

BEIJING



The capital city of China is HUGE so you can expect a lot of variety when it comes to living there. Let me share with you some information about what you can expect, choosing your placement in my biased opinion of the best place to be, Beijing.

Teaching – The main event

- There will be a handful of foreign teachers in the same boat as you in your school, from all different countries including England, America, Germany, Australia and may more. If not there will be people from the Teach English in China programme in a schools across Beijing and close to you which will lead to a bigger network.
- Your Chinese colleagues will become some of your best friends, who will help you with any teaching materials and other aspects of living in Beijing.
- You will be teaching oral English where no mandarin is necessary.
- Teaching Kindergarten will mean teaching via song and other fun activities like movement and dance.
- Teaching university is not as daunting as it sounds. These students may not be as advanced as you may imagine and going through basics will be necessary.
- Class size will be around 25 – 40. Students are very punctual therefore expect full numbers.
- You will have a set timetable that may have last minute alterations on a week-by-week basis.
- You may have to prepare your students for an exam. This may be written by you or may be provided.
- It's best to assume that there are no facilities in the classroom. Most classrooms will have a board and a PowerPoint facility but it's not guaranteed.

Hours

You will teach for a maximum of 16 hours a week and you will have up to 10 different classes. Lessons will last 40 minutes and there will be a 10-minute gap between each period.

Housing

You will be provided with a two-bedroom apartment with a kitchen, bathroom and western toilet. You will have good cooking facilities and furniture will be provided. The housing will be supplied to you by the school and will be either on campus or a short walk away. It is possible that you may be sharing an apartment with another teacher.

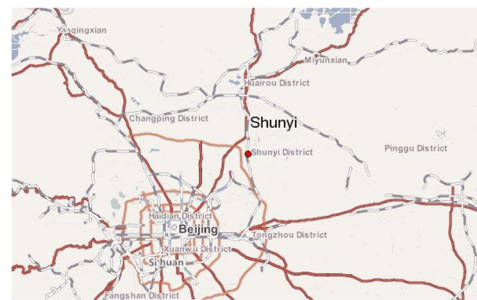


Transport

Beijing is made up of ring roads that surround the city and anything inside line 10 on the subway would be very central. With a vast subway system it is easy to get around. Prices are very cheap ranging between 3 to 6 yuan.

There are also plenty of buses that run a regular service across the city. Taxis are very cheap and can be picked up on the street quickly and easily.

There are job opportunities on the outskirts of Beijing like Shunyi. Shunyi is close to the airport and is on the end of line 15 on the subway. It is its own town in itself with lots to do and see there. It takes between an hour to an hour and a half on the metro to get into the centre depending on where you are going.



Best way to explore China from this location

Beijing is a hub of many destinations, nationally and internationally with easy access to the airport and 4 train stations. All of which are accessible by the subway. Some near by places to visit would include the Great Wall of China, Tianjin and Chuandixia Villiage. Tickets for trains and flights can be booked online via ctrip.com or train tickets can be booked at the train station.



Specific packing tips

Beijing is two extremes. Very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter and what's interesting is how quick it changes. This means bringing two seasons worth of clothes. You can buy clothes in Beijing as well so it's not the end of the world if you don't have everything. Also bring one formal outfit. It is likely there will be at least one formal event. You may want to bring make up from home and if you have big feet then I would recommend bringing a few pairs of shoes.

A random one is also blu-tac. Good for classrooms and home décor but it's just non-existing in China.

Facilities

All home requirements such as washing will be supplied so no need to drag your clothes out to the local launderette, unless you want to. But things that are available to get involved

with are the gym, dance classes in the park and shopping. The gym will require a membership but the dance classes in the park are free to join in. It's a great way to get involved with the local community. There is a vast range of shopping with shopping malls on every corner, from international brands to small independent Chinese shops.

Eating

I mean, where do you start? There are all sorts. Chinese, Korean, American, Japanese you name it. Restaurants on every street. Your colleagues will often take you to where all the best places are which are amazing but often the best places are always the ones you stumble across when walking around. On average you can get a main meal and a beer for £3. Bargain! Street food is fascinating with all sorts of variety, things you will have never seen before and all at a very cheap price. Your school will provide you with school dinners either for free or at a very cheap price, which are great. The pancakes are always the best and they tend to be a very healthy selection.

Opportunities for Mandarin lessons

With Beijing having a large expat community, there is a high demand for Mandarin Teachers. These can be found online or through mutual friends. Often, I would see foreigners sitting in Costa or Starbucks with a Mandarin teacher.

However, the best opportunity to learn Chinese is with your Chinese colleagues. If you take time to get to know them and have a good relationship, they will be more than happy to sit with you and teach you Mandarin.

There is an exam you can do called HSK that will give you a Mandarin qualification. This is easily accessible in Beijing and can be an excellent goal setting incentive to get you to learn Mandarin.

5 Best Things about a placement in Beijing

- 1) Location – Beijing is a central hub with easy access to anywhere in China and internationally. Not only that it has a fantastic range of tourist attractions and activities leaving you with nothing short to do.
- 2) Fair contracts – There was no breaching of contracts and it was completely fair. If anything, the school I was in was very accommodating with any issues I may have had.
- 3) Plenty of friends – There were so many opportunities to meet new people who have become some of the closest people to me to this day. It has led to further travelling and other opportunities. The memories become very valuable.
- 4) Living conditions – The apartments are very clean and have everything that you possibly need. If there were any problem then there was no hesitation in getting it all sorted.
- 5) The achievement – Actually coming away and saying I lived in Beijing and I did all these exciting things is something that boosts careers.