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Summary Article: **Beijing**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Capital of China; parts of the northeast municipal boundary coincide with sections of the Great Wall of China; population (2002 est) 7,699,300. The municipality of Beijing has an area of 17,800 sq km/6,871 sq mi and a population (2005) of 14,930,000. Industries include engineering and the production of steel, motor vehicles, textiles, and petrochemicals; the city is also a major centre of printing and publishing.

Features Tiananmen Gate (Gate of Heavenly Peace) and Tiananmen Square (in 1989 the site of student protest violently suppressed by the army); the Forbidden City (the Imperial Palace known as the **Gu Gong**), built between 1406 and 1420 by the Ming emperor Yong Le; the Great Hall of the People (1959), seat of the National People's Congress; the Museum of China's History and Revolution; the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall (1977); the Summer Palace built by the Empress Dowager Ci Xi (damaged by European powers in 1900, but restored in 1903 and after 1949); the Old Summer Palace (original Summer Palace destroyed by French and British troops during the Second Opium War, 1856–60); the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan); and the Ming tombs 50 km/30 mi to the northwest. Beijing is the leading educational and cultural centre of China: Beijing University (1898) and Tsinghua University (1911) are the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the country and the capital also contains over 50 other institutions of higher education and research. Other notable cultural features of the capital include the Palace Museum, the Arthur M Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology (1993), the Beijing National Stadium (2008), the Beijing Opera, the National Art Gallery, and the Beijing Zoo.

History Records of earliest settlements date back to 1000 BC. Beijing developed substantially as the 13th-century capital (known as **Dadu**) of the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) the capital was moved to Nanjing for 35 years, and Beijing was renamed **Beiping** (Northern Peace). It was called Beijing (Northern Capital) when it became capital again from 1421. In 1928 the nationalist Guomindang returned the capital to Nanjing and gave Beijing its former name of Beiping. It was held by Japan from 1937 to 1945. In 1949 the new communist government shifted the capital back to the city and renamed it Beijing.

Location Beijing lies in the alluvial plain between the Bai He and the Yongding He rivers and is partly encircled, at distances of 16 km/10 mi to 30 km/19 mi, by mountains which are crowned with the eastern section of the Great Wall of China.

Climate Beijing is cold and dry in the winter, when the lakes in the parks freeze to form skating rinks. The temperature regularly rises to over 28°C/82°F in summer. Rainfall occurs on average for less than eight weeks each year. For a few days in April dust storms blow into the city from the Gobi Desert.

Economy Beijing's traditional handicraft industries, developed to serve the court, suffered a decline after the overthrow of the imperial government in 1911 and the removal of the republican capital to Nanjing in 1928. After 1949 its role as the capital of a centralized state with a planned economy brought the office headquarters of government ministries and other national bodies to Beijing. It also became the hub of national transport networks developed after 1949. As the nation's cultural centre,

Beijing houses China's national broadcasting and publishing organizations, 65 institutions of higher learning, and 475 institutes for research and development. Modern industries were developed, bringing engineering and steel, chemical, vehicle, and railway equipment manufacturing to the city, as well as light industries such as the production of textiles and household goods. Older crafts such as the making of enamel or cloisonné ware were also revitalized. From the 1950s to the 1970s, when government policy restricted the growth of China's other large cities, Beijing was allowed to expand. By the end of the twentieth century, however, because of problems of industrial pollution and congestion, government policy was to relocate many factories and to extend the subway system, originally completed in 1988.

Changes in economic policy after 1979 attracted the head offices of foreign companies and agencies to Beijing, together with those of national corporations formed from the state-owned industries. It also brought more tourists, both foreign and Chinese. These developments strengthened Beijing's role as an administrative and financial centre based on service industries. The city's government pursued a strategy of expanding the key manufactures: chemicals, cars, electronics, machinery, and woollen textiles. Other modern industries have also grown up in the city; Haidian in the northwest of Beijing, which has many of the city's universities, is home to China's domestic computer software and information technology industry.

Layout of the old city Old Beijing was composed of two cities, each surrounded by massive stone walls. The sides of the square Inner City (formerly known in Europe as the Tartar City), were 7 km/4 mi long, 15 m/50 ft high, and 18 m/60 ft thick. To its south was the Outer City (once known as the Chinese City) with its longer sides running east–west for 8 km/5 mi. The walls were pierced by 17 gates, which were surmounted by towers 30 m/98 ft high. In the centre of the Inner City was the walled and moated Imperial Palace (the Gu Gong), with a perimeter of 10 km/6 mi; it was also known as the Forbidden City as ordinary citizens were not allowed inside. Today the palace is open to the public as a museum. To the west of the Imperial Palace was an area of gardens and pavilions for the court.

The earth from the chain of artificial lakes excavated in these gardens was piled up to form Jinshan Hill (formerly known in Europe as Coal Hill) north of the Imperial Palace. Zhongnanhai, the area around the southern and middle sections of the lakes, now accommodates the leadership of the national government; Beihai, the northern section, is a public park. Tiananmen (Gate of Heavenly Peace) is the main entrance to the palace, lying on its southern side; it was fronted by an open area, now the Tiananmen Square. The 15th-century Tiantan (Temple of Heaven) with its colossal, round marble Altar of Heaven, is in the southeast corner of the Outer City. Other noteworthy features were the Confucian and Lamaist temples in the northeast of the old city.

Development of modern Beijing Old Beijing was one of the few capitals in the world carefully planned before building. It was symmetrically arranged around the Imperial Palace and, in accordance with traditional Chinese principles, was aligned along a north–south axis which ran through Jinshan Hill and Tiananmen. Outside the palace area, the city had broad streets which intersected at right angles. The Communist government changed the principal axis to east–west by enlarging and extending the Chang'an (Prolonged Peace) Avenue which runs across the north of Tiananmen Square; many large public buildings were erected along the avenue. The walls around the Inner and Outer cities were demolished and new roads laid over their sites, although a few of the gates remain.

Tiananmen Square, enlarged from 11 ha/27 acres to 40 ha/99 acres in the 1960s, was made the political focus of the new state; Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China

there, and it was the site of the huge rallies he addressed. Flanking the square are the Great Hall of the People, home of China's legislature; the National People's Congress; and the Museum of China's History and Revolution. Within the square are the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, built in 1977 to house his embalmed body; and the Monument of the People's Heroes, a 36 m/118 ft-high granite obelisk bearing relief carvings of major revolutionary events.

Rapid economic growth after 1979 brought further redevelopment. Few houses built in the traditional style around a courtyard remain; most have been demolished to make way for office blocks, high-rise residential estates, and luxury hotels, nearly all constructed in international architectural styles. Modern shopping centres with international outlets compete with the principal shopping areas in the old city, Wanfujing Street in the east and Xidan in the west. Most of Beijing's foreign embassies are located to the east of the city.

Enlargement of Beijing has pushed its suburbs well out into the surrounding countryside, while the growth of traffic has necessitated the building of modern road schemes around the metropolis. The outer walls of the old city were demolished to build a second ring road, followed by a third ring road, and in the 1990s a fourth ring road at the edge of the city's suburban district. Many of the new developments are sited on these routes away from the old city centre; Finance Street, on the second ring road, east of old Beijing, is the centre of an office district containing many commercial organizations.

The Beijing National Stadium, the world's largest steel structure, opened in 2008 for the summer Olympic Games.

Communications The city has two main railway stations: Beijing in the southeast of the old city, and **Beijing West** in its western suburbs, both designed in the traditional Chinese style. There are also suburban termini in Beijing South and North stations. The Capital Airport, northwest of the city, with a modern expressway connection, is China's principal international airport. China's first underground railway system was built in Beijing.

From the 6th century BC to the late 20th century The name Beijing signifies the Northern Capital, distinguishing it from Nanjing, the Southern Capital of the early Ming dynasty (1368–1420) and capital of China between 1928 and 1949. In the 6th century BC, during the Warring States period, Beijing was capital of the Yan Kingdom. It was made capital successively by the Khitan Mongols, founders of the Liao dynasty, who renamed the city **Yanjing**; and by the Juchen, founders of the Jin dynasty, who called it **Zhongdu**.

Mongolian invaders sacked the city in 1215, and in 1260 Kublai Khan established the capital of the Yuan dynasty on the same site, naming it **Khanbaliq** or **Dadu** (Great Capital). Yong Le, the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, relocated his capital from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421, and most of the city's present palaces, temples, and walls were established after this date. The Manchus captured the city in 1644, the first year of the Qing dynasty, and further splendid temples and mansions were built.

The city remained the capital of China until 1928, when Jiang Jie Shi (Chiang Kai-shek) moved his government to Nanjing and renamed Beijing **Beiping** (Northern Peace). The removal of the capital deprived the city of its political significance, which had lasted for five centuries. However, it remained the cultural centre of China, retaining the six leading universities of the country and many national research institutes and colleges. The students of Beijing launched the May 4th Movement in 1919 and,

after Japanese aggression in 1931, they began the nationwide campaign of united-front resistance against the Japanese, forcing the nationalist Guomindang government in Nanjing to alter its subservient policy towards Japan.

During the Sino-Japanese War Beijing was the first city to fall into enemy hands, and was occupied from July 1937 to September 1945. In the ensuing civil war the city was handed over to the People's Liberation Army without a fight on 1 February 1949 and, when the Chinese People's Republic was proclaimed on 1 October 1949, Beijing was re-established as the capital of China.

From April to May 1989 Tiananmen Square was occupied by the student Democracy Movement in support of their demands for greater freedom. Attempts to break up the occupation were resisted by popular demonstrations on the roads leading to the square. Finally, on the night of 2 June, army units entered the city in force and dispersed the occupation, causing several hundred deaths in the process.

After significant expansion of its infrastructure, Beijing hosted the 2008 Olympic Games.

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