BEIJING
(Excerpts from TravelChinaGuide.com)

Beijing, Jing for short, is the nation's political, economic, cultural and educational center as well as China's most important center for international trade and communications. Together with Xian, Luoyang, Kaifeng, Nanjing and Hangzhou, Beijing is one of the six ancient cities in China. It has been the heart and soul of politics and society throughout its long history and consequently there is an unparalleled wealth of discovery to delight and intrigue travelers as they explore Beijing's ancient past and enjoy its exciting modern development.

As the capital of the People's Republic of China, Beijing is located in northern China, close to Tianjin Municipality and partially surrounded by Hebei Province. The city covers an area of more than 16,410 square kilometers (6336 square miles) and has a population of 14.93 million people.

Beijing's long and illustrious history started some 500,000 years ago. It is here that the ancestors of modern Homo sapiens, Peking men, lived in caves. Records show that Beijing has been an inhabited city for more than three thousand years and has endured invasions by warlords and foreign powers, devastating fires, the rise and fall of powerful imperial dynasties and has emerged each time as a strong and vibrant city. For more than 800 years, Beijing was a capital city—from the Yuan Dynasty (1271 - 1368) to the Ming (1368 - 1644) and Qing (1644 - 1911) dynasties. Thirty-four emperors have lived and ruled the nation in Beijing and it has been an important trading city from its earliest days.

Although now Beijing is a modern and fashionable city complete with a full 21st Century vitality, you can experience authentic Beijing life and become acquainted with 'old Beijing' by exploring its many teahouses, temple fairs, Beijing's Hutong and Courtyard and enjoy the Peking Opera.
Add any or all of these to your Beijing tour and you will leave with a feeling of special appreciation in your heart for this ancient city that has truly seen it all and tells its story with matchless grace, charm and vigor.

With the biggest central square in the world - Tian'anmen Square, the Forbidden City that is the largest and best-preserved imperial palace complex, a superbly preserved section of the Great Wall, as well as the largest sacrificial complex in the world—the Temple of Heaven, Beijing—attracts both domestic and foreign visitors who all come to wonder at its century-old history and unique cultural relics.

Dwelling too much on the historical past of Beijing may give tourists the false impression that it is little more than an ancient city in style but this is definitely not so! Strolling around Beijing, you'll find it has much in common with any other great metropolis elsewhere in today's world. There are towering skyscrapers; busy shopping malls and an endless stream of traffic that makes the city much the same as others. The most famous and popular commercial circles and commercial pedestrian streets are predominantly located near the Yansha Shopping Mall, Tiananmen and Wangfujing Street, Guomao Shopping Mall, Qianmen Street and Xidan Street, etc. However, although you will find multinational chains with their own brands to offer, nowhere else on earth will you find such a variety of gourmet Chinese restaurants offering the very best of the eight different styles of Chinese cuisine as well as western style dishes.

Beijing City was established over 3,000 years ago and was called Jin City in the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC - 771 BC). Ever since Emperor Qin united China in 221 BC, Beijing has played an important role in north China. It was the capital city in the Liao (916-1125), Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. During these 800 years, 34 emperors lived and ruled here. The world renowned Forbidden City was built during this period. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, World War I broke out. Beijing became the focus of invaders. The war disrupted the society. Many residences of royal families were robbed and burned down. After that, the whole country was reduced to the status of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. It wasn’t until October 1st, 1949 that the People’s Republic of China was founded. Beijing is known as the capital city of the prosperous new country which has flared into importance in Asia.