



The gate of a quadrangle in Beijing

### The Best Travel Time

The period from late August to early November every year is the golden season to take a tour of Beijing, with a pleasant and fine autumn weather.

### Local Flavor of Beijing

#### Hutong and Quadrangle

"Hutong" refers to the ancient small lanes peculiar to Beijing. *Hutong*, which originated from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), has a history of more than 700 years.

Beijing has a wide variety of *hutongs*, each having its own distinctive characteristics. Most of the *hutongs* in Beijing were named after the official organizations, temples, warehouses, workshops, bridges, rivers, fairs, commodities, utensils, the surnames of some celebrities, scenic spots and folk customs. Many of the original names have been used until today.

Most of the *hutongs* in the inner city of Beijing go from east to west regularly, and those in the east of the outer city, from east to south irregularly.

According to statistics, Beijing has over 4,000 *hutongs*, which are mainly located in the area near Shichahai. The Beijing *Hutong* Tour is a special tourist project peculiar to the ancient city. Taking a *hutong* tour will help tourists have a good understanding of Beijing's local customs.

The *hutong* is mainly lined on both sides by courtyards containing compound houses, known as quadrangles, which are traditional residences in old Beijing. A quadrangle often has a large courtyard with independent houses along its four sides. The house on the north squarely facing the courtyard entrance is called the principal house; those on the east and west sides are wing houses; and the house on the south are called inversely set house.

The courtyard in the quadrangle is spacious; and the houses on the four sides are independent, linked by covered corridors.

Hutong Tour



A Peking Opera figure

It is a closed residence, with only one door facing the street. When the door is closed, the family can fully enjoy its privacy, as well as the natural scenery.

The quadrangles in Beijing are national precious cultural heritages of China. Many typical quadrangles can be found in Shichahai and Lishi *Hutong*. Riding in old-fashioned pedicabs through these *hutongs*

is something special for your Beijing trip.

### Peking Opera

Beijing is an ideal place for Peking Opera fans from all over the world. As the quintessence of Chinese culture, Peking Opera is a type of opera with the greatest influence nationwide.

Peking Opera is a special drama form integrating singing, dancing, fine arts and literature, similar to the Western Opera. Both Peking Opera and Western Opera enjoy important positions under different cultural backgrounds.

Liyuan Theater and Chang An Grand Theater are the best places for tourists to appreciate Peking Opera. Liyuan Theater also introduces the

Making up



history and development of Peking Opera, as well as famous Peking Opera actors, Peking Opera costumes, make-ups and props.

### Temple Fairs

As a type of Chinese fairs, temple fairs are closely related to the religious activities held in temples. Fairs are usually held at festivals or on specified days in or near a temple, hence the name. Now most temple fairs in Beijing are organized around the Spring Festival, with eating, drinking and enjoying as the main contents, to add festive atmosphere to the Chinese lunar New Year.

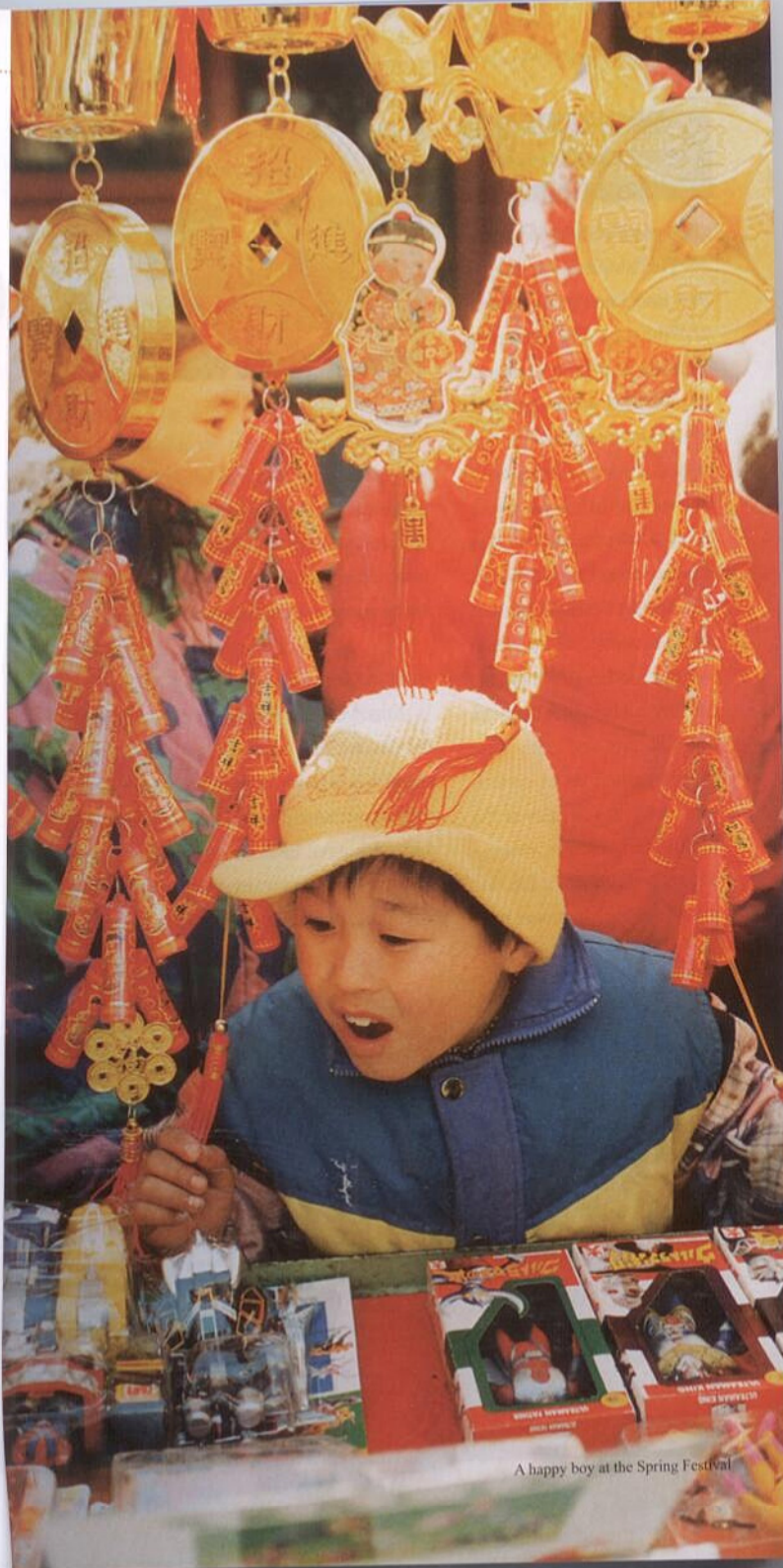
The temple fair mainly displays Beijing's local customs. The Spring Festival temple fairs in Beijing are



Two lions playing with a ball

always bustling with peddlers from all over the city selling a variety of snacks, goods, toys and candies, in addition to theatrical performances. An old saying goes: "At the temple fair, girls want flowers, boys prefer firecrackers, old ladies like cotton padded shoes, and old men want new felt hats." The temple fair is jam-packed with people coming and going all the time, full of the jubilant festival atmosphere.

A folk opera performance at a temple fair



A happy boy at the Spring Festival

## Festivals and Celebrations

### Temple Fairs in Beijing

The temple fair in Beijing is a traditional public gathering for the New Year celebration, integrating foods, drinks and performances. The temple fairs originated from the areas near the temple, hence the name. Most of the temple fairs in Beijing are organized around the Spring Festival, and attract numerous visitors with various kinds of folk artistic performances, local snacks and folk arts and crafts. The people participate in various kinds of folk activities at the temple fair, such as *yangge* dance, walking on stilts, riding a land boat (a model boat



A bustling temple fair in Beijing

used as a stage prop in some folk dance), performing Lion Dance, and beating gongs and drums. In their traditional Chinese costumes, the people enjoy themselves to their hearts content, like a Chinese carnival.

### Beijing Xuannan Cultural Festival

Xuannan District is the original place of the ancient capital city. The district's profound historical accumulations and special regional atmosphere in Ming and Qing dynasties gave birth to "Xuannan culture" with its own characteristics. Xuannan culture has gone down in the *General History*

of Beijing, and become the only regional culture in the book. Between September and October every year, the Beijing Xuannan Cultural Festival is held. During the festival various kinds of theatrical performances, poetry gatherings, fairs and exhibitions are sponsored.

### Beijing Chrysanthemum Show

In October every year, Beijing organizes a large chrysanthemum show, at which a great number of chrysanthemums in different varieties are on display; and an assessment is held for selecting the best chrysanthemum. It is a grand event for people to appreciate beautiful chrysanthemums.

### Beijing International Tourism Cultural Festival

The Beijing International Tourism Cultural Festival is held from September 21 to 24 every year. The main activities include the opening ceremony, the grand parade of performers in their holiday best

along Ping'an Street, a get-together of the Chinese and foreign people on the 10-li Street, the tourism consulting meeting at the Oriental Plaza, cultural tours with special subjects, and so on. With Beijing's tourism cultural resources as the window, and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries as the bridge, the festival aims at strengthening the friendship between the Chinese and foreign people. It is a platform for the cultural exchanges between China and other countries in the world.

Longtan Temple Fair



Beijing International Tourism Cultural Festival

