



Capitalizing on China

Christine Tsai scours the districts of China's capital for Mandarin immersion programs to suit all tastes

The National Aquatics Centre of China, known as 'The Water Cube,' here photographed under construction, is sure to be an exciting competition venue for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The recently completed National Theatre of China in Beijing is seen at left.

Beijing

Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China, is located in the northeast part of central China. It is not only the center of China's politics, culture and economy, but also the site of dynasties in Chinese history. Also known as "Peking" which literally means, "northern capital," Beijing is home to nearly 15 million people.

The city is divided into various districts, each with its own unique characteristics and attractions. The center of the city is surrounded by ring roads which become progressively larger as one moves further away from the city. One can estimate the distance of a residence or business from the city's center by the ring and district that it is located in.

While Beijing is a rapidly growing city in terms of business and economy, making it a fierce competitor against other modern cities around the world, it is still able to maintain its ancient culture and history. The sites to visit are never-ending, from the Great Wall of China to Tiananmen Square and the

Forbidden City, Beijing is full of historical gems.

With the approach of the 2008 Olympic games, the face of Beijing is changing nearly everyday as the city prepares for guests from all over the world with renovations and new construction throughout the city. Visitors and students are also getting excited as the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing provide another great reason to learn the Mandarin language.

Chaoyang District

Located in the northeast section of Beijing, Chaoyang District is home to many foreign embassies. It is also the location of Sanlitun Bar Street where visitors can sample the nightlife of Beijing along with other foreigners and young locals.

AmeriSpan Beijing has locations throughout Beijing, including the Chaoyang District. Over the years, AmeriSpan has

taught more than 28,000 people, learning 15 languages in over 75 cities worldwide. In Beijing, each campus teaches group classes daily for four hours. These programs are designed for total immersion. AmeriSpan encourages students to stay with a host family so that students have the opportunity to understand daily life for locals as well as to practice the language during provided meals.

Beijing Taipei Language Institute, with head offices in Taiwan, now has locations in China and Japan. The school also has a second location in Beijing in the Dongcheng District. While group courses can be arranged, the Beijing Taipei Language Institute specializes in offering one-on-one classes to provide students with a comfortable setting to speaking, listening, and writing Chinese. Because of the many foreign embassies in the





surrounding area, Beijing Taipei Language Institute is the school of choice for many new diplomats.

The Chaoyang District is also home to **Chinese Horizon**, situated across from Beijing Worker's Gymnasium, a multi-purpose stadium which serves as a venue for lots of sporting events. Chinese Horizon offers various Chinese language programs, including an immersion program for adults and children over six, where participants are provided housing with a local family. The school also offers an online Chinese course which allows the student to choose to study on their own or to have teacher support. Chinese Horizon's Mandarin training is a unique blend of classroom teaching and interactive online self-learning.

With locations in Chaoyang and Shunyi, **Chinese Language Education** offers small group, private, online and custom corporate programs for Mandarin Chinese, Business Chinese, and Chinese Culture. Semester and year-long programs incorporate seminar series, real-life language tasks, trips and social events that are fun and also introduce important aspects of Chinese culture. The

Flex Language program offers rolling start dates to accommodate the schedule of any language learner. The school provides assistance with accommodation, insurance, HSK preparation, and 24-hour student support.

The International College for Chinese Language Studies at the Communication University of China provides in-depth study of the Chinese language. Faculty members possess degrees in foreign Chinese, Chinese linguistics, literature or broadcasting and have been granted a Foreign Chinese Teaching Qualification Certificate by the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.

Chinese language courses provided are of varying levels made to accommodate any student. Optional courses include Chinese Pronunciation-Correction, Reading Chinese Poetry, Chinese Characters, Commercial Chinese, Journalism Chinese, and Chinese Idioms and Phrases. The school also provides courses in Chinese culture, folk-customs, and calligraphy. Furthermore, the school offers courses to help students prepare for the HSK, which is a national standard exam which tests the Chinese language proficiency of students' whose native language is not Chinese. Usually

students must take the HSK in order to qualify to pursue a Master or Doctorate degree in a Chinese university.

Easyou International Cultural Exchange Center, near the Chaoyangmen Subway Station, offers a variety of language programs. With locations in Beijing and Shanghai, this school offers private lessons and group lessons that last anywhere from two to 11 weeks. Each day, lessons are combined with group activities and excursions. For those who want to do a little more traveling than the general programs offer, students can arrange for group study tours where lessons are combined with traveling to different areas in China. The school also offers special courses in Chinese painting, Guqin (a traditional Chinese instrument) and Wushu, also known as Kungfu. The school will arrange accommodations for the student with a host family, in a shared studio or apartment, or in a hotel or hostel, depending on the student's needs. Easyou International Cultural Exchange Center prides itself on its full-time support that they provide to students.

With locations in Beijing and Shanghai, **Mandarin House** is a member of the

Study Abroad

International Association of Language Centers (IALC) and accredited by the Ministry of Education and Research in Sweden. Mandarin House offers general Chinese programs in group settings, private settings, or a combination of both. Programs are available for adults and children as well as working professionals. Social activities let students discover Chinese culture in all its facets - from cooking classes to martial arts sessions and visiting old lanes to walking the Great Wall.

Haidian District

Sometimes referred to as the “University District,” the Haidian District is where most of Beijing’s universities are located so it is full of young college students and foreigners. Located northwest of Beijing’s city center, the Haidian District is not only known for its abundance of universities, but also for the Summer Palace, which is where Empress Dowager Cixi would spend her weekends and holidays to get away from the busy city. Named as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1998, the Summer Palace offers historic architecture as well as beautiful breathtaking landscapes.

Beijing Language and Culture

University is an accredited Chinese university that specializes in teaching Mandarin Chinese language and culture to foreign students. With more than 10,000 foreign students per year from more than 100 different countries, BLCU has carried an excellent reputation for providing effective and intensive language training to their students. Students have easy access to any learning materials that they might need since BLCU produces most of the texts and learning materials that are used.

The International Culture Exchange Center at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications offers a variety of programs that would suit any language learner looking for more than just classes to enrich

their studies. The Chinese study program consists of intensive Chinese language instruction, individual tutorials, optional culture classes and field excursions in and around Beijing. The school also offers an internship program where participants can intern with companies in Beijing, Shanghai or Xiamen to practice their Chinese and build their resumes. There is also a study-tour program available where students take a break in the middle of their studies, ranging from nine to 14 days, to visit various cities in China while learning more about Chinese culture.

LanguBridge Education Centre has Chinese programs based in both Beijing and Shanghai, which are hosted at university campuses. The Beijing centre is hosted at Beijing Jiaotong University in the Haidian District. LanguBridge offers summer immersion programs that are open to high school and university students. Each session, which lasts four weeks, combines lessons, tutoring and language exchanges. LanguBridge will offer a special Olympic session this year, where program themes will be developed around the games, to enable students to learn Chinese through watching the games and participating in Olympic-related events.

Sino Language Gateway, which partners with various universities in China, including Tsinghua University and Beijing Language & Culture University, offers a variety of programs, including Chinese Summer Camp, Advanced Chinese, youth volunteers and special Olympic programs. While most programs set the minimum age for study-abroad programs to be high school students, Sino Language Gateway also has programs for children under 10. Sino Language Gateway’s Chinese language study programs include opportunities for interaction with local teenagers, trips to some of the city’s most well-known attractions, well-equipped rooms in the universities and bilingual counselors that are always available.



Xicheng District

Located west of the Forbidden City, the Xicheng District is situated within the second Ring Road close to the city’s center. In the Xicheng District, there are a variety of interesting sites, such as the Beijing Zoo and Beihai Park. It is also home to the Houhai bar area, where lively cafes, restaurants and bars surround the scenic Houhai Lake.

While it has its head offices and most classrooms in the Xicheng District, the **Hutong School**, has also recently opened a new center in the Dashanzi art district within the Chaoyang District. The school offers two main programs, an internship program and an intensive Chinese program. The internship program consists of a placement at one of the school’s partner companies, two hours of Chinese language instruction per day, accommodation in an apartment in the center of the city, organization of weekly cultural activities and business lectures as well as practical assistance during the student’s stay in Beijing. The intensive Chinese language program offers the same as the internship program, but instead of a work placement, students receive four hours of instruction per day.

Wherever you choose to study in Beijing, you will be engulfed by the city’s energy and enthusiasm, and are sure to have an experience you will never forget. **IX**

