Beijing Travel Feature Volume 7

The Memoir of Old Beijing
Beijing as a historical and cultural ancient town with rich imperial history, had shaped many culturally profound folklores and vast background for the capital. From the culture of hutongs, time-honored brands to intangible cultural heritage in various art forms, different elements of Beijing will always trigger your memories and emotions.

In this volume, we will bring you on a tour around hutongs in old Beijing, explore the well-preserved traditions practiced by the Beijingers and renowned brands with centuries of history, as well as experiencing the transcendent beauty of old Beijing’s culture and customs.

**Highlights**

- **Hutongs of Old Beijing**
  - Nanluoguxiang, Yandaixiejie, Guozijianjie, Liulichang, Dongxijiaominxiang, JinYu Hutong

- **Time-honored Brands of Old Beijing**
  - Bianyifang, Tianfuhao, Dinglaishun, Yuebergzhai, Tongrentang, Ruifuxiang, Neiliansheng, Zhangyiyuan

- **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Old Beijing**
  - Traditional Show – Peking Opera, Jingyun Dagu (Drum), Shadow Puppetry
  - Traditional Art – Jing Xiu (Beijing Embroidery), Maohou (Hairy Monkey) Figurines, Beijing Rongniao (Velvet Bird) and Flower Making
  - Traditional Craftsmanship – Filigree Inlay Art, Beijing Palace Carpet Weaving
  - Folk Music – Zhihua Buddhist Temple Music, Zhong He Shao Yue (Imperial Ritual Music) by the Divine Music Administration (Shenyueshu) at Temple of Heaven
  - Folk Art – Beijing Jade Art, Cao’s Kite Art, Beijing Coloured Lantern
Hutong, as an eternal symbol of old Beijing, is the place where Beijingers live and holds the soul of the city. Beijingers have a special emotion bonded to hutongs. Hutongs not only served as the passages that people go in and out of their houses, they have also became historical museums that recorded traditions and customs, and reminding people the life back in the old times. Only by walking through hutongs, one may feel and experience its culture in the neighborhood.
Hutongs of Old Beijing

Nanluoguxiang - The 'Oldest' in History

It is one of the oldest neighborhoods that best represents old Beijing. Located at the heart of Beijing without the hustle and bustle, Nanluoguxiang Hutong has its unique charm and reflects the realistic lifestyle in the city. With a wide variety of boutiques and restaurants that provide local snacks, it is a must-go attraction in Beijing.

Neighboring attractions:
- Prince Gong’s Mansion Garden, Shichahai

Liulichang

A renowned cultural street in Beijing - Its evident academic atmosphere is originated from the Qing Dynasty when Liulichang was the residential area of candidates of the imperial examinations and thereby attracted a lot of vendors who came to sell pens and inks. Nowadays, Liulichang has won good reputation among scholars and invited many foreigners to visit.

Neighboring attraction:
- Former Residence of Ji Xiaolan

Guozijianjie

The only street in Beijing preserved with decorated archways - Walking into this street with the most stories will bring one back to the old days. The archways on both sides of the street and the shades of Chinese scholar trees contrasted finely with vibrantly painted arches, courtyards and temples, manifesting a quaint charm throughout the hutong.

Neighboring attractions:
- Beijing Imperial Academy (Guozijian), Confucius Temple

Yandaixiejie - The Oldest Oblique Street

As suggested by its name, Yandaixiejie Hutong looks like a long-stemmed pipe. It is the oldest commercial pedestrian street in Beijing rich in traditional culture.

As persuasive as it looks, Yandaixiejie is the perfect place to scout for delectable cuisine and interesting antiques in the alleys, also a great spot to spend time reading books and overseeing the ancient architecture.

Neighboring attractions:
- Bell and Drum Towers, Former Residence of Guomoruo

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Coming from Nanluoguxiang, one can easily reach Ju’er Hutong. In here, iconic buildings are rooted in history and culture of old Beijing, as such each of them tells its own story.

Neighboring attractions:
Forbidden City - The Palace Museum, Beihai Park, Prince Gong’s Mansion

Ju’er Hutong

With the continuous expansion of hotels on the street, the passage has been widened, contributing to the outcome of Jinyu Hutong as the widest hutong in Beijing that connects to the bustling Wangfujing Street with high-rise buildings along the street.

The hutong has a vibrant night scene in the evening with the famous Jixiang Theatre and Donglaishun Restaurant located here.

Neighboring attractions:
Wangfujing, Dongtang Cathedral

Jinyu Hutong - The ‘Widest’ Hutong

The longest Hutong in Beijing - It has now become the intersection point between the embassy district and financial street. Differing from other hutongs with grey walls and blue tiles, Dongxijiaomimixiang has a unique appearance built with a western style, where it is the only street gathered with houses and apartments.

Neighboring attractions:
Tiananmen, Laoshe Tea House

Dongxijiaomimixiang - The ‘Longest’ Hutong

Intersecting with Nanluoguxiang, one may come explore and feel for oneself the many historical siheyuan houses of old Beijing.

Neighboring attraction:
Former Residence of Mao Dun

Mao’er Hutong

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Time-honored brands of old Beijing are windows into the profound culture and history of Beijing. What you experience here are the traditions and services that have been the same for hundreds of years. Every shop and plaque of the time-honored brands symbolizes the inheritance of folk culture.

Strolling around the streets in Beijing, these shops always catch your attention without your consciousness. Standing on the streets in Beijing and hidden in the alleys, the shops are the precious assets of old Beijing, like business cards that introduce contemporary Beijing to the world.
There’s a saying in Beijing that goes ‘One who fails to reach the Great Wall is not a hero.’ Regarding food, ‘One who fails to try Peking roast duck is pitiful.’ After a hundred of years, roast duck at Quanjude and Bianyifang are still as tempting as it was, and the tasting method remains one of the most significant elements that has been passing on from a generation to the next generation. Together with warm hospitality, countless local and foreign guests come all the way for the dish.

Address of Bianyifang:
4/F, Bianyifang Building, 16 Chongwenmen Outer Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Address of Quanjude:
30 Qianmen Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

In the memory of Beijingers, there is a unique, indispensable place reserved for the taste of Tianfuhao. There are always some dishes bought from Tianfuhao on the dining table during big festivals. The most classic one is braised pork shoulder in soy sauce, which is famous for its characteristics being juicy, meaty and creamy but not greasy. When a plate of braised pork shoulder in soy sauce is complemented by some hot pancakes, no one can resist the tastiness that the food provides.

Address: 19 Qianmen Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Those renowned restaurants with over a hundred years of history always appeal to your taste buds with the most familiar flavors that trigger your memories. To stand firm in the competitive market and carry down from one generation to another, the renowned brands have been improvising and instilling years of efforts in order to sustain the quality of their dishes, and the establishment of good reputation in the long term.
Tianxingju is well-known for its dish of fried liver. Using pig livers as the main ingredients and seasoning with onion, ginger, garlic, and a thickening agent, this delicious dish is rich but not greasy and typifies a very authentic taste of old Beijing.

Address: 81-83 Xianyukou Street, Qianmen, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Yueshengzhai is an established eatery specialized in beef and mutton cooked in halal sauce. The perfect mix of hot baked sesame cake and freshly prepared mutton in store - it is the taste that you will never get enough of.

Address: 1 Qianmen Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Du Yi Chu has excellent skills making Shaomai, steamed pork dumplings, from bringing the dough together and wrapping to seasoning and steaming, in which you can taste the freshness and rich flavors in every bite.

Address: 58 Qianmen Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Wonton Hou is well known for its wontons with tasty fillings wrapped in paper-thin skins and immersed in a rich broth. Together with the unique cooking method, Wonton Hou has become a time-honored brand that wins the hearts and minds of Beijingers.

Address: 40 Qianmen Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Donglaishun is hailed as the time-honored restaurant that provides the first Chinese mutton hotpot. With a fabulous choice of meats, exquisite knife skills, perfect seasonings, and utensils, Donglaishun has received good reputation and fame. The use of traditional copper pot for hotpot has preserved the most genuine culture and taste of Beijing.

Address: 5/F, APM Beijing, 138 Wangfujing Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Liuquanju offers its distinctive house-brewed medicinal wine.

Address: 178 Xinjiekou South Street, Xicheng District, Beijing
Time-honored Brands of Old Beijing

Time-honored brands of Beijing are the best of the best in the commercial and handicraft industry overcoming competitions over centuries. All of which have conquered a lot of obstacles and outperformed in the end. Among all established brands, there are some big names from the Chinese medical industry, apparel industry, tea and wine industry apart from the food industry.

**Tonrentang**

Tonrentang is a famous dispensary of traditional Chinese medicine in China with over 300 years of history. With the motto of ‘Although no one knows how we procure, prepare and produce the medicines, what we do can never cheat our own consciences,’ Tongrentang has successfully maintained good reputation and product quality since its establishment. The time-honored brand is now well known all around the globe, and its products are being widely distributed and sold to over 40 countries and regions.

Address: 24 Dashilan Street, Xicheng District, Beijing

**Ruifuxiang**

Hailed as the best Chinese silk brand selling a variety of silk products such as silk fabrics, ready-made garments, home furnishings, and made-ups, Ruifuxiang is an established Chinese brand being well known locally and globally and has become one of the important intangible cultural heritage of old Beijing.

Address: 190 Wangfujing Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing

**Neiliansheng**

Beijingers love wearing Neiliansheng’s shoes. The reputed brand has won hearts and minds with its exquisite technique making cloth shoes.

Address: 34 Dashilan Commercial Street, Qianmen, Beijing

**Zhangyiyuan**

Loved by locals and foreigners, the traditional tea house in Beijing is famous for its jasmine tea with the characteristics of ‘soft and aromatic but rich in flavors with an endless aftertaste.’

Address: 22 Dashilan Street, Xicheng District, Beijing
’Intangible cultural heritage’ is an iconic representative of Beijing’s traditional culture. It is also an indispensable part of old Beijing’s folk culture. The continuous development and promotion of folk culture, the diversity in artistic expression and the roots in cultural heritage are what forge Beijing into an international city and a tremendous travel destination, spreading China’s profound culture to the world.
Traditional Drama

As a national quintessence, it is originated from Beijing as its name 'Peking' suggests. With over 200 years of history and evolution, dramatic facial masks that symbolize characters and fates are the most prominent distinguishing features of Peking Opera.

**Recommended Sites**

**Huguang Huiguan**
Features: Peking Opera, Kun Opera
Address: 3 Hufang Road, Xicheng District, Beijing

**Lao She Teahouse**
Features: Xiangsheng (Crosstalk), Zhezixi (Opera highlights), Pingshu (Storytelling), Chinese magic tricks
Address: Building No. 3, Zhengyang Market, Qianmen West Street, Beijing

**Beijing Zhengyisi**
Features: Peking Opera 'Mei Lanfang Classics,' New concept Peking Opera 'Feng Xi You Long'
Address: 220 Qianmen Xiheyan, Xuanwu District, Beijing

**Liyuan Theatre**
Features: Zhezixi (Opera highlights), etc.
Address: 1/F, Qianmen Jianguo Hotel, 175 Yong’an Road, Xicheng District, Beijing

**Guangdelou Theatre**
Features: Peking Opera, Xiangsheng (Crosstalk), Quyi
Address: 39 Dashilan Street, Qianmen, Xicheng District, Beijing

**Jing Yun Drum (Jing Yun Dagu)**
As known as the 'Storytelling Drums,' Jingyun Dagu is one of the Chinese folk art at which performers sing ballads in local dialect accompanied by drumbeats. This folk art form is especially prevalent in Northern and Northern East China district including Beijing and Tianjin, as one established art form among other folk music in Northern China.

**Old Beijingers like to call it 'leather-silhouette play.' As an ancient traditional art, Chinese shadow puppetry has been accompanying Beijingers for over thousands of years. A dedicated show requires attention to detail, which has a combination of exquisite singing and playing techniques of puppet masters, compelling story, delicate puppet figures and backdrops. Not only is it a puppet art, but it also showcases Beijing’s authentic craftsmanship.**

**Chinese Shadow Puppetry**
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Old Beijing

Tradition Art

Jing Xiu (Beijing Embroidery)

Also known as Gong Xiu (Palace Embroidery) – Jing Xiu is a Chinese traditional embroidery craftsmanship, the general term for all embroidery products based in Beijing. Jing Xiu is delicate and luxurious with gold threads crafted in patterns. Once as one of the 4 iconic embroideries along with Su, Xiang and Gu Xiu, Jing Xiu is listed as one of the 8 'Best of Yanjing' crafts.

Maohou (Hairy Monkey) Figurines

A traditional handicraft of old Beijing – Using Chinese medicines as props, Maohou figurines are crafted in different human-like poses, revealing local lifestyle and customs.

Beijing Rongniao (Velvet Bird)

With over 300 years of history, Beijing Rongniao is a general term for silk handicrafts of flowers, birds, insects, plants, animals, and landscapes. The traditional crafts ultimately demonstrate the wisdom and exquisite craftsmanship techniques of old Beijing.

Filigree Inlay Art

As known as fine gold technology, it is one kind of traditional Chinese arts and crafts in which gold, silver, and copper are being inlaid into the making of accessories and wares, showcasing how fascinating arts and crafts of the royal court are. The procedures of filigree inlay are complex at which it requires more than a dozen processes to complete.

Beijing Palace Carpet Weaving

Beijing Palace Carpets are handicrafts that best represent Beijing and the royal court. Using fine materials, delicate weaving techniques and bountiful patterns, the luxurious hand-woven carpets depict Beijing’s exquisite art scene and status of the royal court.

Recommended Sites

Jingcheng Baigongfang (100 Handicraftsmen Workshop)

Features: Traditional Chinese Palace and Folk Arts and Crafts
Address: 12 Guangming Road, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Beijing Antique Porcelain Art Museum

Features: Beijing Coloured Porcelains, Zisha (Yixing Purple Sand Teapot)
Address: 25 Guang’anmen Nanbinhe Road, Xicheng District, Beijing
**Folk Music**

For over 570 years, Buddhist Music from Zhihua Temple has been hailed as the ‘living fossil’ of ancient traditional music. The performance of Chinese Buddhist music from Beijing Zhihua Temple requires distinctive musical instruments, names of the tunes and monks who inherited to perform, making the traditional music the only existing one of its kind that involves inheritance.

Originated from ancient Chinese music, it is a traditional ceremonial music that integrates ritual, music, song, and dance. It was used during festivals and banquets in the Ming and Qing Dynasty. As the most representative music of the royal court, it has a long and profound history.

**Folk Art**

Beijing jade art is a traditional craftsmanship with a long history. As early as in the Neolithic era, jade was crafted to make accessories for women. With the development of crafting techniques, it has gradually become jade art that demonstrates the exquisite skills and artistic talents of ancient Chinese. Common jade materials include white jade, jasper, red agate, crystal, etc.

Cao’s kite is a traditional folk kite art in Beijing with a wide variety and extensive collection of themes, exhibiting Chinese cultures and national spirits. It not only showcases the rich culture of Beijing as the imperial capital, but it also integrates traditional folk cultures, forming a unique style of its own.

The craftsmanship techniques of Beijing colored lantern are comprised of coloring, smearing, knitting, embroidery, engraving, paper-cutting, calligraphy, and painting. The art of colored lanterns is rich in cultural heritage and integrated with folk customs. It is a kind of light art, which exhibits cultures and serves to entertain. Some common lanterns include palace lanterns, trotting horse lanterns, and three-dimensional animal lanterns.
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