

UAS Pocket Guide

PKU, Beijing

General Information

If you are thinking about applying for an exchange or research scholarship at Peking University, you should definitely take a quick look at this guide. Based on prior students' feedback, it may help you to find your way at the campus and to get in contact with the right person. Although this is not a complete survival guide, and you should probably do more research before arriving in Beijing, it hopefully introduces you to the city that is continuously under transition. Beijing is clearly becoming a metropolitan in a global sense, but still has its authentic touch that one can fall in love with.



Photo: Kerstin Geppert.

Travel

The very first question to answer is whether you are eligible to apply for a Chinese visa and if yes, whether you are not too late to begin the application. Better to be too early than too late. If your period of study is less than six months, you should apply for an F visa. One other important thing you should keep in mind is insurance. Peking University's regulations require that all international students must be medically insured throughout their entire planned period of study. You should take care of your insurance by yourself. It is advised to buy an insurance from a German private company because students who do not have valid medical insurance for their stay aren't allowed to register (International Student Division website).



Photo: Kerstin Geppert.

Living

The university does not provide any support with finding a place to live in Beijing. If you are extremely lucky and also, by chance, a Chinese citizen, you might get a room in a student dormitory. If you don't happen to be that lucky, you still can try Airbnb, but you have to be prepared that especially short-term rental tend to be both harder to find and more expensive. The average price is around 2700 RMB/month near to the campus. Living on campus can be important, especially if you like an extra hour of sleep in the mornings but Dongmen is also a very pleasant district, which is in the Eastern center. It is quite but there are also many restaurants, bars, galleries and shops around here. And the metro ride to the PKU is only 45 minutes from the metro station Beixinqiao (北新桥).

Public Transport

In Beijing, traffic jams are completely unpredictable and you can be stuck all of a sudden. They can happen at any moment on any day of the week, and the only way to win the traffic battle is by being the earliest bird possible and getting yourself on the road way in advance. Taking public transit can be a solution, and many commute to the university by subway. Peking University will not give a transport ticket to the visiting students and there is no even such a thing that student discount. Public transport costs in Peking are increasing, especially by subway, and it is advised to charge at least 30 RMB otherwise it cannot cover the costs to University. Rechargeable public transport cards can be purchased at any metro station and there is a public bicycle system, too, but you have to register yourself via Energy Watch Network (wechat) first to use them.



Getting started at PKU

If your field of study is related to sustainability and environmental sciences, you should definitely check out the website of the College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering. If you have any questions during your stay at the Peking University, just email Ms. Zhu Siying (zhusy@pku.edu.cn). She is the international student advisor at the university and will provide you with your student card, too. Although she is helpful, she will not help you with your research or with finding a supervisor, this is something you must do yourself prior to your arrival.



View of the campus // Source: Wikipedia. If you would like to check out more pictures about the campus, here is the link of a virtual tour provided on the website of Peking University.

Peking University

The everyday life at the university is relaxed and casual, but don't forget to bring a small gift to your supervisor. It is a common symbolic gesture, Chinese students do that all the time when they study in Germany. Social relations are extremely important in China and many services aren't that institutionalized as you would expect them. This is also true for the university. If you don't know Chinese you might want to learn some useful phrases: hackingchinese.com offers learning materials and gives study advices. The library at the University is a great working place, and, as the university website states, we aren't just talking about a spacious room full of books, but rather we're talking about the largest university library in Asia, with a collection of 9.0195 million books, as well as Chinese and foreign journals and newspapers. So, +9,019,500 reasons why you should definitely study in that library once you are on campus.



West Entrance of the campus // Source: Wikipedia.

Campus

One needs to eat, regardless of what country one is in. With your freshly minted university card, you can buy food from several restaurants on campus. These restaurants can be very crowded around noon. The food is nice, it is cheap and good, what else could you ask for? There is a street named “Changchunyuan” that is full of food and is near campus where they serve vegetarian food, too. Beijing is a massive city where millions of people are struggling to get from one point to another every day, sometimes enormous distances. The being said, don’t rely on Google Maps as the Chinese government blocks their service. If you know some Mandarin use Baidu Maps, but if you don’t know Mandarin, make sure to always bring the address written in Chinese with you to be able to show to someone, before you get completely lost. (You won’t!)

And finally, apart from the famous sights you cannot miss and the developing gastro scene of the city, here are some personal recommendations: Olympic Park for relaxing, taking some time off and doing exercises. There is also a very interesting restaurant high above on the top of the tower in the park. A café called Hongzhi (鸿芷), the address is 北京东城区朝阳门银河SOHO A座10320. They have many public events on environmental topics and energy related issues and also serve good coffee. Here are two other networks which can be interesting for you, the Energy Watch Network (wechat), and Think in Asia.



Beijing Specialties

Beijing's weather will be harsh, it doesn't matter whether you are planning your stay for the autumn or for the spring semester. Peking University divides every academic year into spring and autumn semesters. The autumn semester begins in September and ends in January of the next year, however, there is no exact starting date of the spring semester since it depends on the Chinese New Year which varies every year. The winter break is four weeks long and always includes the Chinese New Year which celebrates the arrival of the lunar New Year in China. Chinese New year is an official public holiday, during which most Chinese have seven days off. The spring term ends in June followed by a summer vacation of two months. Speaking of summer, the weather during the summer is usually very warm, meanwhile winters seem never-ending and really cold. You will be very grateful to your warming bottle, so don't forget to buy one. The other thing you will need in the winter is a filtering face-piece (口罩 Kouzhao), when the air pollution is the worst. There are sandstorms, torrential rains, hurricane-force winds, but so many people live there life there, so don't panic just be prepared. If you go to Beijing in the winter, you're at least guaranteed to experience and winter wonderland in Beijing. The following pictures were taken at the campus in November, 2015 will not let you down.



Photo: Kerstin Geppert.

written by Barbara Bencze
edited by Anjuli Weigelt and Katrin Risch