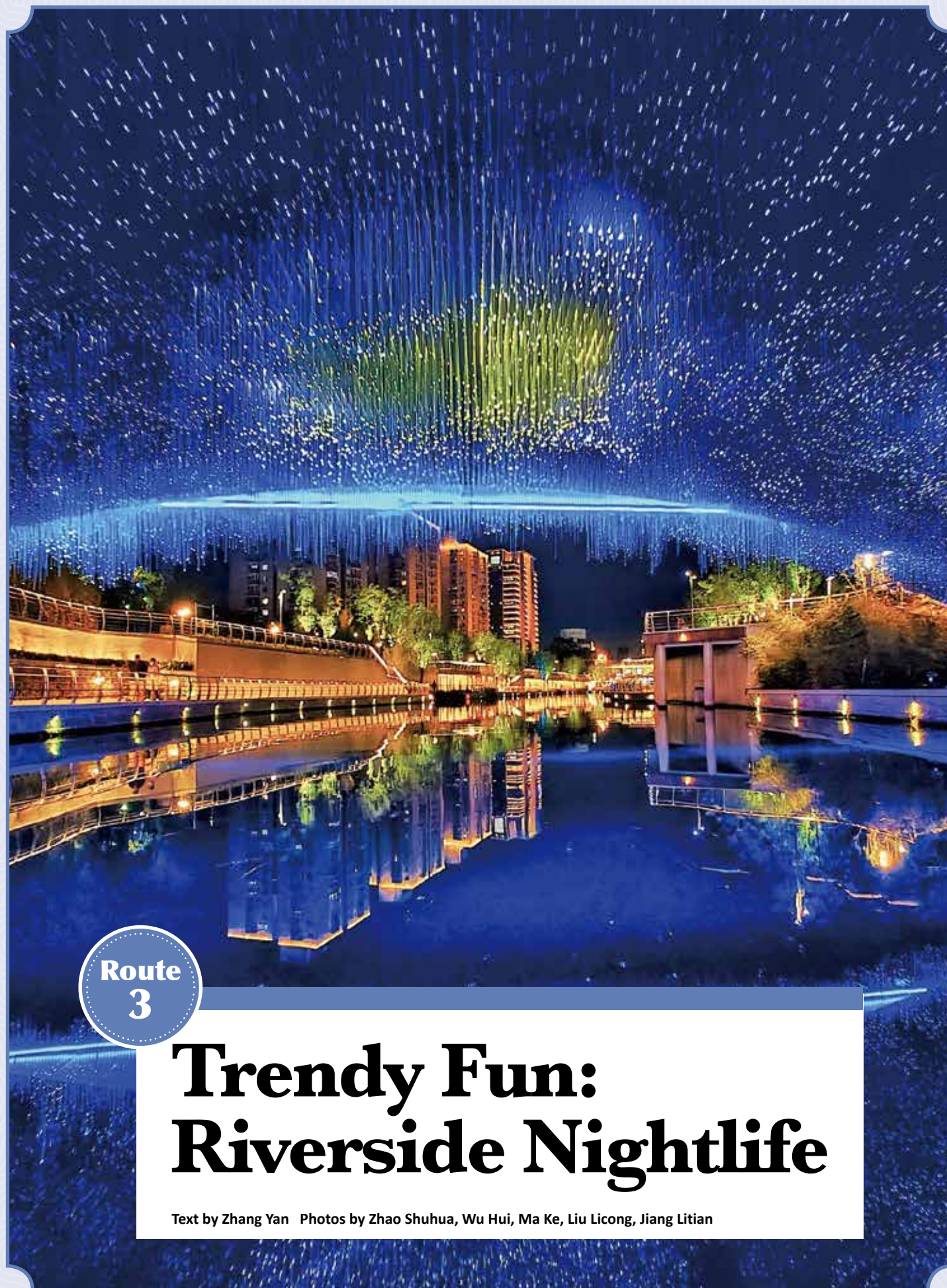


▲ Wanchun Pavillion at Jingshan Park

▼ Shijia Hutong Museum







Route  
3

# Trendy Fun: Riverside Nightlife

Text by Zhang Yan Photos by Zhao Shuhua, Wu Hui, Ma Ke, Liu Licong, Jiang Litian

Beijing's summer is a season of ancient allure and modern vibrancy. The Trendy Fun: Riverside Nightlife offers a dynamic experience that blends contemporary art, popular culture and immersive activities. The attractions along the route highlight some of the most popular and engaging elements of Beijing's cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP). In the morning, visitors can explore the 798-751 Art District, where creativity and design come together in an artful presentation. In the afternoon, they can visit Xiushui Street Market (Silk Street Market), one of China's most internationally renowned shopping destinations, to enjoy the unique charm of Beijing souvenirs. Afterwards, they can head to POP LAND for an immersive fairytale adventure. As evening falls, a boat trip along the Liangma River offers a captivating experience, with riverside lights dancing on the water and the poetic beauty of its bridges.

This itinerary highlights Beijing's multifaceted appeal, shifting from daytime creativity to a nighttime spectacle of lights reflected on the water. It offers a journey through the city's evolving aesthetic, linking the present with the future, and is ideal for families, friends and anyone in search of trendy, fun experiences.

The first stop on the route is Beijing's 798 Art District, a must-visit for contemporary art enthusiasts. This complex, once the 718 Joint Factory under the Ministry of Electronics Industry, is located in the city's northeast. Since 2000, it has developed into China's largest and most renowned hub for cultural and creative industries, driven by an influx of artists from across the country. With their sharp vision and remarkable creativity, these artists began to unlock the artistic potential hidden within the site's industrial past. Over time, this artist community grew, and its creative energy quietly reshaped the city's cultural landscape. The former factory has since become a thriving art centre, earning the nickname "A Dream Plant of China's Contemporary Art." As early as 2003, *Time* magazine recognised its importance by naming it "one of the top 22 most famous landmarks worldwide."

Entering the 798 Art District, visitors are greeted by old yet orderly industrial buildings of red brick and tile, with crisscrossing pipelines that still bear the marks of history. A rich variety of cultural and artistic spaces is scattered throughout the area. Art institutions and creative teams from 25 countries—including France, Italy, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, among others—have gathered here. Both renowned masters and emerging young talents contribute to the district's vibrant atmosphere, where past and present, industry and inspiration, exist in perfect harmony.

Walking into the 798 Art District through its northern gate leads directly to the UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art. Renowned for its consistently outstanding international exhibitions with strong academic value, UCCA attracts a wide range of art enthusiasts and is often regarded as their "spiritual oasis." Deeper into the district, visitors encounter a variety of avant-garde art institutions, including the Meet You Museum, 798 CUBE and 798 Art Bridge Gallery. In addition to conventional

exhibitions, these galleries offer immersive experiences that combine technology and art, engaging the senses of sight, sound and touch. In recent years, the 798 Art District has also hosted cultural events such as IP digital light-and-shadow exhibitions, art markets and immersive theatrical performances. These activities encourage visitor participation and reinforce the district's reputation as a pioneering, innovative and trendy centre for Beijing's cultural and tourism IP.

After visiting the 798 Art District, visitors can continue to the nearby 751D-PARK. Once a typical industrial zone, it has been reborn as a design- and fashion-focused "fashion belt." Preserved industrial relics—such as German-style power plants, steam locomotives, spiral gas cylinders, cracking furnace clusters and weathered pipes—have been revitalised with modern lighting and installation art. An influx of brands focused on new consumption, original design and chic culture has transformed this former "land of iron and fire" into an inspiring destination for the city's trendsetters.

▼ 798 Art District



▲ UCCA Center for Contemporary Art



The distinctive artistic and fashionable atmosphere of the 798 Art District and 751D-PARK has drawn in countless business owners with unique sensibilities. A tapestry of vintage clothing boutiques, select shops, coffee houses, tarot parlours and vinyl record stores come together. From old-style coats to limited-edition accessories, handcrafted notebooks to niche magazines, visitors are sure to discover unexpected treasures in these creatively designed and engaging spaces. If they feel tired, one of the area's Western-style restaurants awaits with graceful music and a pleasant surprise. Order an innovative dish and an oat milk latte, and enjoy the sunlight streaming through the windowpanes onto the table, allowing both body and mind to relax in peaceful tranquillity.

After enjoying a rich experience of modern art and fashion at the 798-751 Art District in the morning, visitors can finally indulge in the long-anticipated shopping at Silk Street Market. It is often said that "climbing the Great Wall, visiting the Forbidden City, eating Peking Duck and strolling along Silk Street" are the four must-dos for foreign tourists in Beijing. Silk Street refers to the renowned Silk Street Market, which dates back to 1978. Originally, it comprised a collection of small shops near the Diplomatic Residence Compound and embassy district. Unexpectedly, it evolved into a popular destination for foreigners in search of distinctive items in Beijing.

In 2003, the original market was

demolished and rebuilt. Two years later, the modern Silk Street Market opened its doors, transforming the once-vibrant open-air market into a contemporary shopping centre. The new market retains the original shopping "street" layout, preserving the iconic "street of silk fabrics" while expanding its range of distinctive offerings. Today, it features a wide selection of goods, including silk, porcelain, tea and handicrafts rich in traditional cultural charm, alongside popular branded garments and personalised, custom-made items. By blending Beijing's cultural heritage with globally sourced products at reasonable prices, Silk Street Market has become a favourite destination for shoppers from around the world.

The celebrated market has welcomed hundreds of foreign dignitaries and their spouses, diplomats from around the world and numerous international cultural and sports figures. More than just a shopping centre, it serves as a window into Beijing's urban identity and cultural reach. Scenes like this are common: inside a bespoke clothing shop, a tailor in his fifties adjusts a suit for a foreign customer, pinching the shoulder line to smooth out wrinkles while speaking English and inviting the customer to check the fit in the mirror. Nearly every merchant in the market speaks fluent English, and some even communicate in French or Japanese. With its acceptance of multiple currencies and international credit cards—alongside warm hospitality and the tradition

of bargaining—many foreign visitors become repeat customers, often returning with friends or family. Whether it is foreign patrons carrying custom-made clothing or domestic tourists holding silk pyjamas and cultural gift boxes, nearly everyone leaves the market with a "Beijing Gift" in hand. More than just a purchase, it was a memory of the city to take home. It is not only a market, but also a key destination for international travellers.

After picking up some traditional Beijing souvenirs, visitors might consider exploring one of the city's most popular IP brands: POP MART. This trendy toy brand, now virtually ubiquitous in China, has not only reshaped consumer aesthetics among the younger generation but also helped bring original Chinese IP products onto the global stage. This brand marks the first instance of a Chinese collectible toy being sold at the Louvre in Paris. Its iconic IP characters, such as LABUBU and MOLLY, have gained international acclaim, sparking a global collecting craze.

Situated on the banks of a glistening lake in Beijing's Chaoyang Park, POP MART has launched its first offline theme park: POP LAND. Covering around 40,000 square metres, the park combines popular toys, natural scenery and immersive experiences. It is not only a perfect destination for family outings but also a "dream-making space" where young people can let their imaginations run free.

Entering via POP Street, visitors are immediately immersed in a parade of childlike wonder and fantasy. The street, lined with



▲ POP LAND at Chaoyang Park

IP-themed shops and whimsically designed installations, offers plenty of opportunities to photograph and interact with beloved characters like MOLLY, LABUBU, DIMOO and SKULLPANDA. In LABUBU Adventure Forest, a fantastical realm built around THE MONSTERS family, visitors encounter magical features such as a fairy tree house, a warrior tribe camp and a secluded fishing village tucked among lush greenery and a tranquil lake. This area thoughtfully preserves the natural setting of Chaoyang Park while seamlessly blending in fairytale elements, creating the feeling of stepping into a real-life adventure inspired by popular toy characters.

Situated on the east side of the theme park, the Bubble Castle serves as its central hub, overseen by the beloved character MOLLY. The ground floor features a curated collection of sought-after toys, including a dedicated MOLLY Toy House. The second and third floors house dining areas where MOLLY's presence is felt throughout, from the decor to the tableware, creating a cheerful and playful dining atmosphere. The basement level offers something unique: a space themed around MOLLY's Wish. This immersive area is dedicated to the creation of popular toys, allowing visitors to observe and take part in the full toy-making process, revealing the secrets behind their design.

Don't miss The Yum Explorer, a yacht elegantly docked by the lakeside on the south side of the castle. Aboard the vessel,



▲ POP LAND at Chaoyang Park

enjoy a delightful dessert while watching the sunset shimmer across the water, creating the illusion that the real world is glowing with fairytale magic.

As evening falls, visitors will discover the illuminated Liangma River nearby—one of Beijing's most cosmopolitan waterfront areas. The riverbanks are lined with a wide array of dining options, from classic Chinese dishes to distinctive international cuisine, sure to satisfy even the pickiest eaters. Relaxing in the open-air seating of a riverside restaurant, enjoying flavourful food and the scenic views of the Liangma River, visitors will find the simple pleasures of a summer evening brought to life.

After supper, visitors can enjoy a leisurely boat tour from Yansha Pier to take in the scenic beauty of the Liangma River. The 6-kilometre waterway features 24 bridges,

including Youyi Bridge, Haoyun Bridge and Zhijin Bridge, each one a unique "pearl" with its own special charm.

Beneath the starlit sky, Liuli Bridge evokes a fairytale atmosphere through its play of light and shadow, enhanced by artificial mist. Guanlan Bridge is especially striking, with a dynamic double-ring design composed of concentric yet varied arcs. Facing the Solana Lifestyle Shopping Park Pier and the Shell Theatre, it forms an elegant "urban golden triangle" with them. Risheng Bridge features a flowing, dynamic facade, resembling a graceful ribbon draped across Honglingjin Lake. Lianxin Bridge, Lanmeng Bridge and others follow similarly creative concepts, each showcasing the design ingenuity and artistic flair of modern Beijing's urban development. Beyond their functional role, these bridges are sculptural expressions that link nature and culture, painting a vibrant portrait of the city's contemporary charm.

From morning exhibitions at the 798-751 Art District to afternoon shopping at Silk Street Market and immersive experiences at POP LAND, followed by a leisurely evening boat ride along the scenic Liangma River, this stylish and engaging route presents a series of fresh highlights from Beijing's cultural and tourism IP. This route radiates continuous energy, offering visitors a vivid glimpse into the interplay between the city's vibrancy and popular culture.



▲ Silk Street Market



▲ Solana Lifestyle Shopping Park

Comfortable sneakers are recommended when visiting the 798-751 Art District and POP LAND, as both involve a fair amount of walking.

POP LAND is perfect for photography, so don't forget to bring your favourite collectible toys for fun and creative shots.

If time permits, consider enjoying light water activities such as stand-up paddleboarding or kayaking on the Liangma River. Note that some of these activities require advance booking.



## Route 4

# Leisure and Art along the Grand Canal

Text by Zhang Jian   Photos by Tong Tianyi



The Grand Canal, the world's longest and largest ancient waterway, is a shared cultural treasure of the Chinese nation and a powerful symbol of historical significance. The Beijing section of this iconic waterway is deeply interwoven with the city's rich heritage and distinctive character, blending former imperial influences with the vibrancy of daily life to create a unique brilliance. This fusion has given rise to a notable cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP) asset, one that highlights both national identity and Beijing's singular charm. To truly experience the essence of this IP, visitors can embark on a leisurely and enriching journey along the Grand Canal in Beijing. From morning through evening, they can visit three major cultural landmarks (the Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, Beijing Library and Beijing Performing Arts Centre), explore the historic "Three Temples and One Pagoda" architectural complex and immerse themselves in the lively, artistic spirit of Moon River Town. A single day is enough to appreciate the Grand Canal's dynamic presence, its storytelling potential, its creative force and its role as a vital channel of cultural exchange.

## Rediscovering the Grand Canal at New Cultural Landmarks

For a first visit to the Beijing Municipal Administrative Centre, consider taking a cruise for an artistic and relaxing journey along the Grand Canal. Board a leisure boat dedicated to the three major cultural landmarks from Pier No. 2 in the Grand Canal Cultural Scenic Area's Olympic Sports Park. The cruise to the landmark pier takes 25 minutes. Upon arrival, the Grand Canal Museum of Beijing is the first captivating sight greeting visitors.

This summer, the museum is presenting the "Exhibition Series on the Origins of Chinese Civilisation: This is the Shang." Featuring national treasures such as the Chongyang Bronze Drum from the Hubei Provincial Museum and the "Fu Hao" Xiaozun Bronze Vessel from the Henan Museum, the exhibition invites visitors to appreciate the splendour of China's bronze civilisation from over 3,000 years ago.

The Grand Canal Museum features an ingenious design that incorporates three cultural elements of the Grand Canal—boats, sails and water—evoking the image of a historic "canal boat" slowly gliding into view. This boat-inspired concept is consistently echoed throughout the museum's interior.

The museum's permanent exhibition, "Historical and Cultural Exhibition of Beijing and the Grand Canal," vividly presents the canal's excavation, its connection to Beijing and the history, culture and landscapes along its route.

A particularly impressive section of the museum is undoubtedly the "Beyond the Canal: Immersive Experience Exhibition." This area employs a large-scale 3D projection device to reconstruct the canal's history, figures and scenes within a virtual three-dimensional space. Visitors feel as though they're journeying through time and space, from the echoing chants of boatmen to the opening of a bustling canal festival, and from the landscapes and customs of canal-side cities to the vibrant Beijing

Municipal Administrative Centre. Located nearby, Beijing Library, known for its striking architecture, has also become a favourite among social media users.

The Beijing Library, also known as the "Forest Reading Hall," features a distinctive design. Its bookshelves are arranged in neat rows, forming a stepped, hill-like structure that rises and falls with its own slope. Visitors can ascend this "hill" via the steps, pausing at various "reading islands" to read, either seated on the floor or resting against a window.

The library boasts the world's largest single-building reading room, spanning 18,000 square metres. It also houses China's largest smart three-dimensional book vault, containing 8 million printed books and 4 million electronic books, and features one of the world's most advanced automated book storage and retrieval systems.

The halls dedicated to the Rare Book Division, along with the Intangible Cultural Heritage Collection Division, are veritable treasure troves, housing a wealth of rare classics and archival materials. These spaces



1. The Grand Canal Museum of Beijing   2. Beijing Library   3. Beijing Performing Arts Centre



also employ digital technology to provide services such as remote reading and ancient book restoration.

When in need of rest, visitors can relax and recharge in the library's leisure and dining area. They may sit by the window, watch the sunlight fall gently across the reading room and enjoy a cup of coffee brewed by a robot barista.

The Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, Beijing Library and Beijing Performing Arts Centre are hailed as the three major cultural landmarks of the Beijing Municipal Administrative Centre. As distinctive attractions, they collectively form a compelling cultural and tourism IP asset, drawing significant attention to the municipal administrative centre.

With a design inspired by the ancient granaries found along the canal, the Beijing Performing Arts Centre consists of three buildings and includes five major performance venues: Opera House, Concert Hall, Drama Theatre, Small Theatre and Amphitheatre. The Opera House features the country's most advanced and fully functional immersive sound reinforcement system. Additionally, the vineyard-style Concert Hall is home to a "French Romantic" pipe organ, regarded as one of its prized possessions.

Here, visitors can enjoy the melodic vocals of the Peking Opera *The Red-Mane*

*Savage Horse*, explore the urban themes of the play *Night Stalker* and even attend a symphony concert beneath the stars at the Amphitheatre.

## Exploring Three Temples and One Pagoda by Boat

After leaving the Beijing Performing Arts Centre, visitors can board a boat heading north from the pier that connects the three major cultural landmarks. Before long, the towering Randeng Pagoda (Dipankara Pagoda) comes into view. As the most iconic cultural landmark along the Beijing section of the Grand Canal, it anchors the ancient "Three Temples and One Pagoda" architectural complex in Tongzhou District.

The complex is located on Dacheng Street in the heart of Tongzhou's old city. The "Three Temples" within it are the Temple of Literature or Confucian Temple (representing Confucianism), Youshengjiao Temple (representing Buddhism) and Ziqing Palace (representing Taoism). Arranged in a formation that resembles the Chinese character "品", the temples stand side by side, each maintaining its own distinct character.

The Temple of Literature, also known as Confucian School, was initially constructed in 1298, the second year of the Dade era of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). By 1883, the

ninth year of the Guangxu era of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), it had undergone 22 renovations and expansions, making it the second-largest Confucian temple in Beijing. Its Dacheng Hall is a grand and imposing structure that enshrines the revered sage Confucius, flanked by statues of 72 accompanying sages, evoking a deep sense of reverence.

A short walk east of the Confucian Temple leads to Youshengjiao Temple, a Buddhist temple with a long and storied history. Having undergone numerous renovations, it now reflects a blend of Ming and Qing architectural styles.

Ziqing Palace, situated west of the Confucian Temple, is commonly known as the Red Boy Temple. This Taoist temple is dedicated to Laozi. According to legend, during times of drought, Tongzhou residents would come here to pray for rain. Their prayers, however, were directed not to Laozi, but to Nezha, as shown in the temple's murals.

Today, despite their distinct purposes, they coexist peacefully within the same

▼ Randeng Pagoda (Dipankara Pagoda)



▼ The Temple of Literature at night



▲ Moon River Town

complex. Visitors can reflect on the moral teachings of Confucianism, the Buddhist idea of cause and effect and the Taoist principle of harmony with nature. Together, these elements form the spiritual foundation of ancient Chinese society.

After exploring the three temples, visitors can trace the shadow of Randeng Pagoda. Originally built during the Northern Zhou Dynasty (AD 557–581), this 56-metre-tall pagoda features a non-hollow and octagonal structure with 13 storeys. A robust brick and wood structure, it is adorned with gracefully upturned eaves and elaborate *dougong* brackets.

Throughout the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, countless grain-laden vessels departed from south and journeyed north, eventually reaching the capital. The distant silhouette of Randeng Pagoda signalled their imminent arrival in Beijing, instilling a feeling of security in the crews. Today, the pagoda still stands tall, serving as a symbolic link between Tongzhou's past and present.

## Encountering Art and Daily Life at Moon River Town

As evening falls, the experience of canal culture within the Municipal Administrative Centre continues. The true spirit of "leisurely

enjoyment" is best felt in Moon River Town, tucked away in the southwest corner of Grand Canal Forest Park.

Upon entering the town, visitors are immediately drawn to Pigeon Square, renowned for its uniquely romantic ambiance that feels straight out of a foreign film. Fountains, sculptures, arched corridors, European-style stone columns, a carousel and flocks of soaring white doves come together to create a fairytale-like setting reminiscent of Prague. It is a haven for photography enthusiasts and a must-visit for lovebirds.

The square pulses with the vibrant energy of a night market. The cultural and creative street features independent brands from Beijing and beyond, offering handcrafted canvas bags, copper keychains and accessories inspired by Grand Canal culture. Interactive workshops such as rubbing, tie-dyeing and lacquer fan making are also available.

A book market provides a peaceful alternative, offering poetry collections, vintage magazines and photo albums that invite passersby to pause and explore. Some stalls include seating areas with coffee and cakes, creating cosy corners for relaxed reading.

Nearby, the food court, rich with

enticing aromas, is a must-visit for many. Snack stands serve up traditional Chinese barbecue, Southeast Asian satay and Western-style desserts.

The most defining characteristic of the town is its widespread artistic sculptures and installations. Rather than being overtly showcased, they are subtly woven into the environment—set beside fountains, nestled in flower beds or tucked among the markets—inviting visitors to discover them by chance.

In the late hours, the town hosts open-air film screenings or intimate concerts. Visitors can sit or recline on the lawn, watching the film or admiring the distant silhouette of Randeng Pagoda—a striking image of past and present intertwined.

From daytime reading in the library to enjoying the elegance of nightlife, from exploring bronze artefacts and oracle bone inscriptions in the museum to sampling culturally inspired ice cream and latte art, the Grand Canal's cultural IP transcends a mere scenic spot or historical narrative—it represents a living part of daily life, allowing all who visit to experience the warmth and beauty of the Grand Canal.

## More about the Three Major Cultural Landmarks

### Grand Canal Museum of Beijing

Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m.–8 p.m.; last entry at 7 p.m. Closed on Mondays, except for public holidays.

Exhibition Series on the Origins of Chinese Civilisation: This is the Shang  
Exhibition Dates: May 19 to October 12, 2025

### Beijing Performing Arts Centre

Advance booking required. Two time slots available: 10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 1 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

### Beijing Library

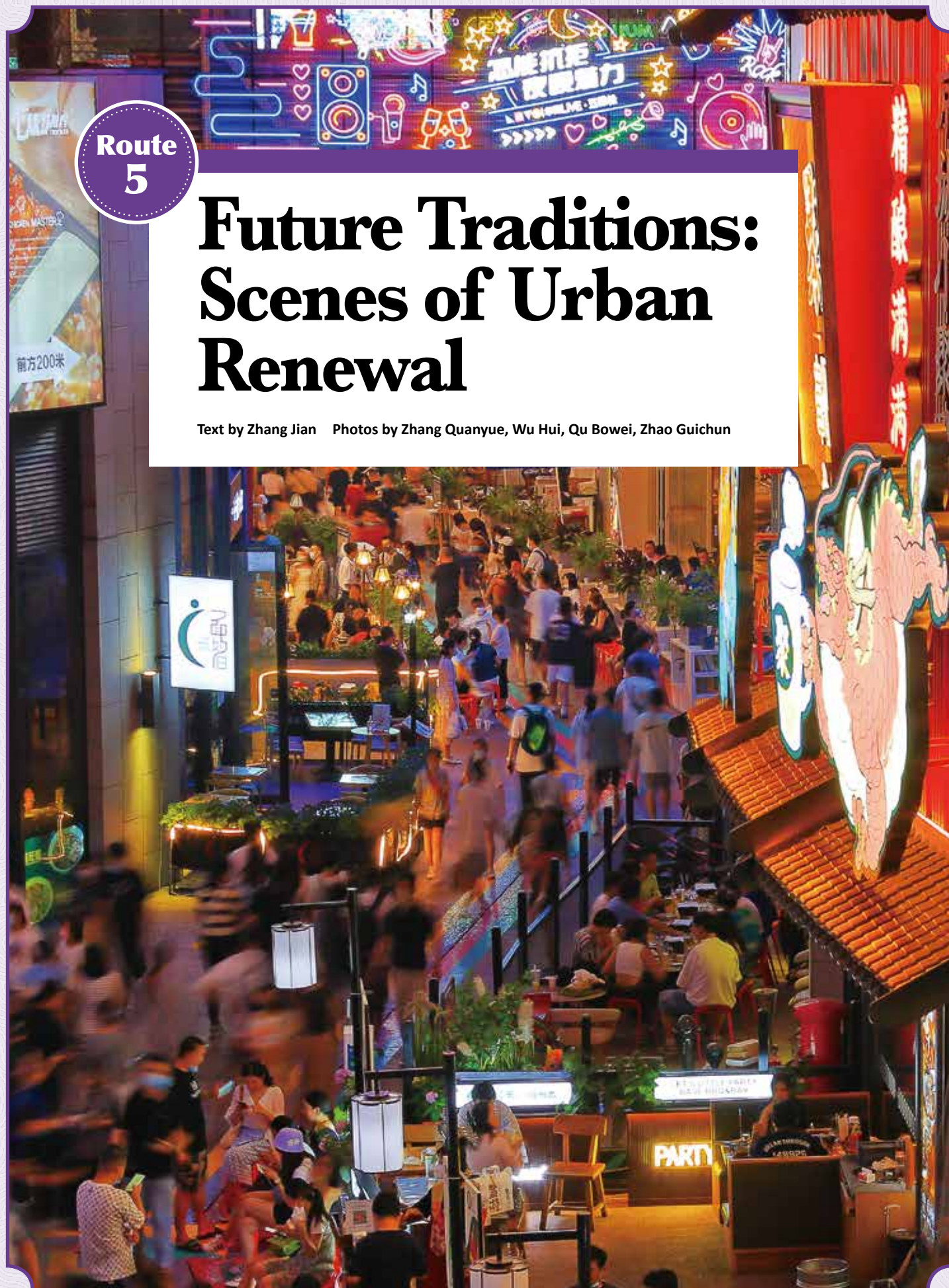
Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m.–8 p.m.



## Route 5

# Future Traditions: Scenes of Urban Renewal

Text by Zhang Jian   Photos by Zhang Quanyue, Wu Hui, Qu Bowei, Zhao Guichun



In Beijing, a unique tourist route offers an expedition of rediscovery. Unlike typical routes that highlight famous mountains and rivers or social media hotspots, this one explores the city's remarkable process of rejuvenation.

The route highlights the deep history embedded in the Ancient Road of Western Beijing, the remarkable transformation of former industrial sites and the vibrant energetic nightlife of today's Beijing. Together, these elements form a distinctive cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP) unique to the city.

This experience is a must for anyone eager to explore urban renewal, societal evolution and the fusion of urban culture with creativity. Just one day on the route offers a captivating journey filled with unexpected discoveries and lasting impressions.

## Moshikou in the Morning Sunshine

The tour begins at Moshikou Station on Beijing Subway Line 11. Upon exiting the station, visitors are greeted by the tranquil yet vibrant Moshikou Street. As a key section of the Western Beijing Ancient Road, it once echoed with the tinkling of camel bells and the hustle of merchant caravans. Now it has been transformed from a "forgotten corner" into a "cultural zone" through urban renewal efforts, and stands as a clear example of the city's revitalisation.

The east-west street, though not wide, seamlessly blends historical culture with everyday life. In the side alleys, neat vegetable stalls cater to local residents selecting fresh produce, creating a lively and authentic market atmosphere.

The streetscape is just as captivating, with pet-themed sculptures and art installations standing alongside a range of distinctive dining spots and coffee shops. As visitors stroll along the street, a sense of timelessness sets in. Early summer blooms of hydrangeas and oxeye daisies in various colours further enhance the street's already charming appeal.

On the south side of the street's middle section stands the "Exhibition Room

of Beijing's First Electrified Village," which highlights Moshikou's pioneering status in rural electrification. In 1922, the Jingshi Huashang Electric Light Company brought electricity to the village, boosting the local economy and improving the lives of villagers. This success became a model for others, prompting a change in the name "Moshikou" from its original meaning of "a place featuring whetstones" to "a place to be a model."

North of the street's middle section is Cheng'en Temple. Experts believe the temple may have served as an intelligence outpost for the Embroidered Uniform Guard during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). In

2020, it was transformed into the Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts Museum, which now showcases more than 400 traditional imperial handicrafts across 8 prestigious art forms: cloisonné enamel, filigree inlay, gold inlay lacquerware, carved lacquerware, jade carvings, ivory carvings, Beijing embroidery and palace carpets.

Cheng'en Temple is a rewarding destination, though advance appointments are required. Visitors will be drawn to the brilliant craftsmanship of the filigree inlay artefacts and the exquisitely detailed lifelike jade Buddha statues. The museum guide's storytelling is as captivating as the artistry on display.



▲ Moshikou

▼ Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts Museum







▲ Fahai Temple Mural Art Museum

Further east lies Jingxi Bookstore, a space that combines books, coffee and cultural and creative products. It includes a dedicated area for displaying books and related merchandise, including titles focused on the murals of Fahai Temple. After enjoying a coffee and browsing through a book, visitors can head to the Fahai Temple Mural Art Museum—a renovated venue that uses digital displays to interpret cultural relics. Using high-definition technology, the museum recreates the original scenes of the Fahai Temple murals at a 1:1 scale. It also provides multidimensional comparisons between the murals and nearly 100 related cultural relics and materials from home and abroad. This allows visitors to study the murals in fine detail and appreciate their historical, artistic and cultural significance.

The murals of Fahai Temple are renowned for their strikingly realistic depiction of gauze draped over the Water and Moon Guanyin. Visitors can uncover the secrets behind this effect, including the painting techniques and pigments used.



▲ Night view of Shougang Park

By exploring the murals' painting techniques and their depictions of figures, costumes and architecture, visitors can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the essence of traditional Chinese culture through the museum's interpretive guidance.

**Free guided tours at the Fahai Temple Mural Art Museum are offered daily from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

**Visiting Fahai Temple requires an advance reservation.**

After visiting the museum, guests can head north to the temple itself, where they will encounter five notable features: Ming Dynasty murals, a caisson ceiling adorned with mandala motifs, bronze Buddha bells, ancient, white-barked pines and one-arch bridge with one ancient cypress growing at each of its four corners.

Moshikou Street, just over one kilometre (km) long, seamlessly blends daily life, historical heritage and contemporary art. As a notable example of the capital city's urban renewal,

Moshikou offers an immersive experience that invites careful exploration.

## Shougang Park in the Afternoon

After spending half a day exploring Moshikou and immersing themselves in Beijing's rich and enduring history and culture, visitors can head to Shougang Park in the afternoon. There, they can see how exceptional creativity has transformed this iconic industrial heritage site through urban renewal.

Shougang Park is part of the Shougang Group, once China's largest steel enterprise in the 20th century. In 2010, the company completed a full relocation in line with urban emission reduction targets and industrial transformation efforts. Its nearly 90,000-square-metre (sq.m) factory complex lay dormant for a period before Shougang began renovating the former industrial area.

The renewal of Shougang focused on preservation and innovation rather than demolition and reconstruction. The park retains four former blast furnaces, with Blast Furnace No. 1 being the most well-known. It has been transformed into SoReal Sci-Fi Park, using technologies such as AR, VR and holographic projection to

create immersive experiences. Stepping inside transports visitors into a world where steampunk meets futuristic space, offering a striking contrast between history and the future. Blast Furnace No. 3, the first modern large-scale blast furnace in Shougang with a volume exceeding 2,500 cubic metres, is recognised as a cherished "Meritorious Blast Furnace" and a symbol of the city's industrial legacy. After its decommissioning, a detailed design and development plan took advantage of the site's elevation differences, resulting in a remarkable transformation of this "industrial hero." The revitalised space now serves as a venue for major cultural and international events in Beijing. Large-scale gatherings such as the China Science Fiction Convention, Beijing Fashion Week and numerous brand launches have been held on the 9.7-metre (m)-high platform inside the furnace, attracting tens of thousands of spectators.

In addition to Blast Furnace No. 1 and Blast Furnace No. 3, steelmaking facilities and equipment can be seen throughout the park. The renewal of Shougang deliberately avoided treating these elements as industrial waste. Instead, repurposed mechanical and electrical equipment now serve as

industrial art installations, enhancing the park's distinct character more effectively than any traditional sculpture could.

Big Air Shougang, also known as the "Snow Flying Ribbon," is a must-see attraction within Shougang Park. Not only did it host the freestyle and snowboard big air events at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games, but it also became the world's first permanent big air venue. Built on the site of Shougang's industrial heritage, the structure is harmoniously integrated with Qunming Lake, the nearby decommissioned cooling towers and the distant Western Hills. Today, visitors can take the country's leading inclined elevator to the 48-m-tall starting platform to experience the view from an athlete's perspective. From there, they can enjoy sweeping views of Qunming Lake, the cooling towers and the mountains beyond. The expansive panorama inspires a sense of awe.

Beyond the industrial facilities, the park's natural landscapes are also well worth experiencing. While neither Xiuchi Lake near Blast Furnace No. 3 nor Qunming Lake near Big Air Shougang is especially large, both are distinguished by the towering architecture lining their shores. Together, these elements create a

▼ Immersive metaverse experience at Shougang Park



**At present, the buildings on the hill are temporarily closed for renovation.**

**Chang An Mills, the largest shopping centre in Shougang Park, offers a wide variety of dining and entertainment options. Visitors can enjoy a complete lifestyle experience through its all-in-one mix of food, leisure, sightseeing and shopping.**

striking sense of visual harmony.

Also within the park is a small hill called Shijingshan. Though modest in size, it gave its name to Beijing's Shijingshan District. At its summit stands Monument Pavilion, a memorial built by Shougang to honour its history and uphold its enduring spirit. The hill is also home to Bixia Yuanjun Temple, originally constructed during the Ming Dynasty and later rebuilt during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). The hill echoes the presence of Tiantai Mountain and Miaofeng Mountain in the distance. On a clear day, visitors at the pavilion can enjoy panoramic views of Shougang Park and the surrounding western suburbs.

Shougang Park also offers a wide range of food and beverage options, including fast food, Chinese cuisine, coffee and desserts. Visitors can enjoy unique experiences throughout the park. For example, the McDonald's features a bicycle-powered generator. By pedalling, much like using an indoor cycling bike, visitors can generate enough electricity to light up the large "M" sign at the entrance. Baidu's driverless bus provides a free 3.4-km ride within the park. Visitors can simply scan a QR code to join.

The transformation of Shougang Park from an "industrial heritage site" into the "light of the city" reflects not only a spatial renewal but also a reimagining of urban values, culture and vision. Shougang Park is a key stop along Beijing's journey of urban renewal.





▲ Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong

## Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong at Night

As the sun slowly sets behind Beijing's Western Hills, the city shifts into "night mode." After a day spent exploring its history and culture, visitors can continue along the path of urban renewal and step into the nightlife of modern urbanites at Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong. This area stands as a prime example of Beijing's revitalised urban nightlife.

Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong, located at the intersection of the West Fourth Ring Road and Chang'an Avenue, originated as an initiative to repurpose Olympic legacy venues. It has since evolved into a dynamic area that combines performing arts, sports, shopping, dining, nightlife and trendy entertainment.

As evening falls, visitors will not want to miss the area's wide variety of tempting culinary options. The food zone features 68 distinctive food and beverage establishments, from spicy Sichuan and Hunan restaurants to *izakayas* (traditional Japanese bars) and innovative cuisines, each giving off an enticing aroma. Crucially, most of these venues stay open until 2 a.m., offering late-night dining that provides real "comfort for the taste buds" to those heading home late.

Beyond the delicious food, the area's bar

street is also highly regarded. It features more than 30 bars, including N Beer Pub, Jing A, BONGBONG, Beer & Frog and Xiang Livehouse. Each night, live bands take the stage at these venues. With dynamic music and shimmering lights, the bar street has become a "delightfully tipsy paradise" in western Beijing. Whether meeting up with friends or unwinding alone, visitors can find comfort and enjoyment here.

Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong has also become a new landmark for trendy events in Beijing. Its halls and stadiums host over 300 events each year, including concerts and basketball and ice hockey games, contributing to a lively cultural and sports scene. With 15 professional indoor and outdoor courts, the Basketball Park, with courts that remain open until 10 p.m., is not only a haven for basketball enthusiasts but also a stop for NBA stars during their visits to China. The park also regularly hosts member leagues and other events, giving people plenty of opportunities to enjoy the energy and fun of basketball.

The Ice Sports and Entertainment Centre served as the ice hockey training venue for the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games. Nicknamed the "Ice Crystal," the venue features a captivating

light show after dark. Inside, it houses two standard ice rinks, measuring 60 m x 30 m and 60 m x 26 m, which can be easily reconfigured. These rinks accommodate activities such as figure skating, ice hockey training and competitions. Under the glow of the lights, the clear ice surface sparkles with a magical sheen. Gliding across it feels like stepping into a fairytale. A large square sits between the Basketball Park and the Ice Sports and Entertainment Centre, covering more than 40,000 sq.m—larger than six football fields. With outdoor lighting available until midnight, the square offers free fitness equipment and open space for roller skating, frisbee, street hockey and cycling.

Visual design is a key highlight of Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong. The space is richly adorned with lighting installations and artistic sculptures, creating an immersive nighttime visual experience. Popular attractions like Love Square, the Flower Wall, Funhouse Mirrors and the Interactive Art Wall have become social media favourites, drawing numerous young visitors keen to take photos and share them with friends. Thanks to its distinctive appeal, Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong has repeatedly been recognised as "Beijing's Landmark on Social Media" and featured on the "Late-night Diner List" and "Must-Visit List of the Capital City" for several years.

Most importantly, Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong has achieved a meaningful integration of "scene renewal" and "urban renewal." What was once a dormant venue complex has been transformed into a dynamic living space that blends trendy elements, energy, art and social interaction. The success of Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong is a clear example of how a city can creatively repurpose space to meet the evolving needs of its people.

From the historical revival of Moshikou Street to the industrial regeneration of Shougang Park and the trendy reinvention of Huaxi LIVE • Wukesong, Beijing presents three distinct revitalisation landscapes. For those seeking an extraordinary travel experience, this journey of "urban renewal" is not to be missed.

## Route 6

# Discovering an Ancient Town near the Great Wall

Text by Zhang Jian Photos by [Poland] Mariusz Przygoda, Lyu Lingwu





Gubei Water Town and the Simatai section of the Great Wall in Miyun District, northeast Beijing, are highly recommended for anyone interested in the country's long history, intangible cultural heritage or Beijing's unique charm. This area holds some of the city's most popular cultural and tourism items of intellectual property (IP). Visitors can not only experience one of the most iconic sections of the Great Wall, but also enjoy an ideal vision of slow living as imagined by Beijingers.

Setting aside a full day to explore the area is well worth it. During the daytime, visitors can enjoy traditional intangible cultural heritage crafts and savour authentic Beijing flavours. After dark, they can carry lanterns as they climb the Simatai section of the Great Wall.

## Savouring Old Beijing Flavours in Gubei Water Town

The drive from central Beijing to Gubei Water Town takes roughly two hours.

The water town is located in Gubeikou, Miyun District, at the foot of the Simatai section of the Great Wall. In ancient times, it held strategic importance as a border stronghold. During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the imperial court ordered the reconstruction of the Great Wall in this area to help protect the capital. Today, the town is one of the most popular cultural tourism destinations in Beijing's suburbs.

Walking through the entrance by the Xiaotang River, visitors are greeted by retro-style buildings marked by grey bricks, tiled roofs and decorative roof figures along the ridges throughout the town. These structures feature finely crafted architectural details. Spending a full day exploring the winding paths of Gubei Water Town often leaves visitors even more curious about its charm. For a unique perspective,

they can ride a sampan—propelled by a single long sculling oar—beneath 21 ancient bridges that span the town's waterways. These bridges were reconstructed using designs from Hebei and Shanxi provinces and come in a range of forms inspired by the garden architecture of the Ming and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties: arch, flat, zigzag, roofed and footbridges. Flowing water, elegant bridges and riverside homes together create a picturesque setting that brings the tranquil atmosphere of Jiangnan, the region south of the Yangtze River, to Beijing.

The main thoroughfare of Gubei Water Town is flanked by craft shops on the left bank and a folklore street on the right. While creating an old-fashioned street isn't hard, arranging a thoughtful layout for a range of trades and businesses is no easy task. Yongshun Dye House is a genuine, long-established local brand. Its founder, Zhang Jukui, was a native of Gubeikou, and the dye house was originally founded in 1900. At its peak, the business even operated a branch in central Beijing's Xinjiekou. This branch, known as Yongshungong Laundry and Dye House, also offered laundry services.

Alongside Yongshun Dye House, the craft shops street is home to other distinctive establishments like Sima Xiaoshao

Liquor Store, Miaomiao Umbrella Shop, a kite shop, a paper-cutting house and Jiankuntang Lantern Store. Together, they help recreate the lively atmosphere of old Beijing. Dozens of intangible cultural heritage inheritors from across the country have been invited to make handicrafts here. At the kite shop, tourists can learn to paint swallows on paper kites with guidance from the artisans; at the lantern store, they can commission traditional Chinese lanterns; at the Chinese New Year picture house, they can request custom artwork from painters from Hebei; at Yongshun Dye House, they can try their hand at textile dyeing; and at Sima Xiaoshao Liquor Store, they can enjoy a taste of mellow, locally made liquor.

Sun and Moon Island Square draws crowds with traditional folk activities such as Peking Opera, acrobatics, sugar figurine blowing and Beijing-style peep shows. The lively atmosphere recalls scenes described in *My Memories of Old Beijing* by Taiwanese writer Lin Haiyin (1918–2001).

In addition to its nostalgic charm, Gubei Water Town also embraces modern trends. In recent years, it has become a favourite destination among young people, drawing them in with attractions like starry night concerts, red leaf-themed events, ACG (animation, comics and games) subculture gatherings and jazz festivals. As Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki once remarked, Gubei Water Town is a place with a rich theatrical atmosphere.

Gubei Water Town's street food is rich in classic Beijing flavours. Local favourites include Gubeikou *shaobing* (a baked, unleavened, layered flatbread), fried tofu wedges and roast duck. Even the copper pots used for hot pot dining feature traditional cloisonné enamel designs.

## Climbing the Great Wall by Lantern Light

As night falls, Gubei Water Town enters its most dazzling hour.

At 6 p.m., as the bell signals the start of the night tour, the Simatai section of the Great Wall opens to visitors. The “lantern-lit night tour” programme, launched in 2015, made Simatai the first section of the Great Wall to welcome the public after dark.

Please book tickets in advance for the night tour of the Great Wall. Opening hours: 6 p.m.–9:40 p.m. (open until 10:40 p.m. at Qingshan)

Tips

Simatai is acclaimed as the “most spectacular section” of the Great Wall. First built during the Northern Qi (AD 550–577), it was later rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty under the supervision of the famed military general Qi Jiguang (1528–1588), who was also skilled in architecture and ensured the section's strength and impressive scale. Unlike the flat and broad Badaling section, Simatai is steep and rugged, with tall watchtowers and solid walls.



▲ Simatai section of the Great Wall

It is recognised as the only section of the Great Wall to retain its original Ming Dynasty appearance. Today, the stretch from the No. 1 to the No. 10 East Watchtower has become one of Beijing's most popular spots along the Great Wall.

Climbing the Simatai section at night is a poetic and solemn experience. Standing atop the Great Wall, visitors are treated to a bird's-eye view of Gubei Water Town, its rooftops dotted with glowing lights. Gazing up from the foot of the mountains, people can see the winding wall illuminated by lamplight beneath a starry sky. If they're lucky enough to catch a drone show, they'll witness a breathtaking aerial performance—400 drones fluttering across the night sky above the Great Wall, creating a stunning visual spectacle.

After the night tour, visitors can wind down with a glass of premium beer while camping at the Great Wall's foot. Lying back under the vast, star-filled sky, people understand why Gubei Water Town has earned its nickname as a “small starry town under the Great Wall.”

The town is ideal not only for a one-day trip but also for an overnight stay. To truly experience the slow-paced lifestyle, tourists are encouraged to stay in a themed guest house. Distinctive local hotels include traditional northern China-style courtyard houses and mountaintop inns.

Gubei Water Town and the Simatai section of the Great Wall stand out as the cultural and tourism IP in Beijing's suburbs with the richest sense of warmth and the most visually striking appeal. Here, visitors can experience the grandeur of the centuries-old Great Wall, the nostalgic charm of old Beijing, the artistry of intangible cultural heritage and the romance of modern life.



▲ Gubei Water Town



# Ancient Trails: Living Heritage

Text by Ma Kai   Photos by Tong Tianyi, Zhao Shuhua, Yan Yusheng



Amidst the ongoing trend of integrating culture and tourism, historical relics that embody the essence of civilisation are being reimagined as cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP) resources, transforming the way people connect with their heritage across time and space. An ancient bluestone path in Beijing's Western Hills is a prime example: its long history provides the backdrop, while intangible cultural heritage techniques act as artistic tools to shape a distinctive cultural IP model, attracting visitors from around the world to experience the essence of Beijing's civilisation.

The journey begins at Tanzhe Temple, a venerable site that predates Beijing by 800 years. As the saying goes, "First came Tanzhe Temple, then the city of Beijing." Entering through the mountain gate, visitors hear the chanting of monks during their morning service, which echoes from the Great Buddha's Hall. Sunlight filters through the 20-metre-high columns, casting a golden web that illuminates the gilded robe of the Sakyamuni Buddha statue. Outside the hall, young international visitors photograph a chi-dragon statue on the roof ridge, their hushed voices mingling with the scent of incense: "This creature with its upturned dragon-like tail is incredible!" The ancient "Emperor Tree," dating back to the Sui (AD 581–618) or Tang (AD 618–907) dynasties, stands tall before the hall. Towering and majestic, it reaches dozens of metres high, its canopy wide and lush. Nearby, the two Yulan magnolia trees known as the "Sisters Qiao" have filled the air with fragrance for four centuries, their blossoms a symbol of good fortune. Turning west, visitors encounter elegant architectural features that recall scenes from classical Chinese poetry and prose. On a white marble base carved with a "nine dragons playing in the water" motif, a winding water channel—like a jade belt—evokes the refined spirit of the "Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion." Legend has it that Emperor Qianlong (reign: 1735–1796) of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) once visited the temple with his ministers. Just imagine that they composed poetry and sipped wine amidst the beautiful surroundings and the sound of a gently flowing spring. Deeper

within the temple, visitors are enveloped by the scent of incense from the Dragon King Hall. A stone fish, hanging beneath the eaves, tells the tale of a fish transforming into a dragon. Though weathered by time, the carving is still visible. Striking it in different spots produces clear tones, reminiscent of traditional Chinese music. Rooted in an agricultural civilisation, the stone fish once served as a sacred totem for praying for good weather and harvests. Climbing the steps of the temple nestled among nine peaks, visitors are greeted by the sound of the Dragon Pool's flowing water and the shadows of ancient mulberry trees, both part of the "Ten Scenic Spots of Tanzhe Temple." The eaves, decorated with nine dragons playing with a pearl, are shrouded in mist, like a classical Chinese painting of a secluded mountain temple. Here, time appears to be slowed down, allowing visitors to escape the world's hustle and bustle and immerse themselves in a tranquil and harmonious atmosphere, their spirits finding rejuvenation.

Leaving the serene Tanzhe Temple, visitors can stroll along an ancient path steeped in quiet history and natural charm. Beneath their feet, persistent wild grasses grow through the cracks in the bluestone slabs, while rainwater collects in bowl-shaped depressions, reflecting the soft blue of the sky. These indentations were gradually worn into the stone by the steady passage of mules and horses

▼ Tanzhe Temple



▼ Tanzhe Temple







▲ An ancient trail in Western Beijing

that once transported coal during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). Lush green trees line both sides of the trail, their branches and leaves weaving together to form a natural archway. Sunlight streams through the foliage, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow that dance across the path like a living oil painting. Wildflowers bloom in profusion, their colours ranging from fiery crimson to pale pink and snow white. As they sway in the breeze, a gentle fragrance fills the air. The soft sound of trickling water can sometimes be heard, like a delicate melody drifting through the trees. Nearby, the aroma of tea draws visitors to a modest stand by the path. The owner warmly serves homemade rose and jujube tea in rustic earthenware bowls. Occasionally, villagers pass by carrying baskets of fresh fruit, their creaking shoulder poles rousing a flock of birds into flight toward distant Baihua Mountain.

Upon arriving at Tanko, visitors can experience a pleasing balance between the vitality of the ancient path and the comfort of modern leisure. In autumn, the fiery red maple leaves that line the old path—once a scene of quiet desolation for passing horse caravans—have been transformed into “masterpieces” through the lenses of today’s urban photographers.

This rediscovered valley has become a “spiritual sanctuary” for city dwellers in search of a peaceful escape from the daily rush. The area is filled with a rich artistic ambiance, showcasing a wide array of creative works. Abstract oil paintings, with bold and vivid colours, convey the profound sentiments of their creators. Elegant sculptures take on a variety of forms, some strong and commanding, others soft and graceful. Distinctive and imaginative handicrafts are also on display, drawing considerable interest. Inside a local coffee shop, a group of international tourists gather over aromatic cups of coffee, chatting warmly about art and their impressions of the journey. Though from different countries and cultures, they find shared understanding and resonance in this welcoming space.

An afternoon break at the open-air tea shop offers an unexpected delight. A young person holding an iced coffee sits beside a gentleman playing the *guqin*, a seven-stringed plucked instrument. The aroma of coffee mingles with the fresh scent of pine needles from the nearby forest, creating a peaceful atmosphere ideal for reading. The Valley Theatre is also worth visiting, with performances of *pingshu*, a traditional form of Chinese storytelling. Veteran artists, speaking in authentic Beijing dialect, narrate engaging

stories, such as scenes from daily life in the city’s hutongs. Stepping into the Jingxi Bookstore, a visitor happens upon the “Liuliqu Official Kiln,” a section of *The Annals of Ancient Trails of Western Beijing*. The bookstore owner, while preparing a pot of jasmine tea, offers a suggestion: “You can go explore Liuli Culture Park to learn about the craftsmanship of making *liuli* during the Yuan Dynasty.”

*Liuli*, or coloured glaze, is a traditional intangible cultural heritage craft of Beijing, representing the culmination of generations of artisans’ wisdom and skill. At Liuli Culture Park, the air carries the distinct scent of burnt clay. Inside the kiln, flickering flames transform raw materials into crystal-clear works of art. For instance, coloured glazed vases feature intricate and refined patterns across their surfaces. Glazed animal figures are crafted with clearly defined details, even down to the texture of their fur, giving them a lifelike presence. Uniquely shaped and richly imaginative glazed ornaments are also on display. Here, visitors can try making glazed wares, feeling the clay shift beneath their fingers and witnessing the birth of new creations. From kneading and shaping the clay to firing it in the kiln, each stage calls for care and patience, and every attempt comes with its own set of surprises and challenges.



When handed a lump of golden clay by a senior artisan, visitors might initially assume that creating colourful glazed wares is as simple as kneading dough. Shaping it, however, turns out to require the soft, steady strength of practising tai chi. They knead the clay carefully, trying to mould it into the form they envisioned. Yet the process proves more difficult than expected. One visitor’s piece ends up slightly crooked, leaning like a tipsy person. Another applies too much force while attempting to form a cup and ends up with an oddly shaped block. Still, they persist. Under the patient guidance of the experienced artisan, they make adjustments and give it another go. The artisan offers reassurance: “Don’t worry. Take your time. Making glazed wares requires patience and care.” As the kiln door closes, flames burst out like a fiery-red dragon from the chamber’s depths. Inside, their creations undergo a quiet transformation, fired at 1,100 degrees Celsius. Once the temperature begins to drop, the artisan dons thick gloves and retrieves the pieces using long tongs. In that moment, visitors begin to understand the pride of Liuliqu, the “Hometown of Chinese Coloured Glaze.” Some children, holding their freshly crafted “little beasts,” jump with delight. The artisan squints and smiles, saying, “This craft has been handed down for six hundred years. We just hope more young people will embrace it and carry it on.”

As evening falls, a mountain breeze scented with pine leads visitors to Ziyang Shanzhuang Inn, known as the “Idyllic Beauty Paradise in Western Beijing.” This village, nestled among misty mountains, has been rebuilt by blending the rugged charm of northern dwellings with the elegance of Jiangnan-style courtyards. Clusters of grey-tiled, white-walled guesthouses are arranged along the slopes. Each courtyard hides its own quiet surprise—perhaps the shade of an old grapevine or a patch of wild chrysanthemums blooming freely in a corner. As they set down their backpacks, visitors become the temporary masters of

their mountain retreat.

As dusk settles over the valley, lanterns throughout the inn begin to glow. The individual courtyards resemble fireflies scattered along the hillside, their terraces aligned with the arc of the Big Dipper. In one courtyard, where bamboo shadows sway gently, a housekeeper offers a cup of hot tea, accompanied by the distant echo of evening drums from Tanzhe Temple. Night in the deep valley unfurls like a layer of dark blue gauze, wrapping city dwellers in a long-awaited, peaceful slumber. Pushing open a carved wooden window, visitors can glimpse the bowl-shaped pits on the ancient path, worn by Yuan Dynasty caravans and now faintly glimmering in the moonlight. The caravans seem to serve as links across time, bridging past and present.

The ancient path of Baihua Mountain is like a string of pearls: Tanzhe Temple reflects the amber glow of history, Ziyang Shanzhuang Inn captures the poetry of

mountains and waters, Tanko offers a glimpse into the future and the Coloured Glaze Workshop resonates like a symphony of flames. This ancient path serves as a corridor through time, linking each element into a unified journey. Most notably, every visitor becomes a co-author of this cultural narrative. By crafting glazed wares, they take part in reshaping the legacy of the capital city’s intangible cultural heritage. While daydreaming on village inn terraces, they may find themselves drawn into the quiet beauty of Yuan Dynasty poet Ma Zhiyuan’s verse: “Under a small bridge near a cottage a stream flows.”

Today’s Beijing welcomes “those who come from afar” not merely as hurried travellers, but as kindred spirits who recognise its historical splendour and modern accomplishments. Like wandering the winding ancient path of western Beijing, visitors can truly appreciate the city’s charm in every detail only by slowing down.

## More about Tanzhe Temple

### The Emperor Tree

Standing proudly before the Vairocana Pavilion at Tanzhe Temple, this ginkgo is the most celebrated among the site’s many ancient trees. Estimated to be over 1,400 years old, it continues to flourish with dense branches and vibrant foliage.

### Sisters Qiao Yulan Magnolias

Planted during the Ming Dynasty, these two magnolia trees have stood for over four centuries. Each spring, they blossom with both pink and white flowers—each tree bears both colours—which complement each other in a striking display, making them one of Beijing’s most enchanting sights of the season.

### Stone Fish

Hanging beneath the eaves of the Dragon King Hall, this bluish-black stone fish is one of Tanzhe Temple’s treasured artefacts. According to legend, lightly touching the fish that corresponds to one’s illnesses or injuries can bring about miraculous healing. This belief once made touching the stone fish a cherished tradition among local Beijingers.

### Yigan Pavilion

This square pavilion, located in the courtyard of Tanzhe Temple’s former imperial retreat, features a white marble floor carved with winding channels for water flow. Remarkably, the design appears as a dragon’s head when viewed from south to north, and as a tiger’s head when viewed from north to south—a striking visual illusion.

Tips





Route  
8

# Cool Summer: Forest Escapes

Text by Zhang Yan

The height of summer fills Beijing with the power and vibrancy of a global metropolis. Hidden within the city's vast boundaries, these green oases offer respite for visitors to reconnect body and mind with nature, embrace unspoiled beauty and recharge with renewed energy. Beijing Labagou Virgin Forest Park stands out as an ecological haven amid the urban bustle. As Beijing's only natural scenic area defined by primeval forest, it has become one of the city's key cultural and tourism intellectual property (IP) assets, known for its cool climate and ecological richness. Travelling north along Lanian Road—often praised as the city's "most beautiful rural road"—visitors feel transported beyond the urban areas, entering a "green gateway" that seamlessly blends nature and culture.

This lush realm is filled with cool breezes and abundant trees. Amid the interplay of light and shadow, the customs of the Manchu ethnic group blend with the wild beauty of the surrounding mountains and forests. As Beijing's IP resources continue to transform into diverse forms such as technology, culture and ecology, the park stands as a vivid embodiment of "Natural Beijing," where breathing in the forest's essence reveals a different facet of the city.

Nestled within Labagoumen Manchu Ethnic Township, Labagou Virgin Forest Park is home to vast stretches of white birch, purple birch, lapland rosebay, dahurian larch and ancient oak. The park also boasts rare species such as Amur linden and Amur corktree. Scattered with rocks and valleys, it is a genuine kingdom of trees.

Within the park, green transcends mere colour. It is a midsummer "dopamine" boost, injecting natural coolness into the heat. While the city swelters under the blazing sun, this spot offers a natural refuge from the summer heat. Entering the forest, visitors are met with a rich tapestry of vibrant green. Shadows of trees dance across the slopes, and soft breezes carry the scents of earth and grass, instantly reviving the senses. Known as the "Cool Palace," the park maintains an average temperature of around 22 degrees Celsius during midsummer, making it an ideal place for leisure, summer getaways and wellness.

The park comprises three major scenic areas: the Glacier Scenic Area, the Baizhang

Cliff Scenic Area and the Nanhou Peak Scenic Area. The Glacier Scenic Area, spanning 15 square kilometres (sq.km), is especially captivating, featuring wide landscapes filled with lapland rosebay, white birch and purple birch. The lapland rosebay here covers several sq.km, bursting into bloom during the flowering season like a sea of rosy clouds. The graceful white and purple birches stand tall, with even broader distribution. The scenery in this area is rich and varied. Landmarks such as glacial remnants, Fangma Valley, Baishi Cave and Shuangjing Platform together compose a sweeping natural panorama. The primeval forest is marked by valleys and peaks. Due to significant variations in altitude, the area features distinct vertical climate zones. With a low population density, the ecosystem remains unusually well-preserved. A number of rare natural phenomena, including glimpses of summer glaciers, enhance the forest's appeal and encourage deeper exploration.

Glacier Scenic Area features towering peaks, deep valleys and narrow gorges, creating a cold, damp and often shadowy environment due to the limited sunlight. Each October, ice begins to form in the valleys as flowing streams gradually freeze over. By winter, glaciers stretching hundreds of metres (m) develop in one of the valleys, with ice reaching up to four m thick in some places. The ice begins to slowly melt in April, but heavy ice

can linger until early July. The area is typically ice-free for only about three months. In years with especially low temperatures, old ice may merge with new layers and remain frozen throughout the year. This striking natural phenomenon draws many visitors eager to see the glaciers during summer, a rare ecological marvel. This ecological wonder represents a significant part of Beijing's cultural and tourism IP resources. Tucked away from the city's bright lights, surrounded by mountains, forests, valleys and flowing water, the scenic area leaves a lasting impression and makes visitors reluctant to leave.

Baizhang Cliff Scenic Area is known for its immense cliff, a dramatic feature that stretches for hundreds of metres along the mountainside and rises nearly 100 m. It appears to have been cleaved from the mountain by a razor-sharp blade. Geologists attribute its formation to the Yanshan Mountains orogeny, hundreds of millions of years ago, when tectonic uplift and crustal fractures shaped the cliff into its present, imposing form. The cliff's steep face is unusually smooth, almost capable of reflecting sunlight.

Another highlight of the scenic area is its distinctive primeval oak forest, which spans five sq.km. As the largest remaining oak forest in Beijing, it features tall, thick oaks with canopies that form dense layers,

▼ Beijing Labagou Virgin Forest Park







▲ Beijing Labagou Virgin Forest Park

effectively blocking out sunlight. The area is rich in wild fruits and vegetables, creating a haven for many small animals. Walking along the forest paths, visitors are met with the fresh scent of grass and trees, and may occasionally catch faint sounds from within the undergrowth. The forest is both tranquil and vibrant, encouraging visitors to pause and simply listen to the breeze stirring through the treetops.

The Nanhou Peak Scenic Area is most celebrated for its primeval birch forest. The mountains are blanketed with white birches, often referred to as the “fairies of the forest” for their pure and elegant bark. The scenic area provides a flexible variety of trails, allowing visitors to choose between easier, shorter routes or longer, more challenging hikes. In spring and summer, visitors can follow log-paved walkways deep into the forest to explore its ancient mysteries. Towering birches rise from a thick carpet of

grass, while moss-covered bluestones are interspersed throughout. The green grasses ripple in the breeze like ocean waves, while the silver-white trunks stand in orderly rows, extending into the distance. From time to time, mist drifts through the trees or dappled sunlight filters through the canopy. To walk here is to enter a fairyland, where the mind clears and a sense of serenity sets in. This untouched natural setting is a true treasure, contributing to Beijing’s cultural and tourism IP. The forest quietly tells a “Beijing Story” of harmony between humanity and nature.

Leaving Labagou Virgin Forest Park, visitors encounter an equally expansive and captivating landscape. The park’s location in Labagoumen Township, Huairou District, offers a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage. Beyond the dramatic scenery, several distinctive Manchu folk villages are scattered across the area. Lanian Road weaves these elements of

Manchu culture into the surrounding natural splendour. Winding and twisting like a lively snake, the road passes through the mountainous north of Huairou. It has been recognised as one of Beijing’s “Most Beautiful Rural Roads.”

Lanian Road, a 13-kilometre rural route, begins at Labagou Virgin Forest Park, a “natural air conditioner” where summer temperatures hover around 22 degrees Celsius. The road winds into the distance, eventually reaching Labagoumen Village. Travelling this scenic route by car is highly recommended. The picturesque scenery along the way includes mountain springs running alongside the road, and each season brings its own charm. The blooming flowers of spring, the lush greenery of summer and the snow-dusted landscape of winter are all captivating. Along the winding path, breathtaking views emerge around every corner.

In addition to its natural beauty, the road

by renowned Manchu artists. Through artefacts, images, text and videos, this cultural space offers a vivid portrayal of the Manchu people’s origins, development, folk customs, lifestyle and traditions.

Along Lanian Road are several other Manchu folk villages, including Sunzhazi, Xiahebei and Zhongyushudian. Ethnic flags, serving as totems, line the village streets, and many homes display distinctive Manchu architectural features, giving the area a unique cultural character. Village history exhibition halls, such as the one in Xiahebei Village, have also been established. Set within a traditional Manchu courtyard, this exhibition hall features farming tools once used by villagers, as well as distinctively styled Manchu clothing and daily necessities. Each display not only documents the village’s past but also illustrates the evolution of the



▲ Scenic view at Labagoumen Manchu Ethnic Township

highlights rich ethnic traditions along the way. Not far from Labagoumen Village stands a folk custom museum dedicated to the Manchu people. Built into the mountainside, this majestic museum spans approximately 2,000 square metres, featuring architecture in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) style. It displays a range of valuable cultural relics related to the work and daily life of the Manchu people since ancient times, along with collections of calligraphy and paintings

Manchu people and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

Visiting a farmer’s courtyard along the road is one of the best ways to experience the region’s distinctive ethnic culture. Here, visitors can sample the traditional Manchu “Double-Eight” Banquet, which includes eight bowls and eight plates of dishes, along with classic Manchu snacks such as oil cakes and sticky bean buns. During holidays, guests can also enjoy traditional Manchu folk

performances like Erkui Wrestling, adding to the lively and authentic atmosphere.

Labagoumen marks not only the end of a forest journey but also the beginning of a “Beijing-style slow life.” It reveals that Beijing’s IP resources go beyond technological innovation and cultural achievements, extending to tranquil landscapes at the end of a winding rural road or within the dappled shade of a birch forest. This spirit of inclusion and diversity enables the city to maintain a serene oasis and a spiritual sanctuary amidst its rapid social and economic advancement.

## Tips

### Travel Advice:

- 🕒 Wear comfortable hiking boots or slip-resistant trainers, as forest paths may be slippery.
- 🕒 Bring mosquito repellent, rain gear, sunscreen and other essential outdoor supplies.
- 🕒 Avoid visiting during thunderstorms, as mountain areas are prone to sudden afternoon showers.
- 🕒 Pack enough drinking water and food, as dining options within the scenic area are limited.

### Recommended Photography Spots:

- 🕒 In the Glacier Scenic Area, visit Dujuan Mountain and Shuangjing Platform.
- 🕒 In the Nanhou Peak Scenic Area, the white birch trees feature beautiful and soft rays of light in the early morning or late evening.
- 🕒 From viewpoints overlooking Baizhang Cliff, capture dramatic sea-of-cloud valley scenes and breathtaking cliffscapes.

### Recommended Village Inns:

- 🕒 For an authentic Manchu cultural stay, consider inns located in Xiahebei and Sunzhazi villages.
- 🕒 Advance reservations are advised, especially 1–2 weeks ahead of weekends or holidays. Most inns offer the traditional “Double-Eight” Manchu Banquet, which requires advance booking.



## Route 9

# Mountain Discovery: Hiking and Stargazing

Text by Ma Kai   Photos by [Russia] Viktor Borovskikh, Wu Hui



Beijing is often immediately associated with the iconic Forbidden City, with its red walls and golden tiles, and the Great Wall, known for its magnificent structures. These landmarks are deeply embedded in the city's cultural tourism assets as its intellectual property (IP). Yet, a two-hour drive southwest of urban Beijing reveals a growing collection of cultural and tourism IP that showcases a different side of the capital. The Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian, a World Cultural Heritage IP, offers a window into the early stages of human evolution. Meanwhile, the ecological IP of Baihua Mountain, noted for its "alpine meadows and starry sky observation," presents a sweeping view of untamed, romantic natural beauty. The spark of early human civilisation and the vastness of the cosmos create a dialogue spanning 700,000 years, unfolding quietly across time and space.

As morning light filters through the dome of the Zhoukoudian Site Museum, it seems to carry with it over 700,000 years of history. Don't be put off by the museum's name—this is far from a dry, textbook-like experience. Stepping into the space feels like entering an immersive, 4D historical epic. Inside the glass cabinets, skull fossils offer

compelling evidence of Peking Man (*Homo erectus pekinensis*), who lived in this area hundreds of thousands of years ago. How did they cook meat using fire? How did they seek shelter from predators in caves? Did they ever look up at the stars in wonder? The primitive yet clever stone hammers and anvils, along with preserved traces of fire, act as silent storytellers, revealing the life of Peking Man. One scraper fossil still bears its sharp edge; imagine rough hands using it to carve meat from a sheep's leg bone one evening long ago. Today, children gather around the displays, their eyes wide with curiosity, their questions echoing through the halls. A guide's gentle voice narrates the grand story of human evolution.

At the Peking Man Site in Zhoukoudian, the rock strata of Dragon Bone Hill give visitors the feeling of watching a prehistoric scroll slowly unfurl. Pointing to the sedimentary bands along the cliff face, a guide explains, "These greyish-green layers hold the key to understanding the life of Peking Man." At Locality 1, archaeologists unearthed evidence of Peking Man's use of fire. The ash layers left by ancient blazes reached a maximum thickness of six metres (m),

resembling the innermost ring in the Earth's geological chronicle.

Stepping out of the museum, visitors are met by a mountain breeze scented with grass and trees—a genuine welcome from nature. As the journey continues westward, villages appear like scattered pearls along the route, slowly being embraced by the arms of the mountains.

Upon arriving at the mountainside car park on Baihua Mountain, visitors may feel as if they have stepped into a summer scene from a Hayao Miyazaki film. At the entrance, the delicate fragrance of pine needles greets visitors. In reality, it is the aroma of sunbaked pine resin, as if nature has opened a candle-making studio. The hiking trails, layered like cream rolls, offer routes for hikers of all skill levels. Beginners can take a three-kilometre (km) wooden boardwalk, lined with fluffy dandelions swaying gently in the breeze. Seasoned hikers can tackle a 15-km wilderness path that winds through an expansive birch forest. The bark's patterns resemble countless open "eyes", silently observing their journey. In the deciduous broad-leaved forest, oak and birch branches interlace to form a leafy canopy overhead. Sunlight filters through, casting a dance of

▼ Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian







▲ Baihua Mountain

light and shadow across the stone steps. Above 1,500 m, the trees appear to lean in unison, and the vista opens up dramatically. In the alpine meadow, a continuous fashion show seems to unfold: pale yellow globeflowers twirl in “skirts,” purple willow herbs lift “torches” and snow-white anemones perform a delicate “ballet” in the breeze. By the roadside, blue-purple North China columbines display their bell-like blossoms, hanging upside down. Suddenly, a shard of granite catches the light—a sharp glint reveals what geologists call “exposed quartz veins,” gleaming like a diamond necklace in the meadow.

Nestled at the northern foot of Baihua Mountain, a cluster of weathered, columnar basalt rocks stand as a testament to the Jurassic period. Formed by ancient volcanic eruptions, these formations resemble a

geological code etched across the ages. Running a hand over their coarse surfaces, visitors can almost feel the Earth’s pulse from 150 million years ago. The most breathtaking view awaits at Wangxiantai, the Platform of Overlooking Immortals, where cloud waterfalls spill unexpectedly from a mountain hollow, transforming the landscape into a vision of mythical isles. It is no wonder locals believe the drifting clouds are offerings to the mountain deity.

As the sun sets, a mountainside inn, resembling a cluster of white boxes, gives off a gentle, welcoming glow. Tucked behind three ancient walnut trees, a wooden sign marks the inn as “Banyin,” meaning “to be in semi-seclusion.” Ivy drapes gracefully over its grey brick walls, evoking the idyllic charm of “Peach Blossom Spring.” The courtyard, built from logs and stone, appears to blend

naturally into the mountain landscape. Inside, guests are greeted by the soothing scent of pine wood flooring, and freshly gathered wild lilies decorate the windowsills. A smiling housekeeper offers a laser pointer with a cheerful, “I’ll guide you through the constellations tonight!” While city dwellers remain absorbed in their phones, guests at the inn lounge on terrace sofas, watching as the housekeeper’s laser pointer sweeps across the night sky. “This is Lyra, and Vega is its brightest star.” Panoramic glass rooms offer an even clearer view of the stars.

Supper offers an authentic taste of the mountains: fragrant stewed pheasant with wild mushrooms and naturally sweet steamed sweet potatoes. “Our ingredients embody the essence of these mountains,” the busy housekeeper explains. “The Chinese toon sprouts are picked from the back of the mountain, and the rainbow trout is freshly caught from our pond.” As dusk settles, guests unwind on the courtyard swings, gazing at the distant peaks bathed in the soft yellow glow of the setting sun and the village below, where gentle wisps of smoke drift into the air. Here, time seems to slow down.

Another way to enjoy this place is by camping. In a designated area beside the meadow, tents are pitched and bonfires are lit. The crackling flames send sparks dancing into the deep blue night sky. The rich aroma of barbecue fills the air, drawing everyone to the picnic. Some bring Inner Mongolian lamb chops, others grill slices of steamed buns and a few share their secret seasonings. Suddenly, someone shouts in surprise: “Look! The handle of the Big Dipper is pointing down!” Laughter erupts, and a honey-stewed chicken wing nearly jabs a neighbour in the face.

Don’t rush off to bed after the barbecue! At the meadow’s highest point, it feels as if the Milky Way cascades down like

a celestial waterfall. The Big Dipper appears so close, it seems almost within reach. Through a telescope trained on Orion, the M42 Nebula reveals itself like a blooming iris, its stars sparkling with gem-like brilliance. Suddenly, a shooting star streaks across the velvety sky, leaving a fiery trail and prompting a flurry of camera clicks near the grills. Beneath this remarkably clear canopy of stars, they are excited, but they carefully do everything, as if afraid of disturbing celestial beings observing the cosmos. Wrapped in blankets and nestled in hanging wicker chairs on the Banyin Inn’s terrace, guests gaze up at the silver-flowing night sky. In that moment, the meaning of “Banyin,” or “semi-seclusion,” perhaps becomes clear—a quiet communion with the universe, sharing the same cosmic coordinate.

In the pre-dawn hours, a gibbous moon rises from behind the mountain ridges, casting a silvery frost over the meadow. Under its glow, the anemones gleam with a pearl-like lustre, and dewdrops on the grass catch the light in soft, fleeting sparkles. Along the moonlit trail, a sudden rustle in the grass reveals a foraging hedgehog. Its quills glint in the moonlight, like a constellation in motion. From the viewing platform, the valley mist becomes a semi-transparent veil beneath the moon’s gentle light. The inn’s soft glow reflects the stars above, creating a captivating display of light between earth and heaven.

Beyond its stargazing appeal, Baihua Mountain’s sunrise is equally captivating. At 4 a.m., mist still clings to the viewing platform, and dew coats the meadow, soaking the hems of trousers with every step. Sleepy visitors hold their breath in unison as the distant mountain outlines slowly emerge in the grey light before dawn. A faint orange-



red hue begins to tint the clouds, and the sea of mist starts to ripple and glow. When the first ray of sunlight breaks through, a golden band slices across the darkness. The sun’s edge rises over the ridges like molten gold, casting a sequin-like shimmer across the entire landscape. Dewdrops still cling to the wildflowers, turning them into tiny crystal chandeliers. Sunlight, having travelled 150 million km, brings not only light but a sudden, sacred glow to everything it touches. A seasoned photographer, who has documented this scene for years, remarks with feeling, “I’ve been photographing Baihua Mountain’s sunrise for two decades.

The golden morning light here is unusually vivid. Like gold leaf beaten with an ancient technique, it gives the clouds a sense of depth and texture.”

In the morning, visitors can explore traces of early human civilisation dating back more than 700,000 years. By afternoon, the experience shifts to wandering through alpine meadows beneath a sea of clouds. As night falls, the Milky Way seems to cascade like silk beside their barbecue grills. The journey’s magic lies in weaving together the story of human origins with the marvels of the natural world, turning each step into a dialogue between history and the cosmos.



▲ M42 Nebula

## A Starry Blockbuster in the Sky: ‘Ice and Fire in the Same Frame’

Tips

Baicaopan, the main peak of Baihua Mountain and the highest point in southwestern Beijing, offers a truly distinctive experience. In addition to its blooming alpine meadows and sweeping sea of clouds, the summit has become a sanctuary for stargazing enthusiasts, thanks to its spectacular and awe-inspiring views of the night sky.

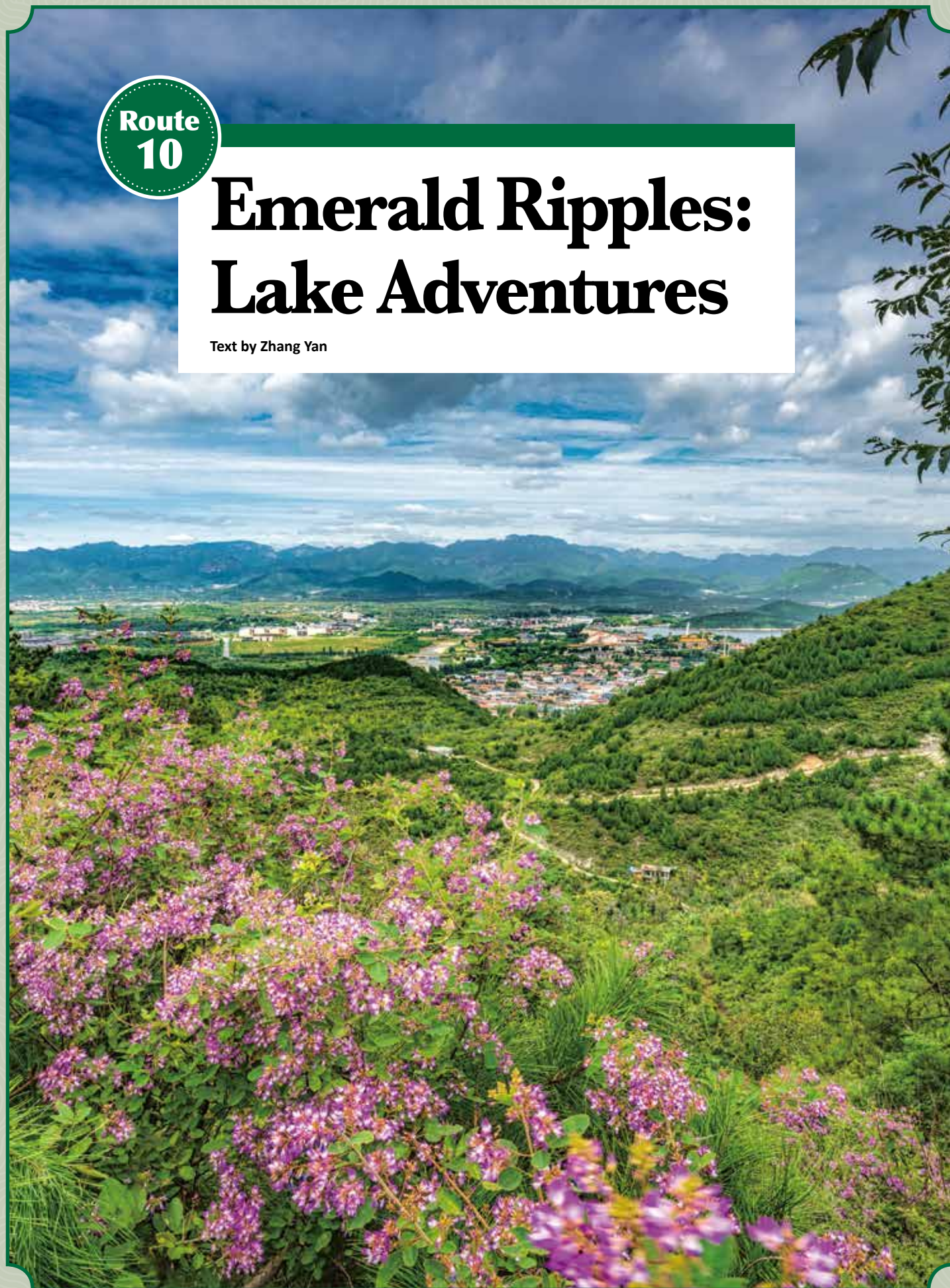
A photographer once captured a breathtaking image from the summit: the California Nebula and the Pleiades Star Cluster, a celestial pairing dubbed as “Ice and Fire in the Same Frame.” The NGC1499 nebula, which emits a faint red hue, is fondly nicknamed the “California Nebula” by astronomy enthusiasts due to its resemblance to the outline of the U.S. state. The Pleiades Star Cluster, by contrast, is a vivid blue reflection nebula. In traditional Chinese culture, it is known as the “Seven Sisters Star Cluster,” symbolising seven celestial fairies. While the California Nebula blazes like a crimson flame, the Pleiades glisten like a piece of untouched ice, together illuminating the vast canvas of the night sky.



Route  
10

# Emerald Ripples: Lake Adventures

Text by Zhang Yan



▲ Jinhai Lake

During Beijing's summer, certain destinations strike the perfect balance between excitement and tranquillity, making them well worth a short detour. Jinhai Lake, situated in the eastern part of Beijing, is one such place. As "Where to go this weekend?" becomes an increasingly common conversation starter, Jinhai Lake is steadily growing in popularity. From parasailing to stand-up paddleboarding, from island camping to forest hiking, it offers a wealth of outdoor activities and unexpected delights. Blending mountains, water, sport, leisure and family fun, Jinhai Lake is emerging as a lively and distinctive part of Beijing's cultural tourism intellectual property (IP) landscape.

Here, there are no overwhelming crowds or excessive noise. Instead, visitors can enjoy the simple pleasure of splashing in the water, the soothing rustle of a gentle breeze through the mountains and forests, and a deep sense of calm that returns as the pace of life slows. The vitality of the water and the tranquillity of the mountains exist in perfect harmony.

Jinhai Lake invites all to experience the vibrant charm and romance of Beijing's suburban landscape.

Beijingers value their leisure time and know how to enjoy life. During time off work,

they often gather with family or friends, form a small convoy and spend weekends exploring the areas around Beijing, or set off on longer road trips across the country. Jinhai Lake in Pinggu District is a favourite destination. Originally named Haizi Reservoir, it takes its name from its location—north of Dajin Mountain and south of Haizi Village.

This man-made lake, covering an area of 6.5 square kilometres, attracts many Beijing residents in search of recreation. Where there is water, there is opportunity for activity. With its broad expanse and endless blue waves, Jinhai Lake is home to the city's largest comprehensive water entertainment centre. It offers over 30 varied and exciting activities, from leisurely boat rides and speedboat adventures to parasailing, rowing, zip-lines, large water slides, bungee jumping, dragon boat races and fun rides on inflatable boats.

Leisure boat rides are naturally among the most popular activities. The lake is dotted with small white boats, their sails billowing in the breeze as they glide gracefully across the water. Tourists onboard can sail against the wind, leaving behind their cares while enjoying the picturesque scenery of the mountains and lake. After docking, visitors can explore the island, enjoying fishing, fruit picking and other water games. For those



seeking more excitement, there is the thrill of the "light cavalry on water"—the speedboat. The lake offers various types of speedboats, with the fastest reaching up to 100 kilometres (km) per hour.

Equally exhilarating is parasailing, which harnesses the power of the wind and the thrill of the water. Take-off, flight and landing for parasailing are all powered by a speedboat. With assistance from trained staff, participants strap into parasails and secure their tow ropes. As the speedboat surges forward, they are lifted into the air, reaching heights of up to 20 metres (m). With the parachute canopy fully extended, they rise and dip between sky and lake. Sometimes, they skim the water's surface like dragonflies; other times, they soar like kites on the breeze.

Have you ever ridden a motorcycle



without brakes? That is a fitting analogy for the feeling of riding jet skis. After putting on a life jacket, start the engine and feel the roar. The rider seems to skim across the surface, quickly accelerating past 60 km per hour. Because jet skis lack traditional brakes, slowing down requires easing off the throttle or cutting the engine to glide to a stop—often accompanied by beginners shouting, “Ah ah ah!” What if the rider falls off? No need to worry. The ignition key is attached to the rider’s wrist by a soft cord, so if they fall into the water, the key detaches and the engine shuts off instantly. It is this mix of speed and adrenaline that makes jet skiing so appealing.

After riding zip-lines, jet ski riders might reconsider their earlier screams. The lake’s dam stretches 1.5 km and features an art corridor, second only to the Long Corridor at the Summer Palace. Passing through this corridor, visitors reach another mountain peak. At the summit, a heart-pounding activity awaits: zip-lines. Anyone in good health can try it—a sensation often compared to performing martial arts skill “*qinggong*.” Simply fasten the harness securely and glide down an angled cable from the mountaintop. The wind whistles past as you soar through the air. The 430-m flight path skims the lake’s surface, creating the illusion of touching the water. The thrill of “flying close to the water” is genuinely exhilarating. Participants feel a rush of “life-or-death” speed, while onlookers

below cannot help but gasp as they witness the rapid descent.

During the height of summer, water sports are a must-try. Stand-up paddleboarding and water skiing offer deeply immersive ways to enjoy the water. With just a board and paddle, people can glide effortlessly across the surface. Stand-up paddleboarding, a graceful and engaging activity, has gained popularity worldwide in recent years. Unlike traditional surfing, where riders rely on waves, stand-up paddleboarding involves propelling the board forward at one’s own pace, allowing paddlers to take in the scenery around them. Even on a still, windless lake, paddlers can move steadily with a paddle in hand. The experience is one of smooth, gliding motion, offering a quiet moment to appreciate nature’s rhythm.

Water skiing, on the other hand, is more visually impressive and presents a greater challenge. During high-speed movement, jumps, turns and spins are performed smoothly, like a water dance combining power and elegance. This sport, often seen in films and television, can be experienced in real life at Jinhai Lake. The provided water skis are upgraded with wider, more stable boards. Even beginners can quickly grasp the basics with guidance from a professional coach and enjoy the excitement of riding the waves.

If challenges that push human limits deserve a place on one’s bucket list, then

bungee jumping is surely a top contender. At Jinhai Lake, a cantilevered bungee platform juts out from a cliff, around 55 m above the water. Jumpers stand at the edge, ankle cords fastened, take a deep breath and leap. In that moment, time seems to stop. The lake and mountain scenery blurs into streaks of light and shadow, as if the jumper is merging with the universe. The body rebounds several times before the motion slows, but the racing heartbeat lingers. This “free fall” is both a physical trial and a test of mental courage.

The lake is surrounded by mountains to the east, south and north, with the clear water reflecting their majestic peaks. Mist gently swirls around the slopes, and sunlight dances on the lake’s surface, creating a soft, shimmering glow. Standing at the shore, visitors are met with the peaceful beauty of sky and water blending into one. After the thrill of the water activities, visitors can return to land and slow their pace. They can explore the island, the wooded hills and the quiet forests, discovering a different kind of landscape within this serene retreat on the outskirts of Beijing.

Hiking up the mountain marks the first step toward a relaxing lakeside experience. On the east side lies Sawtooth Cliff Park, a striking peninsula extending from south to north into the lake, named for its jagged, sawtooth-like peaks. The park features a wide variety of scenic views, including steep cliffs,



▲ The dam at Jinhai Lake

wooded slopes and secluded caves. From the mountaintop, visitors are treated to panoramic lake vistas that are shifted with the light and seasons. Beginning at the campsite entrance, the trail winds gradually upward along a gravel slope that is neither too steep nor too strenuous. It takes about 20 minutes to reach the first observation platform, where the water’s surface gleams like an emerald mirror, reflecting the rugged cliffs above. Continuing along the trail, hikers reach a stretch of gravel slopes covered with woods, where three steep sections require the use of both hands and feet to climb. Trekking poles are highly recommended for this portion of the hike. Any sense of fatigue disappears upon arriving at the summit of Sawtooth Cliff. The 270-degree observation platform offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and lake from multiple angles. A signature of the area is the smoke tree, whose leaves are tender yellow in spring, soft pink in summer and deep red in autumn. When the hills blaze with red, and white boats drift along the lake, the scene looks like a living postcard.

Within the Jinhai Lake Scenic Area, Bibo Island is a favourite camping destination among young people. The island offers broad, open views and features amenities like a castle-style hotel and a scenic infinity pool. Lush green grass stretches out like a soft carpet beneath your feet. In the evening, unwind at the coffee counter on the island’s highest point, watching the setting sun

gradually tint the lake crimson, and enjoy the calm and comfort. At night, pitch a tent, light a bonfire and indulge in a delicious barbecue. Occasionally, late-returning stand-up paddleboarders glide silently past. Slowly, everything fades into stillness and a soothing sense of freedom.

Jinhai Lake not only offers stunning natural scenery but also presents unexpected

delights. A standout feature is the painted dam, a colossal artwork spanning hundreds of metres. Inspired by Picasso’s work, the painted dam showcases bold colours and an expressive artistic style. Standing before it, visitors might forget they are surrounded by mountains and water, feeling instead as if they have wandered into a modern art gallery in Europe. Just nearby lies a vibrant container town, where every corner feels like a carefully designed “viewfinder,” offering endless inspiration for photography enthusiasts.

From thrilling water activities to peaceful mountain hikes, from the vast painting on the lake dam to cafés on the island, Jinhai Lake is like a poetic map, full of vitality and serenity, etched into Beijing’s landscape of cultural and tourism IP. It is more than just a lively outdoor destination. A lakeside getaway allows visitors to find their own rhythm, whether it is the joy of a family adventure or a moment of quiet reflection alone. Amidst the interplay of mountains and water, visitors can discover excitement, rest and companionship all at once. This is the very lifestyle Beijing’s cultural and tourism IP assets aim to offer every traveller who embraces the natural world.

▼ Parasailing on Jinhai Lake



▼ Camping by Jinhai Lake





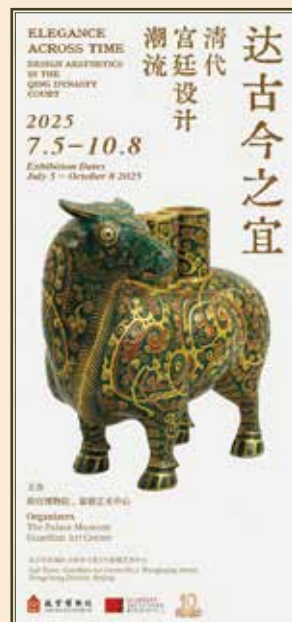


## 世界三大童声合唱团之一 ——德国托尔策童声合唱团音乐会

指挥帝王卡拉扬的御用童声合唱团、联合国教科文组织巴伐利亚非物质文化遗产、世界三大童声合唱团之一的德国托尔策童声合唱团（Tölzer Knabenchor），时隔十年再度访华，2025年8月8日在北京世纪剧院举办“德国托尔策童声合唱团音乐会”。托尔策童声合唱团是一支德国男童合唱团，由格哈德·施密特-加登于1956年成立于德国巴伐利亚州。合唱团自成立以来，一直驻扎在慕尼黑，约有170名歌手。多年来，从托尔策童声合唱团走出来后成长为歌手、独唱家、指挥家、作曲家的多达数十人，堪称音乐家摇篮。合唱团的独奏者演唱《魔笛》中的“三小仙童”被公认为世界最佳演绎。自20世纪70年代以来已演出2,000多场。独奏家也是重大节日的常客。

### A Concert by Tölzer Knabenchor, One of the World's Top Three Children's Choirs

Tölzer Knabenchor—conductor Herbert von Karajan's (1908–1989) choir of choice, a recognised element on UNESCO's Bavarian List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and one of the world's preeminent three children's choirs—returns to China after a 10-year hiatus. On August 8, 2025, the German boys' choir will perform at Beijing's Century Theatre. Founded in 1956 by Gerhard Schmidt-Gaden in Bavaria, the Munich-based ensemble now includes around 170 singers. Over the years, dozens of its alumni have gone on to become celebrated singers, soloists, conductors and composers, earning the choir a reputation as a cradle of musical talent. The group's soloists are particularly celebrated for their portrayal of the “Three Boys” in *The Magic Flute*, which they have performed more than 2,000 times since the 1970s. These soloists are also regulars at major festivals around the world.



## 达古今之宜 ——清代宫廷设计潮流

“达古今之宜——清代宫廷设计潮流”展于2025年7月5日-10月8日在嘉德艺术中心二层开展。展览以清代宫廷艺术为背景，探究中国造物如何“通古今之变”。展览将通过“追踪一件仿古艺术品的诞生”拉开序幕，带领观众走进此次关于传承与创造的沉浸之旅。此次展览是嘉德艺术中心与故宫博物院合作的系列展览中，覆盖文物门类最多、体系最完整的一次。涵盖青铜器、瓷器、玉器、珐琅器、书画、古籍、织绣等。

### Elegance across Time: Design Aesthetics in the Qing Dynasty Court

The exhibition titled *Elegance across Time: Design Aesthetics in the Qing Dynasty Court* opened on July 5 and will run until October 8, 2025, on the second floor of the Guardian Art Center. Set within the context of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) court art, the exhibition explores the development of Chinese design aesthetics across different historical periods. Beginning with the section titled “Tracing the Birth of an Antiqued Artwork,” it takes visitors on a journey through artistic heritage and innovation. As part of a collaborative series of exhibitions organised by the Guardian Art Center and the Palace Museum, the event stands out for its comprehensive scope and rich variety of cultural relics. Highlights include bronzeware, porcelain, jade ware, enamel objects, calligraphy, paintings and ancient books, as well as textiles such as weaving and embroidery.