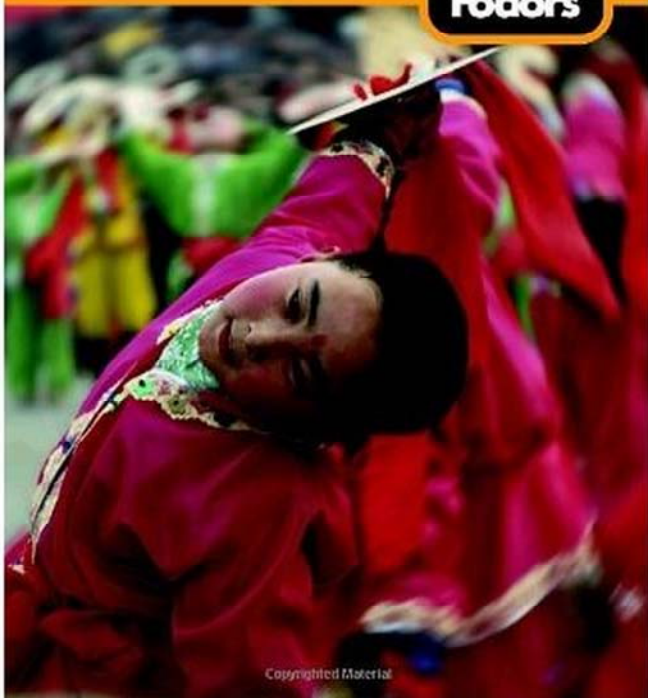


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BEST SIDE TRIPS PLANNER

What to Wear

The weather in Beijing and neighboring areas is notoriously fickle, so make sure you dress appropriately. In the summer it's hot: travel with sunglasses, sunscreen, and a wide-brimmed hat. It gets terribly cold in the winter, so dress in layers and pack gloves, a hat, and a scarf. And if you plan to do any hiking, make sure to bring sturdy, comfortable shoes.

Also, checking the weather forecast before an excursion is always a good idea for last-minute wardrobe changes.

■ **TIP** → Don't carry too much cash or expensive jewelry. Other things to bring along? A camera, a change of clothes if you're staying overnight, and your common sense.



Tours

Every major hotel can arrange guided tours to sites outside Beijing. Among the hotel-based travel agencies are **Beijing Panda Tour** and **China Swan International Tours**. **China International Travel Service (CITS)**, the official government agency, can also arrange tours.

Contacts Beijing Hikers (☎Room 1302, Bldg. 5, Unit 3, Courtyard 41, Nanshiliu, Jiuxianqiao, Chaoyang District ☎139/1002-5516 or 010/5829 3195 @www.beijinghikers.com) leads hiking tours to assorted locations every weekend.

Beijing Panda Tour (☎Crowne Plaza Beijing, 48 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District ☎010/6513-3388 Ext. 1212).

China International Travel Service (☎28 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District ☎010/6515-8565 ☎010/6515-8603)

China Swan International Tours (☎4 Fl., Longhui Building, 1 Nongguang Nanli, Dongsanhuan, Chaoyang District ☎010/8737-2266 @www.china-swan.com.cn)

Chinese Culture Club/The Beijing Amblers (☎Kent Center, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Dongcheng District ☎010/6432-9341 @www.chinesecultureclub.com)

Compass Tourist Information. This is a cheap tour service that caters to backpackers. Tours are generally one-half to one-third the price of CITS. ☎105 Tieshu Xiejie, Xuanwu District ☎010/6308-3201 @www.travelcompass.cn.

Cycle China (☎1391/188-6524 @www.cyclechina.com).

Stretch-A-Leg Travel Service (☎2/F, 34 Lane Ten, Dong Si, Dongcheng District ☎1360/109-4588 @www.stretchaleg.com) Small group and personalized tours of Beijing hutong and off-the-beaten track sights by an expert guide.

Wild China (☎Dongfang International Bldg. 9 Dongfang Dong Lu, Suite 801, Chaoyang District ☎010/6465-6602 @www.wildchina.com). This group tours destinations all over China, and the Great Wall, with tours run by Great Wall historian David Spindler.