



SAMPLE

FLYING CONNOISSEUR 'S BEIJING

INTRO

Beijing was built as the Imperial City and it remains the dominating force of this bulging metropolis, bursting with the energy of the new China. In its race to change its face to that of an open, global city before the Olympics, Beijing was the first city to have completed its venues ahead of time. It sports a major Olympic arena, known as the *Bird's Nest*, 鸟巢, a new airport terminal, monumental CCTV twin television towers - *The Trousers*, 中央电视台双塔, a new *National Center for the Performing Arts* 国家大剧院 - "*The Egg*, 蛋", plus around 57 new hotels and countless new restaurants. All the luxury chains are rushing to open in Beijing, along with an emerging boutique scene.

Much of the old city has been destroyed, but the essence of the Imperial City still permeates the emerging, modern Beijing. Don't expect this city to be like Shanghai, Hong Kong or any other in China. Beijing is bigger, bolder and grander – in both architecture and layout. Its series of concentric ring roads are on a larger scale and it takes longer to get around. The bicycles are still there in their masses, but the roads are now also clogged with cars.

Beijing is beguiling, complicated and can be confusing to the Western visitor, but it carries a greatness that has transcended the generations to seduce and humble you into returning again - and again. As soon as you think you have the measure of this city, it reveals another previously unknown aspect.

Irrespective of the Olympics rush and its rapid transition to a worldly city – with the new Western buildings and the signs in English, Beijing remains an enigma, bursting with hidden corners.

Despite the massive building programs, worked on day and night - swallowing the majority of China's requisition of half the world's concrete and a third of its steel, there is a growing appreciation of Beijing's earlier architecture. Specific areas have been designated historical sites for preservation, as showcases for Chinese culture.

Many of the old buildings are being restored – including a long-term restoration of the previously neglected *Forbidden City* 紫禁城 and the hutongs (inner laneways) in the heart of the Imperial City near *Tiananmen Square* 天安门广场, such as *Nanlouguxiang Hutong* 南锣鼓巷胡同 in the Dongcheng District 东城区.

Many of the "*sibeyuan*" – traditional stone courtyard houses, are being converted to hotels, such as the elegant *Hotel Cote Cours SL* 朋院四和宾馆, another



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Chinese-owned, newly opened, boutique hotel - *The Emperor* 皇家驿站, which has views of the *Forbidden City* from its rooftop terrace; and restaurants such as *Tian Di Yi Jia* 天地一家

This is a sample of part of an *FC Beijing Day*:

Ancient and Modern Beijing

New into Old in the Doncheng district

ARTS AND CRAFT/CAFÉ STREET WALK

Nanluoguxing Hutong 南锣鼓巷胡同

This 800 year-old hutong close to the *Forbidden City* was once home to celebrities, officials, artists and middleclass families.

One of the best preserved areas in central Beijing, it's now an edgy creative hub, attracting young Beijingers – and tourists, with its New China small bars, restaurants, cafes and boutiques.

It's the only remaining traditional residential area in China that still preserves the chessboard layout of hutongs typical of the Yuan Dynasty with a central lane dividing to 8 parallel hutongs on each side forming a fishbone (*wugong*).

There's a revitalised sense of community and traditional street life to be experienced in this energetic new environment – and many interesting little workshops and cafes.

So take your time to wander, browse and observe... maybe shop!
Some places worth seeking out are:

NLGX Design & Café NLGX设计和咖啡屋

This interesting little shop cum café is actively committed to preserving the hutong community heritage and to encouraging local artists and designers by offering them an outlet for their handmade dolls, postcards, original designs of T-shirts and various other exhibits.

There's a great little rooftop terrace to enjoy a cup of green tea and a range of salads, sandwiches & desserts

Open daily 10am – 11pm

33 Nanluoguxiang 交道口南锣鼓巷33号

T. 6404 8088

www.nlgx.org

The Pottery Workshop Gallery & Café 南锣鼓巷23号

Superbly displayed blue and white wares - cups, bowls and range of ceramics in both Chinese and Japanese styles.



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Friendly staff greet you in this recently opened branch of a Hong Kong-initiated ceramic art education centre, with a residency program that attracts artists from around the world. They have other branches in *Shanghai* and the traditional porcelain centre of *Jingdezhen*.

Open Sunday & Monday 10 am – 8pm, Tuesday to Saturday 11am – 11pm

No 23 Nanluoguxiang 南锣鼓巷23号

T. 6401 3799

www.potteryworkshop.org/beijing

JMAX Handmade Jewellery Design Station 饰绝手工饰品

Open 1pm -10.30pm

No. 17-4 Nanluoguxiang 南锣鼓巷17-4号

T. 6401 3799

www.potteryworkshop.org/beijing

Saveurs de Couree 韩香馆

If you're feeling peckish, grab a bite at this gem of a Korean bistro with new-style healthy cuisine and fabulous rooftop for drinking and dining.

No. 29 Nanluoguxiang 南锣鼓巷29号

T. 640 16083

www.saveursdecouree.com.cn

LUNCH

The Source 都江苑

Sichuanese cuisine in a beautifully restored hutong house – the former home of a Qing dynasty general, known as “The Great Wall of China,” who was promoted to the rank of prince for his victory in the Tai Ping Rebellion. The place, named by famous writer, Jin Yong, has the pervasive ambience of dining in a privileged nobleman's home.

WORTH NOTING: a calligraphy screen and mural, dating back to the Tang Dynasty.

For once, this hutong is not hard to find – it's well signposted and on a large road.

The Source is a small intimate place with a mosaic tiled floor, carved traditional furniture, and a charming courtyard planted with century-old pomegranate and date trees for summer dining.

Upstairs is an exquisite loft dining room of timeless, classical ambience, frequently resonating with the sound of Beijing opera.



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It offers a choice of set menus – with a range of appetizers and hot dishes. Lunch is excellent value with a choice of Beef or Chicken @ 128 RMB **OR** 230 RMB with Fish.

Typical dishes are: *Prawns fried with Oolong Tea*; *Stewed Beancurd & Mushrooms*; *Fried Tofu with Tomato Sauce*; and superb *Spicy Noodles*.