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# Expatriate Guide to Beijing, China

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Expatriate Guide to Beijing, China

by

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Bachelor of Science  
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## **PART ONE**

### **Introduction**

The hospitality industry spans the globe, employing millions of jobs worldwide. In recent years, many well-known hotel companies such as, Hilton Worldwide, Marriott, Fairmont, Four Seasons, and The Peninsula, have expanded their portfolios around the world. With this vast expansion hospitality companies look for leaders that want to have unique experiences, and are able to travel the world during their career. The Asian economic market has done extremely well, particularly Mainland China, the People's Republic of China. In response to this, Americans have packed their bags and headed to China to live and work in the hospitality industry. According to the Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China conducted in 2010, there are 71,493 Americans residing in Mainland China (Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, 2010). Americans have found that living in China can be very rewarding for their career growth and experience. One must wonder though, what it is like to live in China, what challenges hospitality leaders encounter there, how similar experiences are by Americans serving in China, how hiring for new properties is conducted, and how all of these experiences compare to what would occur in the U.S. Answers to these questions, along with many others could significantly help American expatriates planning to live in China or living and working there today.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this professional paper is to provide Americans with a guide to the experiences they might expect working in and opening a new hotel property in Beijing, China.

## **Statement of Objective**

The paper aims to provide valuable information about and answer the following questions for Americans that may want to live and work in the hospitality industry in Beijing, People's Republic of China:

1. What is it like to live in Beijing, China?
2. What challenges do expatriate hospitality leaders encounter?
3. What differences are experienced during the hiring process?

This paper will give hospitality industry leaders an American expatriate's experiences to better understand how the culture aspects play a major role. One will see how leaders manage their team in the United States is much different than in China, how training must be as detailed as possible for retention by team members and how the language barrier and interpretation is an ongoing struggle. One of the vast differences shared is how the hiring process is conducted and is a challenge for American expatriates to overcome. This paper will show hospitality professionals exactly what an American expatriate might experience while living day-to-day life, as well as experiences in the hospitality industry that are notably different than what is experienced in the United States.

## **Justification**

The questions and experiences answered and shared in this paper will help hospitality leaders understand and evaluate if this type of experience would fit into their life and career goals. Questions will be answered and experiences shared to better prepare American expatriates. Expatriates will have a better understanding of how important it is to communicate in an organized and patient manner and the way someone interpretes may be different and how

the hiring and training process must remain at top priority in order to have an outstanding operation.

### **Constraints**

This paper is based on firsthand experiences, which could differ based on multiple accounts. This paper must be looked at as an overview or general guide based on the experiences shared from living and working in the hospitality industry in Beijing, China.

### **Glossary**

**Expatriate** (in abbreviated form, expat) an employee who is sent to live abroad for a defined time period. An expatriate is expected to relocate abroad, with or without family, for as short a period as six months to a year; typical expat assignments, however, are from two to five years long (Financial Times Lexicon, 2012).

**Mainland China**, China: a communist nation that covers a vast territory in eastern Asia; the most populous country in the world. (Wordnetweb, 2012).

**PART TWO**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Introduction**

Beijing is a metropolis in northern China and the capital city of China. Beijing is acknowledged as the political, educational, and cultural center of China. It is also the destination of many international flights with Beijing Capital airport ranking second in passenger travel behind Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Beijing is a major transportation hub with dozens of railways, roads and motorways passing thru the city (Travel China Guide, 2012).

Beijing has a rich history that spans more than 3,000 years and has seen radical change. Beijing has been the capital city for more than 850 years; it is one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China and attracts more travelers than any other city in the nation (Travel China Guide, 2012).

Beijing is home to many distinctive and historical landmarks known around the globe, including The Great Wall of China that was built between the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the 16<sup>th</sup> century to protect the northern borders from Xiongnu attacks during various successive dynasties. In the center and heart of Beijing stands the Forbidden City, home to past emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the largest palace complex of China and the world (Travel China Guide, 2012).

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, the People’s Republic of China was formed and under communist rule as a direct-controlled municipality of the national government under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893-1976). Under Chairman Mao’s leadership, the city underwent modernization, as streets were widened, vestiges and tales of histories past of imperial rule were demolished, and technical advisers from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) introduced examples of Soviet-style architecture (City-Data, 2012). Communist rule is very evident and will be

discussed later and the role it plays in cultural aspects. Since 1949 there have been several demonstrations that lash out towards the government and how Beijing and the country are being governed.

Beijing's Tiananmen Square became the stage for a major political event, as the student-led pro-democracy movement was sparked in the spring of 1989, accentuating the disparity between the country's economic reforms and its continuing level of political repression. Although China's human rights record continues to draw criticism from abroad and dissent at home, the economic liberalization of the past two decades has changed the façade of its capital, with the construction of skyscrapers, the proliferation of the services and conveniences that characterize a modern western consumer economy, and the exponential growth of tourism (City Data, 2012).

The People's Republic of China was a closed-door society from 1949 to 1976. Under the reign of Hua Guo-Feng and later Deng Xiao-Ping, China opened its doors and started to tear down the walls, allowing tourists, foreign businessmen and joint-venture partners (Kaye & Taylor, 1997). Despite the abundant pool of labor in China, skilled workers and managers versed in modern business practices were scarce. Though many vocational training schools and universities have been set up in the last 10 years, China's ability to educate and train young people has still not kept pace with the influx growth of foreign investment. Most companies have to employ managers from abroad to start up their operations. For many new expatriate managers and for those with previous Asia experience, China is a stimulating and demanding environment in which to live and work (Kaye & Taylor, 1997).

### **Chinese Culture**

To understand and work in Beijing, China one must understand the culture. The culture

in Beijing is like no other culture and can be vastly different than the culture in the western world. To be able to live and work in Beijing, one must keep an open mind and have patience. Studies have found that 16 - 40 % of all expatriate managers end their foreign assignments early because of their poor performance or their inability to adjust to the foreign environment (Kaye & Taylor, 1997). This statement could not be truer, especially in China. Hotel management colleagues have shared cultural experiences that happen on a daily basis in Beijing stating, “The cultural differences between East and West when I first moved to Beijing were very noticeable. The differences between personal space; whether you are waiting to get into a lift, or queuing at a supermarket to check out, a westerner can feel that their personal space is almost invaded, due to a local person standing so close. After a few months, you learn to adapt and realize that it is not a personal attack, but rather a cultural difference” (Ros Mackey, personal communication, October 5, 2012). This also goes for personal space in a work environment; a westerner will feel that they have no personal space due to the cultural effects in the Chinese population. The cultural differences must be looked at as a learning experience; it is something that cannot be looked at in a negative way, but as a cultural difference that does not have to be accepted, but respected.

Beyond personal space, there are many other cultural differences that have been shared by other expatriates within their time in Beijing China such as mannerisms, “I would say adopting to the culture, getting used to that you cannot just go anywhere you want and do what you want as you do not speak the language. I think one of the major challenges is to get used to the smells and the dirt of the city and how unhygienic some parts are. Also the eating habits and/or general habits of Chinese the people are quite a shock. The spitting and the general lack of manners is definitely a culture shock” (Tanja Muenchenbach, personal communication October



8, 2012). The western world possesses some of the world's best manners, which are due to upbringing. In China, the mannerisms are vastly different, and manners that are not accepted in the western world, may be normal in China as stated above. These cultural characteristics are not to be looked at in a bad way, but in a different way. Expatriates that you encounter that have lived in Beijing China will share some of the same stories and great experiences. No matter the cultural differences, the Chinese people are some of the kindest and helpful people that you may encounter. They will go out of their way to help a person in need and to help a person understand their culture and country. The Chinese people are full of pride.

Beijing is being transformed into a modern city and, sometimes hip city. At least that is the case among some younger Beijingers. It can be easier to get adjusted to the cultural difference, due in part to the younger generation. The younger generation in China has the desire to travel abroad, especially for educational purposes. They have the desire to be educated particularly in the United States and Europe in order to learn and speak English and learn different cultures and mannerisms.

However, in some cases one can feel uncomfortable in everyday situations, such as walking down the street and feeling stared at as some expatriates have experienced. "I think the biggest cultural adversity would be walking down the street like a normal person, and being stared at in an uncomfortable way, looked at as an alien. It is something you get use to because you have to understand that you are different and they (the Chinese) are staring because they are interested because you are different" (Winter Raymond, personal communication October 5, 2012).

### **Expatriate Challenges**

The problems expatriates encounter in Beijing vary by individual. However, the greatest

difficulty is the language barrier when communicating. Even though in recent years English is being taught as a second language, there are still many challenges. The problems are in the way words are expressed and how the meaning is comprehended or understood. The most common communication challenge is illustrated by this quote, “Communication is the biggest challenge working with Chinese Nationals, in that, what you say and how it is interrupted can be quite different. Because someone says yes, does not mean they agree with you, or understand what has been said. English native speakers often speak in double negatives, for example, Have you not done this? Answer is yes, as in yes, I have not done the task, where an English native speaker would say, no I have not done this” (Ros Mackey, personal communication October 6, 2012). The above example is just one of the many communication challenges. An expatriate must remember that even with communication challenges, one must remain patient and clear so that communication is understood, it just may take a few different times.

Expatriates will also experience and find it difficult when most conversations in an office setting take place in Chinese. This can prove to be extremely frustrating when expatriates are around, but do not speak or understand Chinese, leaving one feeling unattached from the conversation; again patience is very important. Expatriates must remember a time when they have worked with other expatriates that may not have had the best English skills and what frustrations they encountered, it is the same aspect. However, it can be frustrating and looked at as rude when the stated happens “I start a conversation in English, but then it shifts to Chinese, which means that I do not understand what is being said. And can continue for five minutes, with no translation being provided. At a point, the conversation will stop and then return to English, however there would be no explanation provided as to what was just discussed” (Ros Mackey, personal communication October 5, 2012). When a conversation is started in English, but then

shifts can leave one feeling very frustrated and in an awkward situation as if the language needed shift because it would be difficult to explain in English or that one was not meant to know or understand the conversation.

### **The Hotel Industry in Beijing China**

Growth within the hotel industry in Beijing skyrocketed right before the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and has steadily continued. In the beginning it was very hard for hotel companies to expand into the Chinese market, which was a direct contribution of the government. With majority of land and buildings in China being state owned (owned by the government) therefore the Chinese government must approve all business and trade transactions. Over the past decade, Chinese government has made progress in allowing more western world companies the right to operate in China. Therefore, allowing for the top hotel companies around the globe build and operate hotels.

Today, Beijing is home to the top hotel brands, from Holiday Inn, Hyatt, Starwood to Hilton, Four Season, Fairmont and Peninsula to name a few. Hotel companies are attracted to Beijing, and rightfully so. Beijing's economy is soaring compared to the hardships that the United States and Europe have and are facing in present day. Also, governmental policies have changed and it is easier for companies to operate and tourists to enter China and visit Beijing.

In 2012, Beijing will have three well-known hotel chains open their doors and over 50 hotels to open within Mainland China (Hotelchatter, 2012). That is an outstanding number, and that is only for 2012. Most major hotel companies anticipate doubling their portfolios by 2014.

With the amount of hotel openings in Beijing and Mainland China and with most companies being foreign, companies look to promote and move management leaders. While many hotel companies find it hard to staff hotels in China, there are some great benefits and

rewards, for the right person that can remain patient and open minded in order to learn how to live a successful business and personal life in Beijing.

It is important that expatriates prepare for a move abroad and have a general expectation of culture and experiences that they can come to understand. The Expatriate Guide to Beijing China will help one be more prepared of what experiences and challenges they will face in Beijing.

## **PART THREE**

### **Introduction**

In order for American hotel industry leaders to successfully live, work and open a new hotel in Beijing, China it is important that research and preparation are completed. The guidebook below will serve as a roadmap based on firsthand experiences to ensure that an American expatriate is able to have a smooth transition into Beijing, China. The guidebook will express importation information and personal accounts to ensure the expatriates time in Beijing is one filled with success, happiness and full of life-long experiences.

### **Recommendation**

#### **The Expatriate Guide to Beijing, China**

##### **U.S. Passport/Chinese Visa**

To enter China, a United States expatriate will need a Chinese visa as well as six month validity remaining on passport. If one tries to enter China without a valid passport and Chinese visa, the expatriate will be denied entry, fined and deported back to the United States. There are several different types of visas, the most common being a tourist visa and work visa. An expatriate working and living in China would apply and receive a work visa that entitles one to work and receive compensation pay in China. To apply for a Chinese work visa one needs to

visit the Embassy of China in Washington, D.C or based on your residence a consulate in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles or Houston. The below documents must be completed before proceeding to the embassy or consulate to apply for a Chinese Visa.

- Passport: Valid for up to six months
- Visa Application Form: Visa application form of the People's Republic of China
- Photo: Standard passport photo size of 48mm x 33mm
- Work Visa Form (Z Visa Form): Original and one copy of invitation letter by a Duly Authorized Unit or confirmation letter of invitation issued by an authorized Chinese agency and one of the following documents
  - Foreigner Employment Permit: issued by Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of China;
  - Foreign Expert Confirmation Document: issued by State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of China;
  - Letter of Invitation to Foreigners for Offshore Petroleum Operations in the People's Republic of China issued by China National Offshore Oil Corporation;
  - Registration Certificate of Foreign Enterprises' Permanent Representative Offices in China issued by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, or the approval document for the permanent representative offices of foreign enterprises issued by related commercial departments;
  - Approval document issued by the Ministry of Culture for those who come to China for commercial performances.
  - Invitation Letter by a Duly Authorized Unit or a Confirmation Letter of Invitation issued by the Foreign Affairs Office of a province (autonomous region, city).

- Accompanying family members of foreigners working in China should submit an Invitation Letter by a Duly Authorized Unit or Confirmation Letter of Invitation issued by an authorized Chinese agency, and proof of kinship, e.g. marriage certificate, birth certificate, etc. There is no need for them to submit documents of employment permit (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 2012).

After obtaining the correct materials from the respected company or by documents listed above, the expatriate must also have a Physical Examination Record for Foreigner completed. This test must be conducted by a registered and practicing doctor. The test includes a full examination, full blood test with HIV/AIDS testing and full x-rays of chest.

Complete and updated information, including proper forms to be completed can be retrieved from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America website, located at <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/>.

Expatriates need to be aware that the visa process is something that takes time. The process can take up to one month to obtain the correct certificates from China and also complete physical examination. It is important that all forms are completed in a timely and correct manor to ensure no errors.

### **Passport Pictures**

It is very crucial that expatriates have 20 to 30 passport pictures taken; the correct size is 48mm x 33m. Passport pictures can be made at local United States Post Office's or local retailers such as Wal-Mart, FedEx, Walgreens, etc. Passport pictures will be used to attach to any and all official documents that one presents for visa processing and then again once arrived in China.

## **Banking**

Expatriates should be warned that banking in China is very different and can be a lengthy process in China compared to the United States. As an expatriate may walk into a bank location and carry out several transactions is just a few moments in the US may take several minutes to even over an hour. American Expatriates by law are only allowed to convert \$500 USD per day, and then must pay fees should one wish to transfer funds out of China. This can be extremely frustrating at times should one need to exchange and transfer more than \$500 USD. However, there are two ways to make this process smoother. Citi Bank has several locations throughout Beijing and China and makes transferring much easier. One must have a Citi account in the United States as well as in China for this process to work. Should one choose to use a different institution, a Chinese Nationalist is able to convert and transfer money with a larger limit than \$500 USD. Typically, colleagues are able to help with this issue to ensure money is exchanged and transferred in a more efficient manner with an average fee between \$30 - \$50 USD per transfer.

## **Power of Attorney**

Having a power of attorney is a must before living abroad, regardless of where it might be. There are occurrences that could happen while not living in the United States that would make having a power of attorney a good choice. It is a simple process that doesn't take much time to process and fees are reasonably priced between \$150 - \$350 USD to have a power of attorney. Typically one would have a family member or close friend to represent as power of attorney. In the instance that an expatriate would need someone to speak or sign on behalf of, having the power of attorney would alleviate an expatriate having to return home unnecessarily during their tenure abroad.

## **Mobile phone/Communication**

Before leaving the United States mobile phone providers will need to be contacted to setup international service and discuss when to cut service off. International service can be quite costly; however it is necessary to have to communicate until having a Chinese number and phone.

Many national mobile phone providers will insist that fees be associated with breaking a contract. Regardless of stating that one is moving out of the country, providers explain that service is available, however international fees apply; this can be costly. In most cases, when contracts are broken, the fees associated with contracts are to cover the phone cost. Most likely, one uses an iPhone or Android, and fees will associate with both to break a contract. Ensure you pick an international plan that will last a few weeks for communication until a Chinese number and phone is purchased.

American phones can be used in China; however they must be unlocked first. If one carries a Smartphone, chances are that it is locked, which means the fees must be paid in order to use the phone. In most cases the unlock fee, which can range between \$250 - \$400 USD is more reasonable than purchasing a Smartphone in China.

However, in China mobile service is very reasonable with packages ranging between \$25 - \$100 USD per month including minutes, internet and text messaging. Additional international packages can be added on for \$5 - \$30 USD per month which can all calling to all over the world.

In this day and age, internet has become a necessity and can be found in many hotels, restaurants, and businesses for complimentary. Other forms of communication can be with various applications such as Skype, whatsapp, viber, and faceTime, just to name a few. Most of



these applications are free to consumers or cost under \$2.00 USD. With having such applications connecting and communicating across the world can be inexpensive and convenient.

Internet in China is easily accessible, even more so than the United States. Almost every establishment from hotels, motels, restaurants, bars and coffee shops offer complimentary internet to patrons. Should one need internet for home use, it can easily be installed and very affordable. Like many necessities, if internet is paid upfront for a year, a discount is received. One can expect to pay between \$250 - \$400 USD for a full year of internet service depending on the download speed.

Connecting to the internet in the United States and finding a wealth of information is common. One can surf the net, research and find information, pictures, video on almost any topic known to man. However, in China the government has full control over the internet. Common websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google are blocked; meaning that one is unable to freely browse the internet like in the United States. In order to climb over “the great wall” as it is referred to, one must purchase a Virtual Private Network or VPN. A VPN sends and transmits data thru a secure network outside of China, most being based in the United States and Europe. This allows one to freely access the internet as if they were in the United States. The Chinese government is constantly monitoring for VPN activity shutting down the connection. This is frustrating not only to expatriates, but also Chinese nationalist. In recent years, various replicas of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google and various other websites have emerged offering browsers the same content as most well known United States websites.

### **Permanent Mailing Address**

Once the expatriate knows a moving date, it is very important to have a permanent mailing address. Typically, one does not keep accommodations in the United States, however if

they do, one would want to make sure someone is regularly checking for mail. If not keeping accommodations, it is very important to setup a permanent mailing address. Typically, having the address of a family member is the best option. This ensures that when important mail and information arrives, the family member can communicate what has been received. This is also important to ensure that proper income tax information, banking, credit card credit information and any other important information is sent to a permanent address location.

### **Credit Cards**

In present day, credit cards are a necessary evil. Whether living, working or traveling abroad, a credit card is a must and often time comes in handy when an expatriate is in-between countries and currency has not been exchanged. It is very important that all creditors are aware of international travel and the amount of time spent in an international destination. Most creditors will note on accounts of international transactions for up to 1 year. If staying for more than 1 year, creditors must be called and informed to note on account again.

It is important that one understands credit card conditions for international transactions and is highly recommended to call each creditor and as any fees associated with an international transaction. Creditors typically charge between 3% - 10% for international transactions, over time these transaction fees add up. If an expatriate finds that creditors will charge for international transaction fees, then it is time to apply for a card with 0% international transaction fees; and there are plenty to choose from. An excellent resource to review current credit card offers can be found at <http://www.creditcards.org/>. This site provides great information and will show international transaction fees.

Expatriates will also want to make an address change on all credit cards, ensuring that the permanent address used is added. It is also advised to have all statements delivered paperless to

an email account. This reduces paper waste, convenient and secure.

## **Medication**

It is very important that expatriates purchase general medication before coming to China. Over the counter medication that is sold in the United States is not easily accessible to anyone in Mainland China. This goes for any basic medication from Tylenol, Advil, multi vitamins, to Pepto Bismal and allergy medication. The Chinese government has strict control on what can and cannot be sold from the western world, and medication is at the top of the list. Medication that Americans find in everyday stores and pharmacies can only be given out in China via prescription at an international hospital. Therefore, it is recommended to purchase a year supply of over the counter medication before departing to China. It is also important to schedule a visit with one's doctor to discuss travel to China and be granted a year prescription on medication should the doctor find it necessary.

International Hospitals are common in Beijing and China and can also prescribe medication. Most hospitals have international medicine or medication that is produced by major pharmaceutical companies, but may have a different name.

There are other options for obtaining medication. Many expatriates will make a trip to Hong Kong and general medications are easily accessible there. Another option is Chinese medications. Chinese medications are typically comprised of herbs and are natural. Many find this option very attractive, as it is natural and inexpensive. There are many known Chinese doctors that specialize in this and give educational classes to inform of ingredients and remedies.

## **Packing**

Major hotel companies will include freight in a relocation package. However, it is suggested to bring only necessities as many expatriates only spend between two to four years

abroad. Therefore in terms of packing, pack light. International travel on major airlines allows for two pieces of luggage and charge extra fees for overweight luggage and extra pieces, which can be costly. One must remember that the majority of clothing products are made in China so therefore it can be cost effective to purchase in China. Having clothing made by tailors is popular and inexpensive on average a male or female suit is priced between \$100 to \$200 USD depending on the quality of fabric. Dress and casual shirts can be tailor made for \$20 to 40 USD with winter and casual jackets between \$80 to \$400 USD. When it comes to major name brands, the cost is very expensive due to importing products. It is suggested to bring minimal of the following and then either purchase or have other clothing products made by a tailor.

- Suits
- Ties
- Shirts (dress and casual)
- Winter Wear (jackets, gloves, scarfs)
- Shoes (dress and casual)
- Pants and jeans
- Undergarments

## **Housing**

The housing market in Beijing, China is one of the best in the world. Expatriates find housing very attractive compared to the United States. Hotel companies do provide a set amount of a monthly housing allowance for expatriates. The amount is based on position and is typically very attractive. Most expatriates opt to have a furnished apartment, which is very common in Beijing, even for local residents. There are options to have non-furnished apartments, however this is not recommended due to cost of shipping furniture or the cost to furnish an apartment.

Beijing is also like any other major city where you do not find single-family homes unless you look out into suburbs.

Furnished apartments (studio to 1 bedroom) typically have the following items:

- Appliances: refrigerator, microwave, stovetop, television, lighting and washer
- Furniture: king size bed with mattress, table with four chairs, couch, chair, coffee table, wall artwork and bookshelf or armoire.

Apartments in Beijing and in China often do not come with an oven or a dryer. In tradition with Chinese customs, Chinese food does not require the use of ovens; therefore apartments typically do not have them. One can purchase an oven for a reasonable price at a local appliance store if needed. Dryers are also not common; with the weather in China typically being very dry a clothes-drying rack is common in the place of a dryer. If a dryer is needed, one can be purchased.

Housing in Beijing can be compared to any upscale residence in the United States. Most apartments are in attractive areas and include a reception desk, security, gym, 24 hour engineering, and mailbox area.

Leasing an apartment actually can be a very easy and quick process. Hotel companies typically have a real estate company that they use. A realtor will be assigned and one will give leasing allowance and preferences. On average finding an apartment takes around 2 weeks from start to move in date. The realtor handles all showing of apartment options, contract terms and maintenance issues encountered. Expatriates should be aware of the following few items.

- Deposit: an owner will require anywhere from a 1 to 3 month deposit
- Rent payment: payments are withdrawn from renters bank account either on a monthly or every tri month basis

- Satellite: payments are made to apartment owner with rent on a 6 month basis
- Electricity: payments are made to building office and are based on consumption, not a monthly usage bill. Heating and temperature is provided at no cost per Chinese government. Air conditioning is based on consumption and renter controls temperature.
- Water: payments are made to building office and are based on consumption for both cold and hot water.

### **Day-to-Day Living**

Arriving in Beijing can be very overwhelming to an expatriate, especially if they have never traveled to China or Asia before. It is a very exciting time for one to experience a new place of living and also a new job. Once the shock wears off and one is comfortable with work and living arrangements are completed, it is time to start learning and experiencing day-to-day life in Beijing.

Expatriates will at first have somewhat of a shock when they first arrive as there are many experiences that will be considerable different than in the United States. A trip to the bank for instance can be a task at times. The government controls the bank so to carry out a simple transaction at a bank does not come easy. For instance, a United States Citizen can only exchange \$500USD per day. If one needs to transfer money back to the United States, it can take time due to the money exchange law. Also, when conducting bank transactions, paperwork is signed for everything, including deposits and withdraws along with having to input a unique pin. It can be looked at as a security measure, but also can be a nuisance.

Mobile phones are relatively inexpensive and easily accessible in Beijing. One will notice almost everyone on the streets have a cell phone, from teenagers to the elderly. One can purchase a local mobile phone sim card from street vendors, and stores. Unless unlocked, phones

from the United States are locked, therefore do not work with international carriers. As discussed above, it is very important to talk with your carrier in the United States before leaving.

Mobile phone service is easy to obtain and there are many options available. The top 3 providers being, China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom each having similar services and packages. In China, one is not required to sign a mobile phone contract. Service can be obtained by purchasing a package based on usage needs or by purchasing charged mobile cards and adding the amount to a sim card. Phone packages are the most desirable and prices range between \$20 to \$80 USD. Also, unlike in the United States, there are no monthly bills, one pays when they are notified via text message that the phone package is running low.

Just as in any major city, Beijing is full of culture and entertainment to experience. Most expatriates find Beijing fascinating with access to historical sites like The Great Wall of China, Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and Summer Place to name a few. Beijing can be overwhelming with the many sites and experiences to share and keep one busy during downtime. A bustling city like Beijing can share history, culture, experiences of the past and the future. Over the past 20 years, China has become more modernized and adapted some western features. However, one can often learn about the past from local people. Local people can be found roaming the streets, buses, trains, and local provinces and can leave one with a humbling experience. Expatriates quickly learn that they can communicate and exchange information without using words through the use of various gestures, head nods, glances and hand gestures.

Expatriates will find that shopping is a pastime in Beijing and malls and shopping areas are in abundance around Beijing. The culture in Beijing is such that people often spend time with friends in malls, restaurants, coffee shops, etc. Many of these malls are filled with both Asian designers and western designers. The typical western designer clothing comes at a price,

typically 30% to 75% more than what one would spend in the United States. Like stated above, one can arrange for a tailor to make clothing, especially work attire, jackets and pants. Many expatriates find the local clothing markets are able to suit their needs. One can browse many designs, often times being knockoffs or replicas of major fashion designers, but at a desirable price. The average cost for a pair of jeans or casual shirt is between \$5 to \$30 USD depending on the quality of craftsmanship. The clothing markets are an excellent choice to buy everyday clothing and are also home to some of the best tailors.

Membership cards are popular in China and almost every retailer will offer membership cards. These membership cards differ slightly from the typical cards that one will see in the United States. In Beijing, many retailers will give you a membership cards for extra rewards, special items, or a discount. On most cards, especially for dry cleaning, restaurants and spa services one is able to place a certain amount of money on a card and then use the card for payment and a discount at the time of service. The greater amount of money placed on a card, gives one a larger discount price. Membership cards are recommended if one finds them at a retail store that they often use.

## **Cuisine**

Beijing is home to some of the best food in the world, especially Chinese food. As one will learn, Chinese food can vary based on what part of China or which province one lives or visits. In Beijing, the food experience will blow one away, regardless if you are able to travel to other provinces, you can still find the cuisine, in Beijing.

The Chinese food in Beijing is drastically different from what most Americans think Chinese food taste like. Chinese restaurants are not buffet style serving up sweet and sour chicken, beef and broccoli and so on like one would expect. Chinese dishes are prepared in



many different ways with an array of flavor and typically served family style.

Americans have become accustomed to eating one entrée that they have ordered. In China, many different dishes are ordered and shared among guest, allowing for people to try different entrees. Entrees served vary from soups, small plates, meat, vegetables and a staple food being rice or noodles. Chinese food is very fresh and is typically boiled or stir fried with oil. Very seldom is Chinese food deep fried as most Americans are familiar with.

There are several Beijing restaurants that serve local favorites such as Beijing roast duck cooked in an open brick oven until tender a crispy, dim sum and noodles. Dim sum is a collection of small entrees from vegetables, dumplings, wontons and meat that can be shared by many. Beijing is very famous for a variety of noodles, made from flour or eggs coming from a variety of sizes and paired with many different types of broths from chicken broth to a more spicy broth. A typical local meal can be enjoyed for \$2 to \$30 USD per person depending on the style of Chinese and what is ordered.

Just because one is in Beijing, does not mean that Chinese cuisine is the only option. Indeed, there are an array of culinary options from Indian, North and South America, to Italian, Japanese and German. The cuisine options in Beijing are endless and are easily accessible from any location. Just as in other major cities, the price for a western meal can be found for \$20 to \$100 USD per person dependent upon which cuisine and items ordered.

A typical trip to the grocery store can be different. Local and international grocery stores are common. It is recommended to go to the local grocery store with someone who is familiar due to everything being written in Chinese. After a few trips, it becomes much easier to shop in the local grocery store and can be cost effective. International grocery stores are common and one is able to find what is called “comfort foods,” whether that is ice cream, cereal, or orange

juice. International grocery stores carry familiar brands and items, at a price. Items that are imported in are typically double the United States price. For example, on average a half gallon of orange juice or ice cream will sell for \$12 to \$15 USD, where as a Chinese brand would sell for \$2 to \$5 USD. A cost savings is easy, if one shops at a local grocery store.

## **Transportation**

Beijing is ranked as one of the most populous cities in the world, and with that comes a variety of modes of transportation for maneuvering around the city. Like other major cities, taxi cabs, subway stations and bus routes can be found along with bikes and local rickshaws. With being a major populous city, traffic problems do exist and are increasingly getting worse.

Expatriates can apply for an international driver's license, however it is not recommended due to the government control of license plates that are issued and the time involved in obtaining a driver's license.

Taxi cabs are an efficient and simple way to get from point A to point B in Beijing, given that traffic is friendly and not in a normal standstill. Cabs can be found fairly easy and charge an average of \$ .50 USD per mile. Should the weather be an issue, cabs can be very hard to come by as most are occupied.

The Beijing subway is a fast and efficient way to maneuver around the city and comes at a very low cost to use; average charge of \$.05 USD per stop. Subway stations can be found all around the city in convenient locations. During peak hour, the subway can become very congested which can slow travel times.

The bus system in Beijing follows the same system as the subway and has multiple stops throughout the city and charges a minimal amount as fare. Many choose to use the combination of bus and subway as a fast and efficient way to getting around Beijing. Like taxi cabs, buses

can often be delayed due to the amount of traffic.

There are hundreds of thousands of cars on the road each day and there are even more bicycles in Beijing. The city is a bike friendly city to say the least and is the most efficient mode of transportation in Beijing. Every major road in the city has bike lanes. It is recommended that expatriates purchase a bike to navigate around the city. Bikes can be purchased for around \$80 USD depending on brand.

When in Beijing, one must experience a rickshaw. A rickshaw is much like a bicycle which has a buggy seat that can hold two people on the back and is peddled and driven by a local driver. This provides a true local experience and is another way to efficiently travel in the city.

While living and working in Beijing, an expatriate has easy access to travel the globe via Beijing Capital Airport. Beijing Capital Airport is among the largest airports in the world and provides flights to destinations around the world. The airport provides daily non-stop service between the following United States locations:

- Chicago O'Hare International
- Detroit International
- New York, John F. Kennedy International
- Los Angeles International
- San Francisco International
- Seattle International
- Washington, D.C. Dulles International

### **Local Law**

Beijing, China is not only the Capital of China but also home to government and military offices. Laws vary drastically than any western culture due to the communist style of

government. An expatriate once stated that in China, people fear the law but in western worlds, people fear the law enforcement (anonymous, personal communication September 2012). This statement accurately depicts Chinese Law. Beijing being the most populous cities in the world has the lowest crime rate of any major western city. People in Beijing fear the outcome if a crime is committed, where as people in the United States fear the enforce (police officer) and not the outcome. One can walk the streets of Beijing and very seldom see a police officer. Police officers are generally seen during major events. Military police are seen at every government building, embassy and major event.

The general responsibility of local police is to ensure that housing and foreign visitor registration cards are issued correctly. Any foreign visitor in China must be registered into the Public Safety Bureau (police station) system within 24 hours of entering China. If a foreign visitor has lodging at a hotel, the information is inputted at check-in. If the foreign visitor is residing at a local residence, they must go and register at a local Public Safety Bureau station. Not only do foreign visitors have to follow this law, but also all Chinese nationalist should they travel within China or move to another province or city other than their hometown.

Local police also hand out fines like any other western culture, most due to parking and driving when a license plate number is not permitted to drive. Beijing has millions of drivers, and in efforts to help with traffic congestion, license plate number dictate which days the driver may drive. Should this law not be followed, local police will fine drivers. When it comes to petty fines that the United States has such as speeding, running of stoplight or stop sign, Beijing does not abide by those same fines. Local police do not concentrate on speeding or running a red light and stop sign. One must pay attention when crossing streets as local Chinese drivers do not yield to yellow or red lights; it is almost as if they do not exist. This can be somewhat puzzling

at first, but then one realizes that these driving habits are a custom now and it just works for Beijing; organized chaos.

It is custom in the United States that we are given a receipt for any purchase that one makes. That is also the case in China, however there is an extra piece of paper that one must obtain in order to receive any form of reimbursement from a company. A fapiao is a receipt that is obtained showing proof that value added tax has been paid. A fapiao is always chopped with a red stamp a tax number and is needed for any reimbursement from a company.

### **Cultural Aspects**

Expatriates will face and experience many different cultural aspects, and many will and can vary, depending on the person. Chinese people can be some of the nicest and welcoming people one can ever encounter, especially the younger generation. Most Chinese welcome foreign guest to Beijing as they see it as a way to learn about the western world, and they are very eager to learn. Also, they want to teach you about Chinese history and Beijing as they are very proud of their country and heritage.

The hardest challenge to overcome is the language barrier. The growing number of bilingual English speakers is rapidly growing, however the communication and understanding is still a concern. Many Chinese will try their absolute best to understand English speakers, and if they fail, they will find someone that is able to translate in order to communicate.

The hardest cultural difference to overcome is mannerisms. An expatriate must understand that in China, the difference of mannerisms is not an insult or being rude, but a cultural difference. Personal space is non-existent in China, one will find being bumped into on the streets, having someone stand right next to them in the elevator, and having people walk in an office unannounced. This is a culture difference, not rudeness and to Americans it can be

seen as having no manners. It is common to pass people on the streets that burp out loud, pass gas, and spit on a normal basis. At first one may be puzzled, but it is only a difference in culture. Chinese are also naturally impatient people, they do not like to wait and time is important. Often times you will find elevators being barged before occupants can leave and people walking in and out of doors in any direction. At first, it can be a bit frustrating; however these experiences must be looked at in a positive cultural difference and a learning experience.

### **Work Experience**

Working in the hotel market in Beijing, China can be full of experiences and be rewarding. Most major hotel companies have multiple properties throughout Beijing and China. When it comes to leadership roles in Beijing, most of these positions are filled by expatriates. As the hospitality industry is rapidly growing in China more leadership positions are becoming filled by Chinese nationalist as they gain experience.

Finding qualified candidates for various hotel positions in Beijing can be a task. Many candidates do not have loyalty to a hotel or brand and therefore will move positions frequently for a promotion or a greater salary. This poses a great challenge to hotel leaders making it difficult to find experienced candidates. In many cases, leaders must find the most qualified candidate and groom them into the position with training, scenarios and experiences.

A typical hotel will have a rather large Human Resource department depending on the size of the property. Human resources have to be in constant search for candidates due to high turnover rates in Beijing. The candidate interview process in China differs drastically than in the United States. A candidate will submit a resume providing personal information such as, marital status, political status, weight, height, and picture. These questions are of course forbidden by United States law to be asked to a candidate. However in China, these questions are common and

expected.

Finding a qualified candidate can be a great challenge, however most leaders find that training team members is a more pleasant experience. The Chinese expect and work more efficient with a structure, much like the government. They are eager to learn and will work to the best of their abilities. However, training them is almost like teaching a child to read. Step by step they learn with practice and repetition. Once they have mastered a skill, they will perform their job duties with zero error and provide flawless service to guests. Chinese team members like structure, therefore having operating procedures or standards written out in black and white provides the best method of training. They like and understand when items are specifically detailed out and will refer back to training materials to ensure they perform at their best.

Chinese also particularly like having expatriates as leaders. Chinese typically are used to having a leader that does not recognize outstanding job duties, but focuses on what was preformed incorrectly in a job function. Most expatriates are the exact opposite and realize that praising great efforts in work will provide greater motivation, results, and higher guest satisfaction. Therefore, hotels with expatriates as leaders typically have higher guest satisfaction scores, and lower turnover percentages.

Communication for expatriates will be one of the greatest challenges one will face. Just like in day-to-day life, the communication barrier is challenging. The greatest challenge falls when a leader is communicating to the team members and the meaning is lost in translation. It is important for leaders to understand that they must speak in simple form to ensure their point is understood. It is also very important, regardless if one feels like they have an excellent staff that understands English to have a team member to translate what the leader is saying into Chinese. This will alleviate any communications challenges and also give the team members a chance to

ask questions should they not understand.

### **Conclusion**

Having the opportunity to live and work in Beijing, China can be a rewarding and educational experience for hospitality leaders. It can give leaders a career advantage based upon experiences they faced when working in an international positions. It can also provide life changing experiences that many leaders never have the chance to experience.

Expatriates have to learn how to live their daily lives in Beijing. Many of the items discussed in this paper concern such topics. Knowing how to replenish medications, where to shop for different kinds of foods, how to register with the government, how to arrange for and communicate by phone and the Internet and many other topics were discussed in earlier pages in this guide. The intent is to help educate and promote being a leader in the hospitality field in Beijing, China. This paper provides real life scenarios and challenges faced by others. Each provide expatriates and potential expatriates with an inside look into something that will make their lives considerably easier and more productive while in China. Working in the hospitality industry gives leader's opportunities everyday to work in an international position. Whether the opportunity is in Beijing, China, or any other international location, one must go in with an open mind in order to be a successful leader and take away a wealth of knowledge and experiences to share for a lifetime.



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