



# ACYA crash course to BEIJING

This document has been written as a resource to help you through the initial tasks you will face when coming to Beijing. It has been compiled by ACYA members over time, drawing from their personal experience and knowledge living and studying in China.

It assumes that you are a student, and most likely intending to live in the university district of Wudaokou. For individuals coming to China to work, or those living in other areas, there may be more information relevant to you that is not considered here. As such you may find other documents or websites more appropriate.

## What is covered in this Guide?

- Accommodation - Registering accommodation, finding a place, residence permit
- Banking and Money - Opening a bank account, fake money
- Transport - Beijing transport card, transport tips
- Buying a SIM card - Where and how to buy
- Food - Food safety, Wudaokou restaurant recommendations, vegetarian restaurants
- Mobile APPS - The best apps for life in China





## Accommodation

### Registering your accommodation (住宿登记):

All foreigners residing in China are legally obliged to register their accommodation against the national police database. This **registration needs to occur within 24 hours of entering the country** (or changing address). If you do not register your accommodation within this period, you will be liable for an accumulating fine of 500RMB per day. If you are a repeat offender or the period is particularly long, you may even be deported.

So how do you register?

If you are staying at a hotel or at your university dormitory, they will register you against the database when you check in - you don't need to do anything.

If you are either staying at a friend's house or renting an apartment, you will need to go to the local police station (派出所) to register yourself. In Wudaokou, this is diagonally across from the 'U Center' mall - 500 meters from BLCU. At the start of the semester, the line here can be insane! As such it is best to go and line up before they open for the day, or before they get back from lunch. They are open from 9am - 12pm, 2pm - 5pm.

You will need to take

- Your passport
- Your visa
- Your friend's residence permit (if you are staying at theirs), or your lease (if you are registering your own place)

### Finding your new home - Deciding where to live:

You have two options - to live on campus, or to live off campus. Let's start with an initial overview:



On Campus		Off Campus	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Social: Meet new people easily	Not great 'value for money'*	Privacy & freedom	May be hard to organise
Close to university		More choice	
They will register your accomodation			

\* This will not be a consideration for those with accommodation supplied as part of a scholarship

Living on or off campus is very a personal decision. As noted above, each option has its own advantages and disadvantages and you will have to weigh this up against how important each factor is for you. Some other information:

- If this is your first semester in China (and particularly if your Chinese language is limited) you may find it easier to live on campus. Finding an apartment off campus requires a deal more administration and general China 'savviness'.
- Restrictions to freedom associated with living on campus may include: Not been able to bring external 'friends' into your room after a certain hour, or having staff periodically check on your space.
- Be aware that most university dorms are designed as two people per room. If you find you do not get along with your roommate in the initial period, many dormitories will be happy to relocate you.

### Finding your new home - Administration:

#### If you decide to live on campus -

It is best that you email your desired dormitory and reserve a place before arriving - spaces will fill out fast at the start of the semester. Other than this, the process is quite simple. Prices





vary per dormitory (BLCU for instance has several dormitories available to foreign students at different prices - the best and most expensive is dorm 17).

### **If you decide to live off campus -**

You may either go through an agent, or find the apartment yourself and negotiate directly with the landlord. Either way, shop around! It's a good idea to compare a few houses and agents before you sign a contract. In the end you may expect to pay 2500 - 3000 RMB / month for a room without a balcony, or 3000 - 4000 for one with (excluding bills).

Agents: Agents are good because they will be able to show you a number of apartments in a short period of time. You may find Chinese rental agencies (such as 我爱我家) in Wudaokou, or ask around for the wechat accounts of private-business English speaking agents.

But be aware, agents (in particular the English speaking ones) can be very sneaky. The true 'behind the scenes' story of how they operate goes like this: An agent approaches a landlord and takes out a one year lease on their apartment. For example say the apartment is 2 rooms, and the agent leases it for 6000RMB / month. After arranging their own deal, the agent will then take foreigners around and tell you that each room is 3300RMB / month - to a total of 6600. In this way the agent leverages money off your monthly rent (although they will not tell you about this). In addition, the agent will then go on to ask for a 'finding fee' - classically one month's rent.

Consider the price appropriate if you feel happy paying for it. But just be aware that the price and fees are negotiable (owing to how much competition there is from others for the apartment).

Going Direct to the Landlord: This is how most Chinese people go about finding their apartment. Just be aware however that although going directly to a landlord will save you the agency 'finding fee', you will still have to negotiate with the landlord on the monthly price.

Some websites to start with include:

<http://bj.58.com/chuzu/>

<http://rent.baidu.com/bj/house/>

<http://beijing.anjuke.com/rental/>

Select '普通住宅' to find apartments hosted directly by the landlord.





## Residence permit (临时住宿登记表):

This section is **only relevant for International students who plan to study for longer than 6 months** (those with X1 visas). International students with X2 visas (studies shorter than 6 months) do not need to apply for the residence permit. X1 visa holders, read on -

With your initial X1 visa, you will note that it is valid for 30 days and for a single entry (though it might actually say zero entries) – don't worry about that. What you have is essentially a temporary visa, it will allow you to enter China and begin the process of obtaining a 'Temporary Residence Permit'. The Residence Permit is in reality a visa by another name. It is pasted into your passport exactly like a visa, and looks almost the same. It permits you unlimited exit and entry during its validity.

The reason the government requires you to undertake this transition is because they want to ensure that you register at your university and pay your fees before handing you a long term ticket to China. The office that handles this process is the Public Security Bureau (PSB) Exit and Entry Administration Office (though all universities offer a filing service for a small fee to save you travelling there yourself).

You will need a number of documents to apply for your residence permit - some which you may only attain after the school semester has started. As such, **ensure that you do not arrive in China too early before the start of the semester** (ideally no more than 1 week before your registration day). Your temporary visa only has 30 days, and the processing takes some time.

Check with your universities for full details. Generally speaking, required documents include:

1. Completed Application Form of Aliens for Permanent Residence in PRC;
2. Four recent 2-inch color photos (full face without hat) against blue background;
3. Valid foreign passports or identification capable of substituting passports;
4. Certificate of health issued by Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau, or issued by foreign medical agencies accredited by the Chinese government (considered valid 6 months from issue)
5. Your accommodation registration papers





6. The processing fee (a few hundred RMB)

7. Multiple photocopies of all important documents and especially your passport

## Banking and Money

### Opening a Bank Account

You are allowed to open a domestic bank account with a student visa in China, and we highly recommend that you do so! Domestic bank accounts integrate more easily with online shopping / e-commerce platforms, and will save you a bucket of money of ATM fees.

You will notice that there are dozens of different banks in China. Of these, 'Bank of China', and 'ICBC' have the most number of ATM's. They are also best placed to handle international transactions.

To open an account, you will require a) your passport - photocopies are not sufficient b) a few RMB to submit into the account c) 5 minutes - 1 hour to fill out a form (depending on the line)

Most banks located around Wudaokou will have an English speaking manager but in case they don't just go up to the information desk and say: "我想开一个银行账户" – Wǒ xiǎng kāi yī gè yínháng zhàngù (I want to open up a bank account).

**Top tip:** Make sure you tell the bank you want to turn on internet banking otherwise you won't be able to use the account for online shopping.

### Fake Money 假票:

Fake money is not uncommon in China, and is an issue that affects both local residents as well as unwary foreigners. Central authorities are constantly working to combat this problem but thieves are always producing bills and updating their forgery techniques. Today, fake money is incredibly sophisticated, and can be quite hard to tell apart from the real stuff. Follow our tips below to keep the real RMB in your pocket.

- Be aware that fake bills are most commonly found in 100RMB and 50RMB denominations, so be extra vigilant when handling these.





- There are a number of tests you can do to verify a bill's legitimacy (you will notice Chinese store vendors going through these when they receive a bill themselves). Jump on google for a full rundown on how to do this.
- ATM's have inbuilt detectors, so it is unlikely that you will ever withdraw fake bills from these. However as an extra precaution, new ATM's are also equipped with an option to print the ID number of each of your bills on the back of your ATM receipt. Always take a receipt and select this option where possible.
- Understand the most common place that you will receive fake money is from other people - in particular be wary of taxi drivers! The most common con works like this: You give somebody your \$100 RMB bill, they secretly swap it with a fake one when you are not looking, and then they hand the fake bill back to you suggesting you gave it to them and they won't accept it. How do you get around this? Make a display in front of the vendor that you are observing your bill and know what it looks like BEFORE giving it to them. When you give the money, watch to see where it goes. Upon receiving the change, check it before pocketing.

## Transport

### Beijing Transport Card 北京市交通卡:

The Beijing Transport Smart Card makes travelling on public transport a breeze and therefore is a must have! With the Smart Card you can enjoy a 50% discount on your bus fare as well as a discounted price for the subway. You can pick up a Smart Card from your local train station for 20 yuan (Wudaokou station can get very busy, so it's easiest to buy and recharge your card during off-peak times). No identification is required.

### Beijing Transport Tips:

It's much quicker getting around Beijing if you choose the right way. Follow our members transport tips below:

- If you are going to Tsinghua or PKU, you will definitely need a bicycle or scooter (BLCU is smaller, so it's not as significant). Bicycles can be bought from as little as 100 (for a very crappy old Beijing style), scooters are around 1000 - 2500 second hand, 3000+ new.





- Nice bicycles and scooters do get stolen (even from within campus). If it looks good and you want to keep it - lock it up.
- Uber and 滴滴打车 are great ways to get around on longer trips, or when there are few taxis around. An uber trip from Wudaokou to Sanlitun costs around 30RMB (Compared to 60 in a regular cab).

## Sorting out your SIM

### Where and how to buy

The two main carriers are China Mobile and China Unicom (both are actually SOE's - companies owned by the government). The differences between these carriers in terms of price and coverage is negligible. Beyond this, be aware:

- At the start of each semester, each company will send sales teams into universities to set up stalls. At the time of writing (2016), there was a particularly good deal available only to students. It offers a SIM with reasonable monthly specs for 200RMB / year (most Chinese students have this deal)
- If you buy your SIM off campus, make sure that you visit a real outlet (don't only look at the store signs, these may just allude to them been an onseller). True outlets will have the cheapest price, and will be most willing to help you access any deals that are available at that time. You can tell a true outlet because it will only sell the service of one provider.
- SIM cards are required to be registered to your passport in China. Remember to take it with you when you go to buy.
- Chinese telecommunication networks operate on a different frequency to ours in Australia. If you bring your mobile with you, expect your internet to be much slower (though you will still be able to make calls). If you decide to buy a local phone, consider domestic brands such as xiaomi (小米) - they are fantastic value for money.
- You may recharge your mobile through a mobile app (discussed later), by buying a recharge card, or by calling the provider's service number (China Mobile: 10086, China Unicom: 10010)







## Food

### Food Safety

China has had a number of high publicity food safety scandals over the past few years, and thus you may be a little worried before coming here - this is only partially warranted.

Firstly it goes without saying that food hygiene standards in China pale in comparison to those in Australia, but that does not mean that everything is inedible. Most people will only ever experience a slightly upset stomach while they are here. More serious things are incredibly rare and basically not worth worrying about. Despite this, it is worth being cluey as to what to look out for - we will deal with this here.

**Oil:** In recent years there has been a phenomenon emerge called 'gutter oil' 地沟油. This is essentially oil that has been reclaimed from the water run off drains and then sold onto vendors who use it as cheap cooking oil. This is a problem all over China - it's possible to see it been collected even in Wudaokou. While illegal, it is seemingly not strictly policed. You are unlikely to get sick from consuming this, though there is little research on how bad it really is. How to avoid it? You can generally assume that reputable stores and university canteens won't be using it, it's more of a street vendor thing. As such, steer clear of street foods that are deep fried and you'll skip much of the problem.

**Meat:** Meat can be of dubious quality in China, and it's very hard to certify exactly what things are. There are many documented accounts of people turning street dogs or even rats into meat, but it is quite hard to tell where this all ends up. In addition to this issue, a high degree of processing is pretty common amongst all meat - even if it is from the correct animal. Once again you are unlikely to get evidently sick from eating it, but little research exists. As such, it's not a bad idea to eat more vegetables and less meat in China than you otherwise may in Australia. On that note - check out our vegetarian restaurant recommendations below!

### Restaurant Recommendations

#### Vegetarian:

The Vegetarian Tiger 素虎





Heavenly Fragrant Kitchen 天厨妙香

### Those with meat:

#### 没名儿生前五道口 (Nameless Shengqian in Wudaokou)

This is one chain restaurant in Wudaokou that you must try! Located right next to Dmart near Wudaokou train station, this place is popular with locals as it is both cheap and delicious! The shengqian dumplings are so good you'll be left wonton more!

#### 日昌餐厅 (Otto's Restaurant)

Looking for decent cantonese food in Wudaokou? Then Otto's restaurant is the place to go! Perfect for group dinners, this place is also located right next to Wudaokou station and can be easily found on baidu or google maps as it has an English name. Famous for their chicken wings, this place is definitely a must try!

#### Dong Lai Shun Hotpot

If you are looking for some traditional Beijing Hotpot then you better head to Dong Lai Shun! The Wudaokou branch is located on the 5th floor of Ucentre - close to Wudaokou train station. Dong Lai Shun is well known for its mutton and traditional Cloisonne brass pots. This is a perfect place to go with a group or take visitors!

## The Must Have APPS

China is far ahead of Australia (or the West in general) when it comes to applications and E-commerce.

See our recommended list of the must-have APPS below:

**Wechat 微信** - A must have since it's the main platform of communication here in China!

**Pleco** - Largely regarded as the best Chinese-English dictionary. Just go ahead and buy the **professional version if you are in learning Chinese for the long haul**





**Zhifubao 支付宝** - Recharge your mobile phone and canteen card, pay your utility bills, buy train tickets, use vending machines, and transfer friends money online all with this app. Must have a Chinese bank account to use.

**Wechat Wallet 微信钱包** - Almost exactly the same as 支付宝 but from a different provider

**TimeOut** - This app is great for discovering what Beijing has to offer - from restaurants and bars to concerts and events!

**Baidu 百度** - China's version of google - a must have for when you're out and about and need to search for directions or restaurant reviews!

**Taobao 淘宝** - Yes, that's right - China's most popular online shopping website also has an app! Download this app for quick access to all your favourite goods and services!

**Beijing Transport Map** - A subway map and route planner - ideal for when you need to calculate the time and distance of a journey.

**Tantan 探探** - China's rip off of Tinder

**Blued** - A dating app that is tailored towards the gay community, both Chinese and foreign.

## A Final Note

This is an open source paper. If you can see anything that needs to be updated, or think there is something worthy of inclusion that we missed, we would love to hear about it! Contact the ACYA Beijing Media Director to give us the lowdown on where we could improve.

If you would like elaboration on any of the above information, feel free to direct your question to the ACYA Beijing Wechat Group - we are all friendly and happy to help out.

Finally - Thanks for reading! We hope to see you at an ACYA Beijing event soon.

