

24 HOURS by Apple Mandy

24 hours in beijing

a day in the life of the Chinese capital

beijing is a blast at the moment – literally, with construction in full swing preparing for the 2008 Olympics – and figuratively, as the ancient capital transforms into a worldly capital of cool. Even regular visitors will find new landscape each time they visit. Here's our hit list for a day in the city – one word of advice, get moving.

8am: Wake up to a traditional Beijing breakfast at Niu Jie, including steamed *mantou* (bread), *aiwowo* (sticky rice with sweet fillings) and *youtiao* (fried flour sticks), washed down with a glass of *dou zhi* (fermented soya milk), of course.

9:30am: For flea market aficionados, Panjiayuan Market (aka Dirt Market), is a great place to pick up souvenirs. Get in early before the crowds arrive to rifle through Tibetan trinkets, Buddha statuary, antique Chinese porcelain and the obligatory Chairman Mao posters and hats.

11am: Take a stroll around the art district of 798 Dashanzi, in the northeast of the city. The Bauhaus-style buildings have Maoist slogans scrawled on the ceilings in red brush ink and are home to an eclectic collection of studios, galleries and design companies. Close to the entrance, the tiny 798 Photo Gallery offers an interesting pictorial look at the city from a social and cultural standpoint.

12:30pm: The aroma of tender mutton cooked in beef marrow soup will lead you to Hongyuan, where the food, decoration and ambiance are full of local flavor.

2pm: Check out the half-completed National Stadium, a magnificent steel bird's nest designed by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron from Basel, Switzerland, together with the China Architecture Design Institute.

2:45pm: Kick back like a true Beijinger at Jingshan Park. This 800-year-old park was once the exclusive playground of imperial families – Yuan, Ming and Qing. Now ordinary folks fill the grounds, writing Chinese calligraphy on the pavements, doing ballroom dancing or bursting into spontaneous renditions of Beijing opera.

beijing opera



houhai

4:30pm: Take a *sanlunche* (tricycle) tour of the *hutongs* and distinctive *siheyuan* architecture around the Houhai area. These fast-disappearing residential lanes and their courtyard homes teem with life as it has been lived for centuries. Sadly, not for much longer.

6pm: Satisfy your hunger pangs with a visit to Wangfujin Food Street, lined with outdoor stores peddling exotic snacks like deep-fried scorpions, cicadas and starfish.

7:30pm: If the creepy crawlies just don't do it for you, head to Da Dong for a Beijing specialty, *kao ya* (roast duck). This establishment is renowned for its crispy duck skin served with several different sauces.

10pm: Show up early at Club Suzie Wong to claim one of the highly popular Ming dynasty opium beds, and later hit the dance floor to the sounds of sexy Hed Kandi-like beats. ■

Sleep
China World Hotel
 1 Jianguomenwai Xi Lu (6505 2266,
www.shangri-la.com)
 Capital accommodation at the China
 World Trade Centre complex from the
 Shangri-La group.

Eat
Niu Jie
 near SOGO Department Store,
 Xuanwumen district
Hongyuan
 Bldg 13, by Tiantan Park South Gate
 (6701 7030)
Da Dong
 Bldg 3, Yuanjieshu Beikou,
 Dongsanhuan Lu, Chaoyang district
Suzie Wong
 1A Nongzhanguan Lu,
 Chaoyang district

Play
Panjiayuan Market
 Jiu Huo Shi Chang (Sat-Sun 7am-5pm)
 798 Dashanzi
 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang district