Beijing: Imperial City & Museums

Beijing - 6 days / 5 nights

Sample itinerary - Subject to availability

Travel style: tailor made

Overview

The imperial city read slowly: palace, mansion, museum, wall.

The journey

Six days through Beijing's imperial core and its great collections - the Forbidden City at timed entry with the Treasure Gallery, the National Museum's Ancient China hall, Prince Kung's Mansion's half-a-dynasty story, and the wall at Mutianyu. Museum-first pacing for travellers who read the plaques.

Highlights

- The Forbidden City at timed entry, Treasure Gallery included
- National Museum of China - the Ancient China masterpieces
- Prince Kung's Mansion and its 'half of Qing history'
- Jingshan Hill's dusk view over the golden roofs
- The Great Wall at Mutianyu
- Temple of Heaven's park mornings
- Summer Palace's Long Corridor and Kunming Lake

Day by day



DAY 1 Arrive Beijing

Met and driven into the Dongcheng grid, where the hutong map still follows the Yuan-dynasty chessboard laid in 1267 by Kublai Khan's planners. The afternoon is orientation only: Tian'anmen's scale first, then the Qianmen arcades and Dashilan's old shopfronts as the lanterns come on. Early night; the palace tomorrows. (Arrival day: keep it light - an early night is the best thing for the week ahead., Arrival day: keep the evening light - the first night sets the pace for the week ahead.)

Meals: - - Hotel: Beijing, Dongcheng

DAY 2 The Forbidden City

A full palace day at reserved timed entry: the Meridian Gate axis, the three great halls of state, then away from the crowds into the Treasure Gallery's imperial jewels and the ceramics rooms most visitors walk past. Out the north gate and up Jingshan Hill for the dusk view - the golden roofline laid out over the moat, the hill itself a feng shui mound built from the palace excavation. The complex dates to 1420, twenty-four emperors called it home, and the guide reads the architecture as the constitution it was: roof-tile colour, gate hierarchy, axis politics. (A day that works at any pace - the guide reads the group and adjusts on the ground., The guide can flex the order inside the day; the pace is set around the group.)

Meals: B - Hotel: Beijing, Dongcheng



DAY 3 National Museum & Prince Kung's Mansion

Morning in the National Museum's Ancient China hall - the Houmuwu ding's three-thousand-year bronze, the jade burial suits of the Han princes, the sequence that makes the week's other sites legible as one civilisation's arc. Two focused hours with a specialist docent beat a rushed lap of 1.4 million objects. Afternoon in the lanes beyond Shichahai for Prince Kung's Mansion - the 1776 estate of Heshen, Qianlong's corrupt favourite, later home of Prince Gong the late-Qing diplomat, hence the saying 'one mansion, half of Qing history'; the garden's Kangxi-era fu character stone still draws luck-rubbers. Evening: a hutong courtyard dinner and the Silver Ingot Bridge's lakeside lamps. (Keep an hour of slack in the afternoon; the best moments on this route are rarely scheduled., The guide can flex the order inside the day; the pace is set around the group.)

Meals: B, D - Hotel: Beijing, Dongcheng

DAY 4 The wall at Mutianyu

North through the mountains to Mutianyu - the Ming wall section where watchtowers crown wooded ridges, reached by cable car both ways and left to the group's own pace on the ramparts. The wall's logic explains itself up here: sightlines, beacon intervals, the grade a garrison had to hold. Back in the city by late afternoon; the evening free around Wangfujing's bookshops and food halls. (Cable car up and toboggan down; an early start keeps the walk ahead of the coach groups., Cable car up and toboggan down; starting early keeps the walk ahead of the coach groups.)

Meals: B - Hotel: Beijing, Dongcheng



DAY 5 Temple of Heaven & Summer Palace

Temple of Heaven at opening - the triple-gabled hall where emperors prayed for harvest each winter solstice, built on the 1420 axis that made ritual architecture the machinery of the state - with the cypress park's tai chi and opera circles in full swing. The afternoon drifts north to the Summer Palace: Kunming Lake by boat, the Long Corridor's fourteen thousand painted scenes, and the Marble Boat where reform budgets sank. Farewell dinner is the Peking duck, carved tableside at a wood-fired house. (Modest dress and quiet voices; some halls ask for shoes off and no photography., The guide can flex the order inside the day; the pace is set around the group.)

Meals: B, D - Hotel: Beijing, Dongcheng

DAY 6 Depart

Transfer to the airport timed from check-in; the morning fits a last park walk or the Lama Temple's incense if the flight allows. The UK desk stays reachable until boarding, and Beijing pairs cleanly with Xi'an eastwards or Shanghai southwards for whichever brief comes next. (Departure day: bags out early and three hours at the airport keeps check-in unhurried., Departure day: bags out early, three hours at the airport, no rushed check-in.)

Meals: B - Hotel: -

What makes this journey different

- The National Museum's Ancient China gallery with a specialist docent - the bronzes and the jade suits read as a 5,000-year timeline rather than a hall of objects.
- The Forbidden City on reserved timed tickets, plus the Treasure Gallery and the ceramics rooms most day-trippers never reach.
- Prince Kung's Mansion - 'one mansion, half of Qing history' - from Heshen's corruption to Prince Gong's diplomacy, told in the house where it happened.
- Mutianyu at the quiet end with cable car both ways, and Jingshan Hill at dusk for the one photograph of the golden roofline.

Where you stay

A four-star hutong-adjacent hotel in the Dongcheng grid or a five-star on Wangfujing - both put the museums inside a ten-minute ride. Quoted per season.

Food & local life

Peking duck at a wood-fired house dating to the Qing, imperial-style court cuisine reconstructed from palace kitchen records, zhajiangmian and jianbing at the breakfast counters, and the hutong courtyard tables in the Shichahai lanes.

Included

+ Accommodation in the agreed grade, with breakfast
+ Private guide and private vehicle on touring days
+ All internal transport between cities as stated - high-speed rail, internal flights and transfers
+ Entrance fees for the sites named in the itinerary
+ Meals as stated (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
+ Drinking water in the vehicle, and a 24-hour emergency contact while the group is in China
+ Forbidden City and National Museum reserved tickets
+ Peking duck dinner

Not included

- International flights to and from China
- Chinese visa or visa-application costs
- Travel insurance, including medical and cancellation cover
- Meals not marked in the itinerary, drinks and personal spending
- Anything listed under subject to confirmation until it is confirmed

Planning note

Advance reservation may be required during peak travel periods. Your quotation confirms current availability, opening arrangements and any booking lead times.

Customisation

Every framework can be re-built around your client's dates, party size, hotel grade, pace and interests - or combined with scheduled small group departures where budget matters. Send us the brief and we will quote in writing.

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