



China Country Information

Beijing and Shanghai



Beijing

Located on the other side of the earth, about 8000km's from the Netherlands, Beijing, the capital of China, is internationally accessible via Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA). Beijing is the nation's political, economic, and cultural centre. Situated in north China, close to the port city of Tianjin and partially surrounded by Hebei Province, it also serves as the most important transportation hub and port of entry. As one of the six ancient cities in China, Beijing has been the heart and soul of politics throughout its long history and consequently there is an unparalleled wealth of discovery to delight and intrigue travellers as they explore the city's ancient past and exciting modern development.

Transportation

Beijing is northern China's main transportation hub. Frequent flights, modern roads and rail make it easy for visitors to reach it. Crisscross roads make the urban transportation generally fast and convenient; however, you may from time to time encounter traffic congestion sometimes due to the millions of vehicles. Beijing subway is highly recommended during rush hour.

Education

As home to both Beijing University and Qinghua University, Beijing is an important centre for higher education in China. Beijing University, founded in 1898, was relocated from its original site in the central city to a new campus, that has been significantly expanded to accommodate one of China's largest

universities. With six schools, 31 departments, and 44 research centres, Qinghua University is China's premier technical institute and one of the country's major centres for scientific and technical research and development.

The northwestern edge of the city, home to both Beijing University and Qinghua University, has become a major educational and research district that is also home to the People's University of China, the Central Institute of Nationalities, the Beijing Normal College, the Beijing Medical College, and the Central Conservatory of Music. It is hosts institutes specializing in aeronautics, petroleum production, forestry, agriculture, and other fields.

Shanghai

Shanghai, Hu for short, is a renowned international metropolis. Situated on the estuary of Yangtze River, it serves as the most influential economic, financial, international trade, and cultural centre in East China. The municipality covers quite a large area – 6341 km² or 2,448 miles² – and has a population of around 24 million.

Transportation

Shanghai serves as an important air, rail, road and water transport hub in eastern China. The frequent flights, trains and buses make one's travel a breeze. The urban transportation is also quite satisfactory. Despite the traffic jams that do happen occasionally, the convenient taxis, buses, metro trains etc. can take you to any corner of the city.

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Education

Shanghai is a major centre of higher education in China. By the end of 2019, Shanghai had 64 universities and colleges, 929 secondary schools, 698 primary schools, and 31 special schools. A number of China's most prestigious universities are based in Shanghai, including Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tongji University, and East China Normal University. These universities were selected amongst the "985 universities" by the Chinese government in order to build world-class universities.

Characteristics of the area

In China, Shanghai is known for its 'ocean culture' (haipai) or even 'overseas culture' (yangpai), characterised by an acute and receptive sensitivity to foreign ideas, attitudes, styles and opinions. This is commonly referred to as the distinguishing feature of Shanghai's culture compared to that of other Chinese cities. The Shanghainese are self-confident; they don't fear the erosion of their past by international trends, since it was largely these very forces that shaped their city in the first place. They have always been ardent consumers of Western brands and ideas. Their compatriots tend to view this East-meets-West mentality with a degree of scepticism, feeling that they should be more respectful of local tradition. On your arrival into Shanghai, this different environment can result in culture shock for expats.

Culture

Chinese culture is a lot different from western culture. There are some typical cultural differences in terms of mentality, conversation, and behaviour as follows:

Face

The concept of 'face' is prevalent throughout China and can never be underestimated. People go to great lengths to acquire it through displays of wealth or generosity. For example, never insist on paying for a meal hosted by a local, especially if it is in their home. This would be a serious faux pas. Complimenting someone on their appearance or business acumen – especially in front of their friends or colleagues – is a sure winner. Confrontation and public criticism are guaranteed face-destroyers and will inevitably be counter-productive. When in doubt, be lavish with compliments, or at the very least be quiet and respectful. In business, understanding 'face' can mean the difference between success and failure or promotion and demotion. If you want

to become a master, study how locals handle social situations and pay attention to those situations where subordinates are deferential to their superiors.

Conversation

Negative replies are considered impolite. Instead of saying 'No', answer indirectly. Replies such as 'Maybe', 'I'll think about it' or 'We'll see' will generate a much better reaction and allow the questioner to save face. When addressing a group, acknowledge the most senior person first. Questions about your age, income and marital status are common. If you don't want to reveal this information, prepare non-specific responses. Do not be surprised if there are periods of silence during dinner. It is a sign of politeness or thought and need not be broken with uncomfortable small talk.

Practical Tips

Unlike the Dutch, Chinese people are less direct and prefer to express themselves subtly and euphemistically. Chinese students may appear shy and sometimes less confident, especially when they speak English or deal with foreigners. This is not because they don't like it, but they need time to adjust to cultural differences, understand each other, and respond. Therefore, when interviewing Chinese students, one should try to make the atmosphere a little bit less formal. For example, you can ask them: What kind of transportation did you take today to get to here? Or ask some other questions that can relax students.

In China, Chinese people use WeChat as the main online communication platform, which is an all-in-one integrated social media APP. Literally, you can do everything with this APP in your daily life. For instance, you can order food and taxi with WeChat. In this case, before your departure or upon your arrival, downloading WeChat is necessary. If you need to use Google, YouTube, WhatsApp etc. VPN is required.

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