



CHINA AT A GLANCE

SIZE: 3,705,473 square miles, slightly smaller than the United States

POPULATION: 1,306,313, 812 (July 2005 est.)

LANGUAGE: Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages

CAPITAL: Beijing

TYPE OF GOVERNMENT: Communist State

CURRENCY: Chinese Yuan (CNY)

TIME ZONE: GMT + 8

ABOUT YOUR PORT GUIDE

This is your guide to Beijing, specially prepared by Princess Cruises. This guide is intended to assist you if you are on a shore excursion, touring independently or doing both.

Please note that the information provided is general in nature and is subject to change.

A Proud Capital, Perfectly Placed Between the Plains Where Dynasties Fell and an Empire Arose

Founded more than 3,000 years ago as a frontier garrison town to defend against northern barbarians, Peking, Beijing in Chinese, has served as China's cultural, political and administrative capital for more than 700 years. Throughout this time, East and West would finally come closer through more commonly shared events, better appreciating our mutual interdependence.

In early historic times, the town—successively called Chi, Yuchow, Yenjing, Chung-tu, Peking, Peiping and again Peking—stood on the fringe of the civilized Chinese world. The small plain on which it is located is ringed by mountains to the west, northwest and north. To the northeast, a pass opens onto the Mongolian plateau, at Chuyunguan. Proceeding along this mountain range to the east, one reaches the coastal pass, Shanhaiguan, that leads into Manchuria.

The Peking plain became a natural junction between plateau and plain and the first line of defense against the barbarians to the north. The real distinction between the Chinese and the barbarians was not racial but cultural, fostered by climate. To be Chinese meant to be a farmer. Intensive cultivation created the agricultural surplus necessary for the creation of the sophisticated Chinese culture.

To the north, climate prevented the creation of such surpluses. With irregular and sparse rainfall and small streams as the only source of water, people in the north

came to live in small groups mainly by raising livestock and hunting. Ever moving between summer and winter pastures, the steppe nomad was contemptuous of the Chinese peasant, who was tied to his plot of yellow earth.

Increasing pressure on the climatic and cultural frontier made ancient Peking a melting pot of Chinese and alien ideas of more than 400 years of gradually increasing barbarian control in China—a period that culminated in the rule of the entire country for the first time by a completely alien dynasty, the Mongol Yuan. It was also the beginning of the rise of Peking to the status of imperial capital.

The fires lit by the Mongols burned off and on in Peking for a month, demonstrating the inherent dangers of establishing a major city so vulnerably close to the steppe. But the Mongols, perhaps for the dual purpose of remaining close to their ancestral steppes as well as controlling their magnificent empire to the south, established Peking as the capital of Kublai Khan's Empire of the Great Khan and, in 1266, began construction of the Imperial City.

Mongol power was short lived, as their oppressive regime was first pushed north and finally semi-absorbed by the Ming Dynasty in 1368. Recognizing the importance of frontier defense, the dynasty's third emperor, in 1404, again made Peking the capital and continued construction on sites still present in today's Chinese capital.

Adventures Ashore® Port Guide ~ Xingang (for Beijing)

Under the Mings, the Mongol Imperial City became the Forbidden City. They further fortified the strategic passes of the Great Wall, and broke ground for the beautiful and perfectly formed Temple of Heaven.

In addition, they buried 13 of their emperors in tombs 20 miles north of Peking in a valley enclosed on three sides, approachable only from the south and guarded by a processional route

lined with massive statues of horses, elephants, lions, camels, mythical beasts and human figurines.

Following the Mings, the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, China's last, continued construction of the capital, finishing the resplendent Summer Palace in time for the enjoyment of the Empress Dowager. The Bell and Drum Towers and Tiananmen Gate were all finished by the Manchus.

Since the founding of the People's Republic, Peking has experienced dramatic changes. While all the sites mentioned above can still be seen and visited, the city's walls were long ago torn down to make room for roads. There are more than 50 high-rise, deluxe western-style hotels for the millions of tourists who visit Beijing each year.



The Great Wall

Places of Interest

FORBIDDEN CITY

This 250-acre complex of palaces, pavilions and courtyards was the home of China's emperor, the fabled "Son of Heaven," from 1421 to 1911.

THE GREAT WALL

Begun over two millennia ago to protect the frontier, the Great Wall runs for some 3600 miles. Sections of the wall have been restored.

TIANANMEN SQUARE

The dramatic scene of political struggle and unrest, Tiananmen Square is the largest public square in the world and can accommodate a million people.

SUMMER PALACE

Constructed as a place of rest and recreation for the emperor of old. The focus of the Summer Palace is a huge lake with a long walkway circling it. To the one end is built a series of towers, halls and temples climbing the hillside. The park is accented by many small architectural features such as the beautiful 17 arch bridge which leads to a small island, and the pagoda on the hill of the far shore.

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

The Temple of Heaven is a large park and temple complex situated in more or less the south central area of Beijing. The park is filled with more than a thousand species of tree, some of which are hundreds of years old, despite their relatively small size.

BEIJING ZOO

Beijing zoo is famous, naturally, for its large selection of pandas. It was initially named Ten Thousand Animal Garden which was built in 1908, proving that it already has had a history of more than 90 years. The Zoo was originally the imperial manor in the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644).

WANGFUJING STREET

Wangfujing is now considered the central heart of the city. The street has two major shopping malls and is also home to a number of large department stores, souvenir stores, and whole side streets full of food stalls, Chinese painting stores and other goodies.

THESE SITES CAN BE FOUND ON THE
MAP AT THE BACK OF THIS GUIDE

Practical Information

DOCKING

Your Princess ship docks in the port of Xingang, a 2 - 2½ hour drive from Beijing.

SHORE EXCURSION DEPARTURES

Passengers will meet at a specific location for each shore excursion departure. Please refer to your tour ticket and the Princess Patter for the correct place and time. Your Shore Excursion staff will be at that location to assist you.

TAXIS

Limited taxis are available pierside; drivers do not speak English.

SHOPPING

Beijing offers some of the best examples of Chinese craftsmanship, especially in:

Handicrafts: cloisonne, ivory carvings, jade, carved lacquerware, traditional figurines

Artistic & Cultural mementos: calligraphy and embroidery, paintings, writing implements

Silk Products: garment and carpets

Antiques: furniture

In Beijing, large department stores, supermarkets and Friendship Stores are found in many areas of the city. There are also markets for specialty items. The prices in large department stores are fixed, but you can bargain in open markets, free markets, small shops and some of the specialty shops.

From Tianjin, the nearest shopping area is about 50 minutes away.

OPENING AND CLOSING TIMES

Banks: Nearest bank is located in Beijing; generally open weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Shops: Generally open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Post Office: Generally open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

SOME USEFUL WORDS

Hello	Ni hao (Nee HaOw)
Yes	Yo'u
No	Meiyou
Thank You	Xie'xie
Goodbye	Zai Jian
Good Morning	Zao Shang hao

PRINCESS CRUISES AGENTS

In case of emergency while you are ashore, please contact:

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Telephone: 86-22-25793756
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The Forbidden City

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