

General Information

Beijing

Beijing has been the capital of China for over 800 years dating back from Yuan Dynasty, and home to 34 emperors who ruled China's vast territory. Its unique history, culture and characteristics bequeathed many famous historic sites of great aesthetic and cultural value. A walk through the city reveals dozens of places worth more than just one visit: The Great Wall, The Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, The Summer Palace, Yonghegong Lamasery, Daguanyuan, The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan, Lugouqiao, The Bell Tower and The Drum Tower, many of which are recognized as World Cultural/Heritage Sites by the United Nation.

Today, Beijing remains the center of national politics, economics, culture and tourism. While preserving its historical and cultural heritage, the city has been transforming itself into a world-class city. With connections to over 60 cities worldwide and advanced transportation network to link up different corners of its nation, the city is the host of 2008 Olympic Games, demonstrating its vigor and youthfulness to the world. IROS 2006 offers its participants a great opportunity to see and feel the city where one should never miss its unique and harmonious mixture of ancient civilization and modern accomplishments while enjoying high quality conference program.

The entire area of Beijing within the city limits is - in many ways - one great historic museum. The original city plan was divided in four. The innermost rectangle is the Forbidden City, now a museum and public park, but formerly the residence of the Ming and Qing emperors. The second rectangle forms the boundaries of the Imperial City, enclosing residences and parks for the former senior government officials. The outer rectangle forms the outer city with its markets and old residential districts. The Imperial Palace, lying inside the Forbidden City and surrounded by a high wall and broad moat, is probably China's greatest surviving historical site. Dating from the 15th century, the Palace was home to a total of 24 emperors and, today, its fabulous halls, palaces and gardens house a huge collection of priceless relics from various dynasties. The surviving city walls are impressive monuments, as are the traditional hutongs, enclosed neighborhoods of alleys and courtyards. Other points of interest are the Coal Hill (Mei Shan), a beautiful elevated park with breathtaking views; Beihai Park, the loveliest in Beijing; Tiananmen Square, the largest public square in the world, surrounded by museums, parks, the zoo and Beijing University; the Temple of Heaven, an excellent example of 15th-century Chinese architecture; the Summer Palace, the former court resort for the emperors of the Qing Dynasty reconstructed in traditional style in the early 1900s after Western attacks, looking out over the Kunming Lake; the Great Wall (see below), the section at Badaling being some 72km (45 miles) from Beijing; and the Ming Tombs, where 13 out of the 16 Ming emperors chose to be buried. Two magnificent tombs here have been excavated, one of which is open to the public.