

## Suggested Tours in Beijing

Wednesday, April 18, 2011:

With a midday arrival at Beijing Capital International Airport, the delegation will be escorted directly to the Peninsula Hotel. Prior to dinner, guests may choose to partake of a “mini-market” of Chinese goods right in the hotel. The bazaar could include a tailor and vendors selling pearls, Pashminas, cashmere goods, and more!

Thursday, April 19, 2011:

**Tiananmen Square:** The world’s largest public square, this plaza is nestled between the Forbidden City, Qianmen, the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, and the Great Hall of the People. Since the rule of the Communists, the gate to the north end has been crowned with an enormous portrait of Mao. For many people, Tiananmen Square is made synonymous with some of China’s defining historical moments. Mao proclaimed the People’s Republic of China from atop Tiananmen Gate in October 1949 as Beijingers cheered in the plaza below. Later, the square was the sight of the 1989 pro-democracy student demonstrations. However, today countless tourists visit the square to take in the vast space and the historical drama it holds.

**Forbidden City Tour:** The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is located in the middle of Beijing, and now houses the Palace Museum. For almost five hundred years, it served as the home of emperors and their households, as well as the ceremonial and political center of Chinese government. Built in 1406 to 1420, the complex consists of 980 buildings with 8,707 bays of rooms and covers 720,000 m<sup>2</sup> (7,800,000 sq ft). The Forbidden City was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987, and is listed by UNESCO as the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world.

**Lunch at Hutong Pizza:** This hard-to-find pizzeria occupies the site of a former Buddhist nunnery and features untouched murals in the loft. This lovely courtyard restaurant, complete with indoor fishpond, serves square and sophisticated pizzas. The relaxed venue is a charming place to while away the hours over a delectable pizza, or one of the hugely popular veggie burgers.

**Hutong Tour:** If you want a glimpse into real Chinese life, this is a must-do. Hutongs are the alley districts and courtyard homes that offer a rare window into traditional Beijing. They are also a unique and exciting way to see how people actually live. These alleyways teem with life and are intensely social. Everywhere you look people are sitting outside chatting or getting together for an open-air mah jong game. While many hutongs were destroyed in an effort to clean up the city for the Olympics, the government (recognizing the tourism potential) has pledged to preserve several of these old neighborhoods, proclaiming 25 so-called “protected hutong areas” in central Beijing. The tour (in rickshaws) includes stops at the Drum Tower, Bell Tower, a local family’s home, and wraps up with a tea ceremony in a local tea house.

**Great Wall:** Several areas of the Great Wall are open to the public, but we recommend Mutianyu, which is somewhat more remote and less touristy. For the easiest, continuous walk that doesn’t require backtracking, we recommend that you take the gondola to the top of the Wall, hike mostly downhill, and then ride the toboggan slide down.

**Lunch at The Schoolhouse:** There are few good options for a tasty Western meal anywhere near the Great Wall. But at the Schoolhouse, hikers can still marvel at the Mutianyu section of the Wall and recharge on the cafe’s terrific homemade fare. Fabulous burgers for lunch, pan fried trout and cheesecake for dinner are among the excellent options. Founded by a group of entrepreneurial expats dedicated to culinary gusto, Schoolhouse uses local ingredients to whip up excellent desserts and Italian fare.

**Summer Palace Tour:** Also known as The Royals' Summer Playground, this beautiful palace is located about an hour outside of the city. Despite the name, the Summer Palace isn't really a palace at all. Rather, it's a stunning complex of pavilions and temples built along Kunming Lake.

Saturday, April 21, 2011:

**Panjaiyuan "Dirt" Market:** The range and variety of goods makes the Dirt Market a must-see and one of the most colorful and exciting spots in Beijing. You will find rows and rows of people selling their goods—jade, wood carvings, pottery, artwork, etc. Bartering is the name of the game.

**Lunch at SWITCH!:** With its mod furnishings, lofted floor-to-ceiling windows, wooden deck, and street-facing entrance, this café caters to the gallery-hopping crowds. Run by the Culinary Capers catering team and attached to UCCA, it's no wonder this relaxed, light-filled restaurant succeeds both gastronomically and aesthetically. Don't miss the ridiculously creamy conchiglioni pasta or the fun "donuts in a bag."