
YOUR GUIDE TO



BEIJING

& THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Hi Paul!

Welcome to your guide to Beijing & the Trans-Siberian Railway.... In this book you'll find a guide covering Beijing, China and the Trans-Siberian Railway journey.

You'll find tips on packing and airlines. Plus, you'll find food recommendations in Beijing and near its top tourist sights, useful phrases and more.

Wishing you and your wife a good trip!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caitlin', is written on a white background. The signature is stylized and cursive. A thin vertical line is drawn to the right of the signature, extending from the top of the signature down to the bottom of the page.

Caitlin – Editor, The Vegan Word



BEFORE YOU GO

AIRLINE MEALS

Don't forget to book yourself a meal on the plane! Most airlines provide vegan meals on request but you need to book it in advance. Request the meal with the code VGML. Some airlines call it by different names but VGML is the international code for it. Confusingly, different airlines seem to refer to VGML in different ways, so some airlines call it vegan and others "vegetarian non-dairy" (to differentiate it from Asian Vegetarian meals, which do contain dairy), while some call it "strict vegetarian".

Other meals (not offered by all airlines):

VJML: Vegetarian Jain Meal

VLML: Vegetarian Lacto-Ovo Meal (so when you're ordered a vegan meal make sure it says VGML, not VLML)

VOML: Vegetarian Oriental Meal

RVML: Vegetarian Raw Meal

Depending on the airline, the Vegetarian Jain meal and/or Vegetarian Oriental Meal may be vegan so it's worth asking when you call.

You should always follow up after placing your order for a vegan meal, just to confirm, when you check in at the airport and also, if possible, after boarding the plane.

PACKING YOUR BAG

Let's chat about your suitcase. What are the items you can't absolutely live without? Some people fill their suitcases full of shoes; some stuff them full of books. I've been known to bring a lot of chocolate - and a little nutritional yeast (not to put on the chocolate, of course). Here are some tips for tackling two parts of your bag - toiletries and food (I'll leave the shoe choices up to you).

Toiletries

Ah, the toiletry bag, bane of every plane traveller's existence! Since we have to contend with so many rules and regulations with regards to what you can and can't take on a plane along with how much of it you can take...things have gotten a little bit complicated for those of us who fly with carry-ons. Especially for those of us who want to take eco-friendly and vegan toiletries, and can't just run to the nearest drugstore and buy a big pile of mini Colgate toothpastes and tiny bottles of Pantene. The first and easiest option is to simply buy some empty bottles that are travel-sized/TSA-approved, and fill them with your favourite shampoos, soaps, etc. You can easily refill these before each trip, so you're not wasting lots of tiny plastic bottles.

Toothpaste, on the other hand, is more of an issue. You can't pick up refillable toothpaste tubes at your nearest drugstore, but you can order these refillable, BPA-free tubes on Amazon (also great for packing sunscreen!):
<http://www.amazon.com/Toothpaste-Go-Travel-Sized-Refill-3-Pack/dp/B007262RYM>

Or, you can buy little tubes of Jason brand natural toothpaste:
US: <http://www.jasonnaturalcare.co.uk/travel-size-toothpaste/>
UK: <http://www.jasonnaturalcare.co.uk/powersmile-travel-toothpaste-peppermint-fluoride-free/>

I'd also highly recommend checking out the hair and body care products at Lush, if you have a shop nearby or can order online. They are very vegan-friendly; all their products are cruelty-free and they clearly label which products are vegan, and all their products are natural and many are made fresh. They have some non-liquid products like face soap/scrub in plastic tubs, solid perfumes, solid shampoo bars, bath bombs (solid balls which dissolve in water into bubbles), solid massage bars (which melt when heated to skin temperature) and more. These are great because you can stock up without worrying about going over your liquid limit!

If you think you might need to do laundry on the road, don't forget to pack some laundry detergent. I find the best way to do this is to buy those laundry tabs (the solid ones), which transport well and again, won't take you over your liquid limit. Or, you could buy a multi-purpose liquid like Dr. Bronner's soap, which you can use for just about everything - laundry, shower gel/soap, face soap, even toothpaste. Warning: I've never used it as toothpaste and the idea freaks me out a little, but by all means, have at it and see how it goes!

Food

So if you're anything like me, you almost always have a few snacks buried in the bottom of your bag. You put them in there at some point thinking "I better pack some extras in case I can't find vegan food before my meeting/near the museum/at Sam's party even though she specifically told me she'd be making vegan food for me." I don't know where this irrational fear came from because I've never actually been anywhere I can't find at least one vegan option (even just a banana or a bag of nuts).

It does pay, though, to bring a few emergency supplies with you on your trip, particularly in case of an unfortunate airplane incident. You know, one of those awful cases where they forget to bring your vegan meal even though you ordered it in advance, and you dig in the bottom of your bag and discover that somehow this is the one time you DON'T have any bars.

This is particularly handy on cheap flights which don't provide meals. It also helps to avoid paying for excessively overpriced and often unhealthy meals in the airport. What's the key to packing a meal for the plane? Make something easily transportable, and also something that can be eaten cold, like a sandwich. Bring along:

- Fruit (something that won't get crushed, like an apple, as opposed to berries which will just get smushed in your bag)
- Something relatively small and light which pack a lot of energy, like some nuts and seeds.
- Remember not to bring any liquids, or if you do, put them in small containers that won't take you over your liquid limit. And yes, they often count 'pastes' like hummus as liquid.
- Or you can make your own fruit and nut bars. Check out this super useful post from Oh She Glows [http://ohsheglows.com/2013/05/27/7-portable-travel-snack-ideas-vida-vegan-con-fun/] with some great ideas and recipes for easily transportable snacks for the plane.

Other

One last item you might want to bring that's neither food nor toiletry but might just save you a lot of hassle is a Vegan Passport. These pocket-sized books explain that you're vegan and what you do and don't eat in 79 languages. Just show the local language page to your server and ask for a meal! You can buy them here:

<https://www.vegansociety.com/shop/books/lifestyle-books/vegan-passport>



THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

The Trans-Siberian railway, as you likely already know, is the longest railway line in the world, running across Russia and connecting Vladivostok and Moscow, with connecting branch lines into China, Mongolia and North Korea. It is also one of the most famous railway lines in the world.

The Trans-Siberian passes through several countries that are not exactly famed for their vegan-friendly cuisine. However, if you go prepared, you'll have no trouble. Before we get into the nitty-gritty of a packing list, let's talk about one option for finding meat-free Russian cuisine that you might not have heard of yet: fasting food (not to be confused with fast food!).

WHAT IS ORTHODOX FASTING?

The most prevalent religion in Russia is the Russian Orthodox church. Similar to the Eastern Orthodox church (which dominates many post-Soviet countries), Russian Orthodox followers rigorously fast throughout the year. The longest periods of fasting take place over Lent and prior to Christmas, but there are many fasts throughout the year over different feasts and holidays. Strict Orthodox followers may fast more than 130 days a year.

There are different types of fasting in the Russian Orthodox church: days where fish but no meat is allowed, days where oil isn't allowed, days where oil is allowed and days where "bread, vegetables and fruits" are the only foods allowed (in practice, these are vegan days).

What does this mean, really? It means that in Russia during the Great Lent (the longest fasting period), everywhere from Dunkin Donuts to Subway begin offering vegan options.

And what does this mean for you? Well, Wednesdays and Fridays are traditionally strict fast days, where meat, dairy, eggs and alcohol are forbidden (in some interpretations fish are excluded and in some shellfish are allowed, so always double check there's no fish in what you order). Additionally, Sunday the 11th of September is a holiday and a fast day.

On the Russian leg of the journey, you could go to a kiosk or stall on one of the stops the train makes, the dining car on the train, or a restaurant in a city you stop in and ask if they have a fasting menu, *постное меню* (pronounced *postno-ye me-nyu*), and make sure everything is free from fish. In my experience, saying you are "fasting" is usually the quickest way to obtain vegan food in Orthodox countries, even outside of fasting days. Though of course, you might encounter a few quizzical looks as to why you're requesting fasting food on a non-fasting day...

You can find the full Russian Orthodox fasting calendar here:
<http://www.holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/>



SELF-CATERING ON THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Many travellers (both tourists and locals) bring their own food on the Trans-Siberian railway so don't fear, you'll be in good company. The dining cars apparently frequently run out of many of the dishes on the menu, and can be overpriced, so many people stick to their own meals of instant ramen and cuppa soup. Some say 1/2 of a Trans-Siberian railway journeyer's luggage is bound to be food! ;)

What kind of food do people bring? Common lists include ramen, instant soup, bread and sausages...but here's a completely sausage-free list for you!

GRAINS & STAPLE FOODS

Every train car/carriage has a samovar, or a coal-fired boiler, that will provide you with an endless stream of boiling water for your meals, tea and drinking water (bring a bottle with you!). With this you can prepare some simple "add boiling water and go" meals, such as:

- Instant ramen (make sure that it's all vegetable and doesn't contain any fish flavouring or stock)
- Soup in a cup (make sure it's made with vegetable stock and no meat additives)
- Instant oatmeal
- Rice noodles (a staple of Asian cuisines, these thin vermicelli rice noodles can usually be prepared by just soaking in hot water for 3-5 minutes)

Some other staple foods & grains to bring with you:

- Bread
- Couscous (easy to make since you don't need to boil it like rice – just add hot water and let sit for 5 minutes! Make sure you add enough water for all the grains to absorb it.)
- Oats (you don't have to go the instant oats route, you can bring wholegrain oats and use the overnight oats method to make them; just add an equal amount of liquid and oats, plus any flavourings like dried fruit and nuts, and let sit overnight. The liquid will absorb overnight into the oats.)

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Now, you don't want to have to live on ramen and starches for a week. Here's how to get fruit and veg into your diet. Also, you might have some luck on your journey – at many stations, there are locals selling food and sometimes there are train station kiosks too. Normally the locals sell pre-made foods, but occasionally they sell local seasonal fruits such as berries. But in case, here's what to bring with you.

- Bananas (they make a great snack and you can buy green ones that will ripen over the first few days of the trip)
- Hearty fruits that won't get smashed in your bag and will keep for awhile, like apples and oranges
- Dried fruits
- Hearty vegetables that will last awhile and don't require cooking; you can eat these raw or you can pour hot water from the samovar over them for a few minutes to warm them and cook them partially, then add them to couscous/rice noodles etc. (onions, carrots, bell peppers, cucumbers)

PROTEINS

From the sounds of it, you might be able to re-stock on bread and possibly fruit on the journey, but there's not much in the way of vegetable protein being sold on train platforms. So I'd recommend making sure you bring plenty of non-meat proteins with you!

- Nuts, like cashews, almonds, walnuts
- Seeds, like sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds
- Canned beans
- Peanut butter
- Vacuum packed/UHT tofu

Tip: Look for the “cedar” nuts sold by some vendors selling on train platforms. They are similar to pistachio with a meaty but more subtle flavour and grown in abundance on the taiga. They come from Siberian pine trees, and apparently they even contain a fatty acid similar to that found in fish oil so they're good for you, too!

OTHER FOOD ITEMS

Now, you'll not just want to eat plain bread and couscous the whole time. Here's how to spice things up, and have some snacks too.

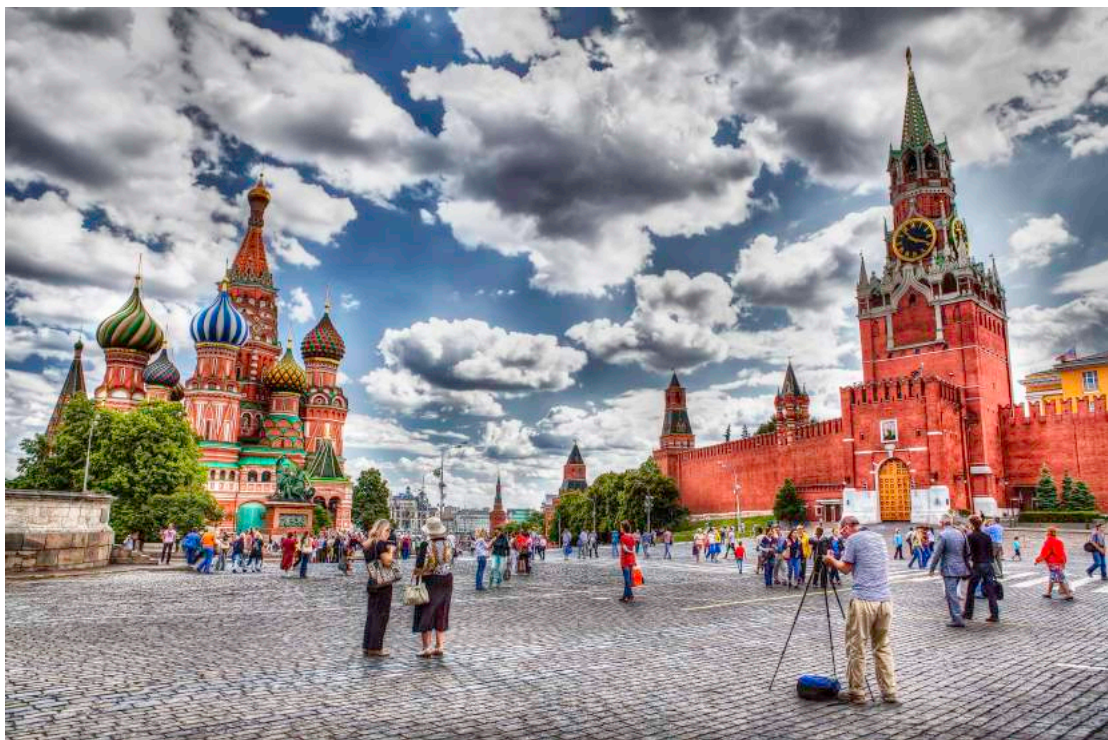
- Dried spices to make your meals more interesting – either your favourite spices or some mixes like an Italian herb blend, Mexican spice mix or curry powder (you can even buy small containers like these empty cosmetic tins to put them into: <http://amzn.to/2bIGioi>)
- Olive oil, vinegar, soy sauce (try to find small bottles or decant some into those empty bottles you can buy to put your shampoo in)
- Jam
- Кабачковая Икра [kabach-kovaya ikra] (found in most Russian supermarkets, always vegan) – squash puree that you can spread on bread for breakfast, lunch or a snack
- Fruit and nut bars like Clif bars, Lara bars or Luna bars

- Finally, I know I said this was sausage-free...but you could always buy veggie sausages to bring on board! You can find veggie sausages at Etika, a health food shop in Moscow: <http://bit.ly/2bAtr9e>

UTENSILS & SUPPLIES

You'll also need a few basic utensils and kitchen equipment to prepare your meals.

- Containers or bowls
- Cutlery
- Knife for chopping vegetables or fruit
- Can & bottle opener



ALONG THE WAY...

Since you'll be stopping along the way, you'll have a chance to replenish your supplies and to eat hot food not prepared by you via samovar (pew!). Be sure to always ask for the nearest large supermarket where you're staying. As you get into Mongolia it may be harder to find fresh fruits and vegetables as they are not as widely available (due to the climate) and usually imported from China.

Tip: A quick note on restaurant hours. Unless otherwise noted all hours in the guidebook are daily. Always phone ahead to check though, as timetables may vary by season or due to holidays.

MOSCOW

Moscow might not be a city famous for its vegetarian dishes but the vegetarian and vegan scene has exploded in recent years. Tolstoy was vegetarian, and given the Orthodox fasting tradition as well, Moscow actually has a long history of vegetarian and vegan food. Here are two vegetarian restaurants to check out. See the section “Ordering Food in Russia” for some common dishes that are often vegetarian.

Best Vegetarian Restaurants in Moscow:

The two restaurants that get top billing among Moscow vegetarians are Fresh and Sok Café.

Sok Café (Сок Кафе)

Russian Address: Лаврушинский переулок, д. 15

English Address: Lavrushinskiy pereulok, 15

Phone: +7 495 953-79-63

Hours: 11am – 11pm

A small vegetarian café located across from Tretyakov’s Art Gallery and near Red Square and Christ the Saviour Cathedral. Here you can sample meat-free versions of some of the most famous Russian dishes, from borscht to “herring under a fur coat” salad and vareniki dumplings.

Fresh (Фреш)

Russian Address: ул. Большая Дмитровка, 11

English Address: ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 11

Phone: +7 965 278 90 89

Hours: 11am – 11pm

A trendy vegetarian café located 5 minutes from the Bolshoi Theatre and 10 minutes from Red Square, Fresh offers healthy food ranging from sandwiches, soups and noodles bowls to smoothies.

Look out too for branches of Le Pain Quotidien, located around the city centre, offering a range of vegetarian and vegan options.

KAZAN

Vegan Day

Address: Ul Shigabutdin Marjani, 18

Phone: +7-9534859282

Hours: 9am – 9pm

Small vegan café in the centre.

Govinda’s

Address: Chistopolskaja Street, 79

Phone: 89274444999

Vegetarian café and delivery service making Indian and Russian food.

Radyisya

Address: Островского, 84

Phone: 89625567997

Café attached to yoga and arts centre, serving Russian food (including a vegan borscht). Menu in Russian with pictures.

I-MNE

Address: Peterburgskaya 9

Phone: 89270378003

Hours: 10am – 10pm

Health food shop that sells nuts, beans, sprouts, etc.

YEKATERINBURG

Ivan Tsai (Иван Чай)

Address: Schorsa 105

Phone: +7-343-3448837 or 3448838

An upscale vegetarian restaurant.

Rada

Russian Address: ул. Вайнера, 8, Галерея "Красный леопард", 2 этаж

English: Address: S Ulitsa Vaynera, 8

Phone: +7-3433448838

Hours: 11am – 10pm

Vegetarian café with a buffet inside the Red Leopard Mall. Walking in through the entrance to the mall, go up the stairs and the restaurant is on the left.

VegBurger

Address: Tolmacheva, 22

Phone: 345-9022

Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00am-9:00pm, Sat-Sun 10:00am-9:00pm

Vegetarian and vegan organic fast food restaurant in the city centre.

Vegeterinburg

Address: 8 Marta, Bld 5

Phone: +79126967333

Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00am-7:00pm, Sat-Sun 10:00am-6:00pm

Vegetarian health food shop where you can stock up on seitan, homemade tofu, etc.

Zelenoe Yabloko

A chain of health food shops found around Yekaterinburg, including one in the Alatyrr mall. A good place to restock, they sell whole grains, tofu, nuts and seeds, mock meats, etc.

NOVOSIBIRSK

Veggie Pit

Address: Novosibirsk, Michurina 8 K2

Phone: +79237777434

Hours: 11:00am-8:00pm

Vegan fast food kiosk located in the Central Park.

Art Café Om

Address: Chelyuskintsev 30/2

Phone: 3807391

Hours: Mon-Fri 12:00pm-10:00pm, Sat-Sun 12:00pm-11:00pm

Vegetarian Indian restaurant.

Jagganath

Address: Vatutina 15

Phone: +7-383-2218787

Hours: 10:00am-10:00pm

A health food shop and an excellent place to restock – they sell tofu, mock meats, herbs, etc.

From this point on as you go more and more east it will become increasingly difficult to find fresh fruits and vegetables (especially in Ulan Ude, apparently), so best to stock up now.

IRKUTSK

Govinda (two locations)

Address: Furye Street 11 & 2-ja Geleznodorognaja Street, 66, 3rd floor

Phone: 620167 & 3952-684-524

Hours: Monday to Sunday 11am – 8pm (Furye Street) & Monday to Saturday 11am – 7pm (Geleznodorognaja Street)

Vegetarian Indian buffet

Эко-Продукт

Address: Эко-Продукт

Phone: +7 395 224-41-36

Hours: Monday – Friday 10am – 8pm, Saturday & Sunday 10am – 7pm

Health food shop

ULAN UDE

By the time you've reached Ulan Ude, vegetarian restaurants have disappeared and fresh fruits and vegetables might be harder to come by. There are definitely some vegetarians and vegan people in Ulan Ude, though, as I found a group for vegetarians and vegans on VK, Russia's version of Facebook.

There don't seem to be an abundance of vegetarian options in Ulan Ude, but there are pizza places, so you can always stick to those. And sushi is very popular in Russia so if you're a sushi fan you could always ask for vegetable sushi like kappa maki (cucumber) or avocado maki. Marco Polo restaurant has a page of vegetarian and vegan options on their menu, and it looks like there's a health food shop too, so you won't be completely out of luck in Ulan Ude!

Marco Polo

Address: Kommunisticheskaya Street, 46

Phone: 9834201700

A non-vegetarian restaurant that has a whole page of vegetarian and vegan options on their menu.

Alphabet of Health (АЗБУКА ЗДОРОВЬЯ УЛАН-УДЭ)

Address: Наш магазин находится на ул.Гагарина 30, ост. Аптека
Health food shop.



ORDERING FOOD IN RUSSIA

If you end up in a non-vegetarian restaurant here are a few phrases to have handy:

- постное меню - *postno-ye me-nyu* – fasting menu
- я веган - *Ya ve-gan* – I'm vegan
- я не ем мясо - *ya nye yem myaso* - I don't eat meat

- Мы не едим мяса - *mi nye ye-dim myasa* – We don't eat meat

Here's a video on YouTube you can watch to help with pronunciation:
<http://bit.ly/2bU81Sh> (Although it might be easier to print out the phrases!)

And some dishes to look for:

- Borscht: the famous beetroot soup is usually made with meat stock and sometimes has added beef chunks, but ask in case they have a version made with vegetable stock.
- Golubtsi: these cabbage rolls are often stuffed with meat and rice but sometimes you can find meat-free versions stuffed with just rice, mushrooms and vegetables.
- Pirozhki: fried or baked bread rolls, sometimes filled with meat but sometimes potatoes or cabbage.
- Vareniki (вареники) dumplings, similar to pierogi, found in supermarkets in the refrigerated or freezer sections. There are often vegan versions stuffed with mashed potatoes, cabbage or fruits (for the sweet versions). Look for the ones labeled "Постный".
- Vinaigrette: not the salad dressing, but rather a Russian beetroot salad, usually made with diced beetroot, potatoes, carrots, pickles, onions and sauerkraut.

ULAAN BAATAR

Mongolia has a reputation as one of the least vegetarian-friendly places in the world due to it having one of the highest rates of meat consumption globally and such delicacies as fried crispy fat. However, this has all changed recently, in particular in the capital of Ulaan Baatar. A few years ago, there were no vegetarian restaurants there. Now, the capital has 15 vegetarian and vegan restaurants! You'll be best off sticking to vegetarian restaurants here, because traditional Mongolian cuisine has a reputation for being exceedingly meaty and you might struggle to find food in non-vegetarian places.

Recommended:

Luna Blanca

Address: 16 Tourist St, FPMT Buddhist Center, 1F (opposite Zanabazar Museum)

Phone: 976-5515-9651

Hours: Monday – Friday 11am – 8pm, Saturday & Sunday 12pm – 8pm

A completely vegan restaurant that also happens to be ranked fifth of all restaurants (vegetarian and non) in Ulaan Baatar. Try their Luna Blanca combo plate to get a sampling of meat-free Mongolian dishes.

Agnista

Address: near 5th secondary school, 4th khoroo of Chingeltei district

Phone: 976-99067988

Hours: 9am – 10pm

Another vegetarian café where you can sample vegetarian versions of traditional Mongolian dishes.

Other Options

Bosco Verde

Address: east side of State Circus

Phone: 976-99092015 or 70117715

Hours: 11am – 9pm (closed Saturdays)

A vegan Italian restaurant that also serves some Mongolian dishes.

Café de Amor

Address: Negdsen Undestnii 18 (by the Cuban Embassy)

Phone: 77119997

Hours: 7am – 9pm (closed Sundays)

Coffee house that also serves vegan food like burgers, sandwiches and breakfast. Has wifi and computers.

Loving Hut (chain)

Addresses:

Bichil khoroolol, Bayangol district

Jobi 72 Center Building, 4th Khoroo, 15th Horoolol, Bayanzurkh district

Extension of 45th building, Khoroo 3, 12th Khoroolol, Bayanzurkh district

3th Floor, Mars Trademarket, 2nd Khoroo, Chingeltei District

Student Dormitory of Food College, 2nd Khoroo, Khan-uul district

2nd Floor, Mongol Nekhmel Co Ltd, 2nd Khoroo, Khan-uul district

Bldg 40, Juulchin Street 7, Baga Toiruu 12 (at Luna Blanca)

A-31, Baga Toiruu, 6th Khoroo, Sukhbaatar district

A chain of vegan restaurants worldwide, but each is operated individually so has a different menu. Usually they serve a mix of local and international Asian dishes, and offer good value for money.

Ananda Cafe

Address: Baga Toiruu, building-18

Phone: 316986, or 325967

International vegetarian cuisine, smoothies, fresh juices and takeaway.

Govinda's

Address: 60th building, 1st khoroo, Bayangol district

Phone: 976-89662420

Hours: 12:30pm – 6pm

Vegetarian Asian food.

Stupa Cafe

Address: Juulchin Gudamj (at opposite Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts)

A cosy vegetarian café located in the FPMT centre, known locally as the Mahayana Centre.



INTRODUCTION TO BEIJING

Beijing, a sprawling metropolis, is the capital of China. From the Forbidden City to the Great Wall, Beijing has plenty to keep visitors occupied. You can expect temperatures in September between 14 °C (57 °F) and 26 °C (79 °F). The rainy season has ended so it's an excellent time to visit. Bring summer clothes and a cardigan or light coat for the cooler mornings and evenings.

China's long, rich history is filled with vegetarian and vegan food thanks to the Buddhist influence. (Buddhist monks -- and sometimes laypeople -- tend to eat vegetarian.) Unfortunately for modern-day vegetarian and vegan visitors, the cultural repression of the Mao era included a suppression of Buddhist traditions, including vegetarianism. Historically many Chinese, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, didn't eat very much meat due to economic constraints. Now meat is seen by some as a "status symbol" and you may be met with some confusion as to why you don't eat meat if you have the economic means. Many traditional Chinese dishes also appear to be vegan at first glance, but may contain meat as a "flavouring" (for example ma po tofu).

However, don't fear - there are plenty of excellent vegetarian restaurants to visit in China! Even outside of these, if you explain in very clear terms that you are vegetarian (it might help if you couch it in Buddhist terms), you can sometimes get simple vegetable dishes in non-vegetarian restaurants.

Tip: "Vegetarian" or "strict vegetarian" (vegan) is often interpreted in China as not containing garlic or onion, thanks to Buddhist tradition. So be prepared for some your food to be allium-free.



BEIJING: AN OVERVIEW

Beijing is China's sprawling megalopolis, its capital and a key part of its history, with its own history stretching back three thousand years, with a population of a whopping 18.5 million and a city stretching over 1,300 square kilometres. To put it in perspective, New York has a population of 8.5 million spread out over 790 square kilometres while London's population is 8.6 set over a more spacious 1,500 square kilometres. In other words, Beijing crams twice the number of people as London into a slightly smaller space.

There's plenty to see and keep you occupied, with seven UNESCO world heritage sites in the city. They are: the [Forbidden City](#), [Temple of Heaven](#), [Summer Palace](#), [Ming Tombs](#), [Zhoukoudian](#), plus portions of the [Great Wall](#) and the [Grand Canal](#). Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008 and is set to host the Winter Olympics in 2022 – making it the first city ever to host both.

As far as vegetarian and vegan food goes, as mentioned before, China is a bit of an unusual case. With a history of Buddhist vegetarianism and the birthplace of tofu, you'd expect to find vegetarian options readily available everywhere. However, changing diets and cultural shifts mean this isn't the case. And with regards to tofu, many Chinese people eat it regularly – flavoured with meat. However, this doesn't mean that you can't find vegetarian food – far from it. There are more than 50 vegetarian restaurants in Beijing and 7 completely vegan restaurants. Active Buddhist temples tend to have a vegetarian restaurant attached or nearby, so if in doubt, look for a temple!

Tip: If you eat in a temple restaurant, leave a donation – monks are not allowed to ask for money so they may not have set prices. If you find a temple but not a restaurant, ask one of the monks if they know of any vegetarian restaurants nearby! (Ask for **素食** – vegetarian food)

In non-vegetarian restaurants, beware of dishes that sound vegetarian but may contain meat. For example mapo tofu is tofu flavoured with pork, and spinach is sometimes cooked with shrimp. Dishes may be cooked with meat broth or sauces like oyster sauce. And restaurateurs are not always clear in whether or not a dish has “small amounts” of meat in it... Many a traveller have bitten into their vegetable dumplings to discover they're vegetable *and* *pork* dumplings... It's always best to be very clear in communicating what you do and don't eat. You might want to write down or print out some Chinese phrases like:

我吃素 – Wo chi su (I am vegetarian)

我不吃肉 – Wo bu chi rou (I don't eat meat)

我不吃鱼 – Wo bu chi yu (I don't eat fish)

You can watch this YouTube video for help on pronunciation:

<http://bit.ly/2bo8N8F>

However, I'd suggest you always print and bring phrases with you because Chinese is notoriously difficult to pronounce and if you change a tone just ever so slightly you can completely alter the meaning.

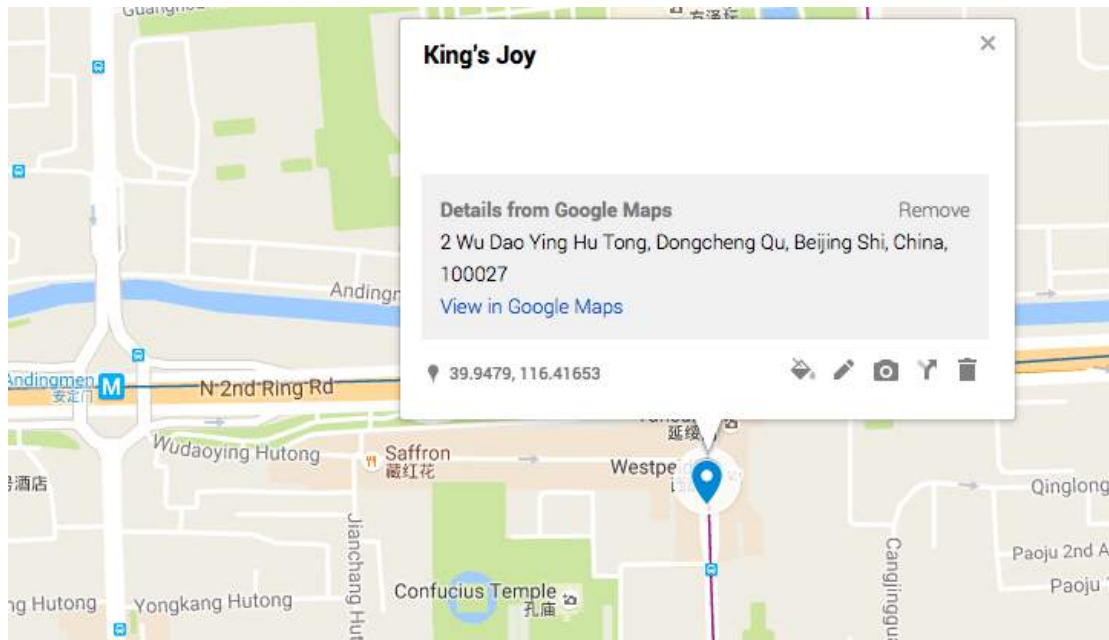
If you want to be completely safe, you can stick to fully vegetarian restaurants. Luckily, Beijing has no shortage of these, so read on for some of the best.

Tip: Always print out the name and address of a restaurant in Chinese characters so you can show taxi drivers or anyone you ask for directions.



BEIJING'S 3 BEST VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

With over 50 vegetarian and vegan restaurants in China's capital, which are the best? These three are worth a visit:



King's Joy (京兆尹)

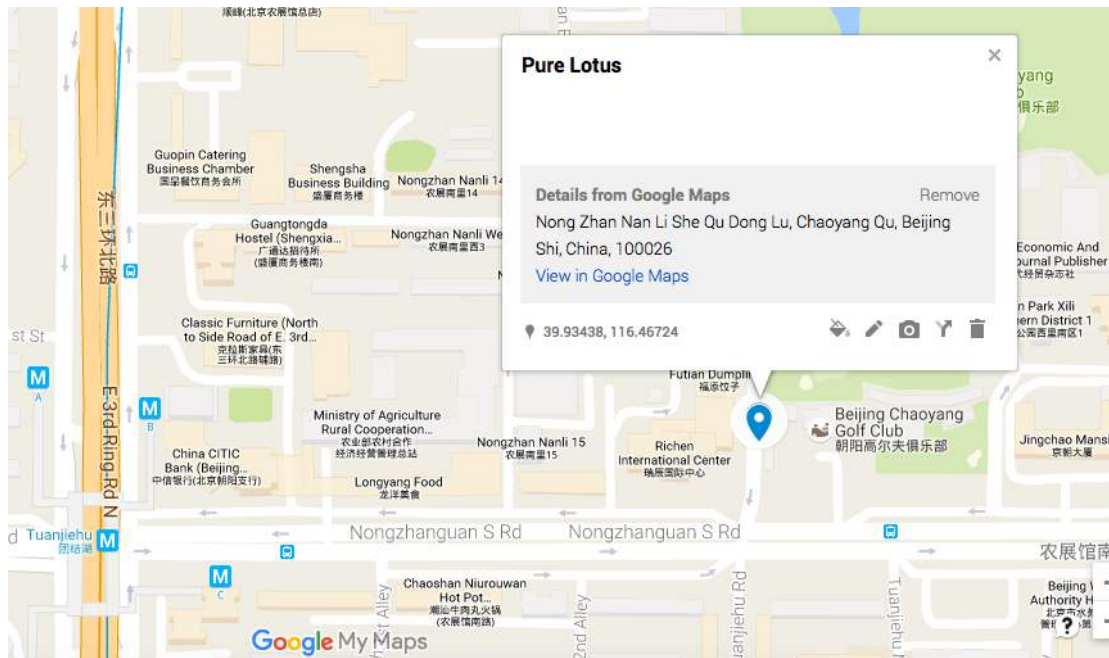
Chinese Address: 东城区雍和宫五道营胡同2号 (Yonghegong neighbourhood)

English Address: 2 Wudaoying Hutong, Yonghegong, Dongcheng district

Phone: 8404-9191

Opening hours: 11am-2pm, 5pm-11pm

Currently ranked on Tripadvisor at number 3 out of all the 10,000+ restaurants (vegetarian and non) in Beijing and two-time winner of TimeOut's Food Award of the year, vegetarian restaurant King's Joy is a joy to dine at. King's Joy eschews the mock meats favoured at many vegetarian restaurants and replaces them with mushrooms and vegetables. One of the few places in Beijing that you can get a vegan version of local specialty zhajiangmian, noodles in a soybean paste that are usually made with pork.



Pure Lotus (净心莲)

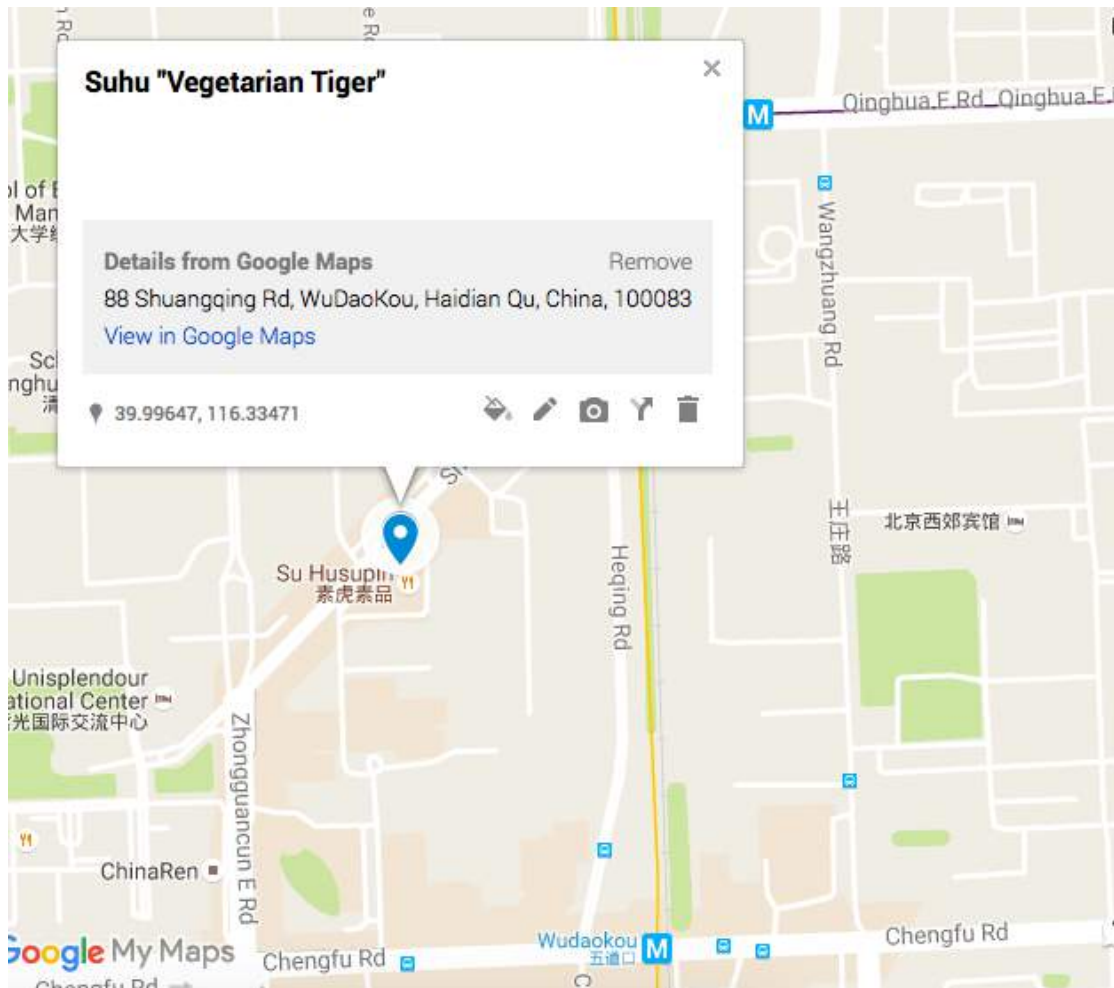
Chinese Address: 农展南里10号JVC大厦 (in a complex below the JVC tower, Chaoyang Park neighbourhood)

English Address: 10 Nongzhan Nanli

Phone: 6592-3627

Opening hours: 11am – 11pm

Pricey and famous Pure Lotus, run by Buddhist monks, is a high class restaurant experience, with beautiful décor and even special effects like dry ice. Here you can try a wide range of creative vegan dishes including classics like a vegan version of Peking duck. You'll need reservations for this one.



Suhu “Vegetarian Tiger” (素虎素餐)

Chinese Address: 双清路88号华源世纪商务楼2楼 (Wudaokou neighbourhood)

English Address: 2/F Huayuan Shiji Building, 88 Shuangqing Rd.

Phone: 8252-7078

Opening hours: 10am – 11pm

Hidden on the second floor behind a building complex near the university, Suhu is worth finding. Well-known among vegetarians in Beijing, this completely vegan restaurant boasts dishes from vegan fish filets in hot chili oil, dim sum and vegan egg tarts. Don't miss the specialty dessert, Chinese yam with blueberries. They also sell some ingredients and snacks near the door, like mock pork floss and moon cakes.

Tip: Always double check opening times in case of changes or seasonal hours.

TRADITIONAL ACCIDENTALLY VEGGIE DISHES

So, you've ended up in a non-vegetarian restaurant? Here's a list of traditional local dishes that are usually accidentally vegan. Double check with waitstaff in case, but these are almost always vegan.

松仁玉米 – Corn and ginkgo seeds

荷兰豆 – Plain snow peas, sometimes with carrots

清炒西兰花 – Lightly fried broccoli, sometimes with garlic

香辣土豆丝 – Deep-fried tower of super-thin cut potato shreds with dried chili (not very spicy)

素炒饼 – Stir-fried bread strips with cabbage (the bread is chewy, like noodles)

毛豆 – Edamame (soft soy beans in the pod, like the Japanese appetizer)

油泼面 – If you happen to be eating at a Sha'an Xi noodle restaurant, order these, but they probably won't have them many other places. They're inch-thick noodles with a splash of oil, pepper, vinegar, bean sprouts and bok choy (pak choi).



VEGETARIAN OPTIONS NEAR BEIJING'S ATTRACTIONS

GREAT WALL

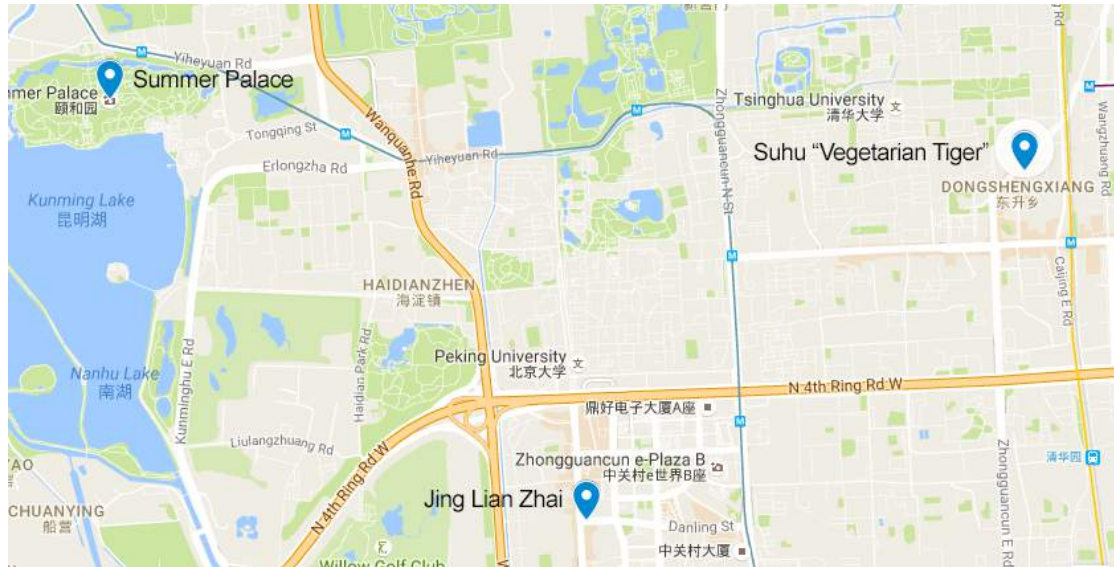
The Great Wall of China – one of humankind's most famous structures and one you can supposedly see from outer space. Most trips to China include a trip to the Great Wall. Obviously being a huge piece of architecture, there are many different points on the wall you can visit – from the touristy, refurbished sections to the old, crumbling to pieces parts (careful if you visit one of these sections, and be sure to wear sturdy shoes).

Many parts of the Great Wall are relatively rural, with few or no restaurants around, so you're best off bringing a packed lunch or some snacks with you. Then you can even say you've had lunch on the Great Wall!

SUMMER PALACE

Favourite retreat of the Chinese royals, the Summer Palace is the best preserved royal park in Beijing. A collection of lakes, palaces and gardens, the Summer Palace is one of Beijing's most visited destinations.

As the place emperors fled to from the city to escape the summer sun and heat, the Summer Palace is naturally located outside the city centre and there aren't a huge number of vegetarian restaurants in its immediate proximity. Nearest is Jing Lian Zhai buffet, just over one and a half kilometres away, or Suhu (see Beijing's 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants) is four kilometres away so a trip to the Summer Palace could be combined with a meal at Suhu.



Jing Lian Zhai (静莲斋素食)

English Address: 16 Su Zhou St, Haidian District (at corner 4th Ring Rd)

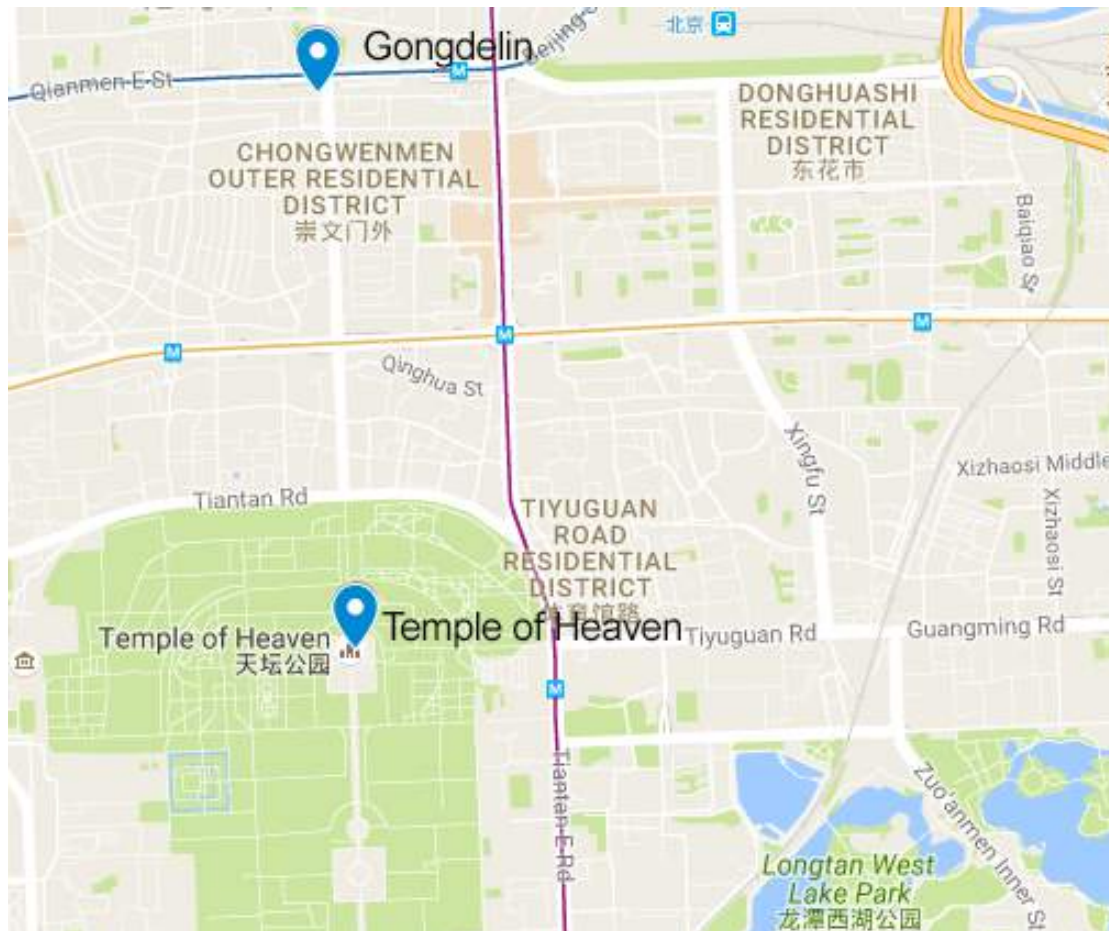
Phone: 010-56016078

A self-serve buffet-style vegetarian restaurant next to McDonald's, of all things.

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN (TIANTAN PARK)

This temple complex was built in the 15th century, the same time as the Forbidden City. Covering an area of 2.7 million square metres, the Temple of Heaven is actually bigger than the Forbidden City. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, emperors performed the Heaven Worship Ceremony here.

Gongdelin, one of Beijing's older and more well-known vegetarian restaurants is about a kilometer and a half from the Temple of Heaven.



Gongdelin

English Address: 2 Qianmen E St, ChongWenMen, Dongcheng Qu, Beijing Shi

Phone: 010-67020867

Opening hours: 10:30am – 9pm

FORBIDDEN CITY

The Forbidden City: China's best-preserved collection of ancient buildings and the largest palace complex in the entire world. Off-limits to the public for five hundred years, it's now a UNESCO World Heritage site and a must-see in Beijing.

Nearby you'll find Fu Hui Ci Yuan, a vegetarian restaurant (just over a kilometre away) plus, if you're sick of Chinese food, two restaurants that serve vegan pizzas and pasta: Café 1901 (non-vegetarian but vegan-friendly at 101 Xianmen Street, Xicheng) and Cloud Kitchen (vegan, at Aimin 4th Alley (at BeihaiBei subway station)).



Fu Hui Ci Yuan

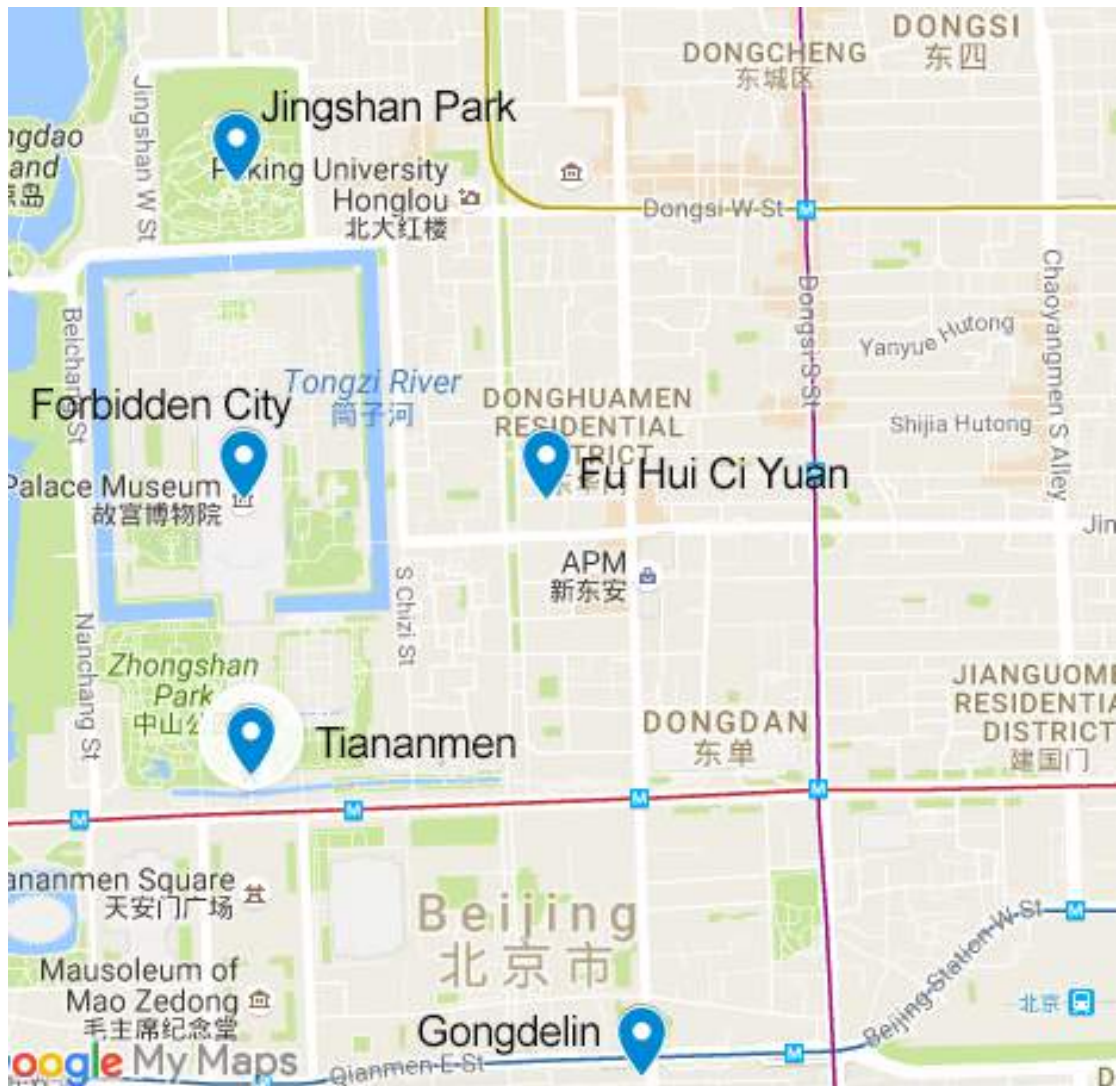
English Address: 53 Dong'anmen St, Dongcheng

Phone: 010-51385789 or 13716034788

Opening hours: 10:00am – 9pm

TIANANMEN SQUARE

One of the most famous places in Beijing, Tiananmen Square is the image many people get in their mind when they picture Beijing. One of the biggest public squares in the world, Tiananmen Square has been home to a number of iconic moments in Chinese history, the most famous outside of China being the 1989 protest. Located just across from the Forbidden City, most people visit Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City together.



Restaurants: close by is Gongdelin (see Temple of Heaven) and Fu Hui Ci Yuan (see the Forbidden City).

JINGSHAN PARK

Beijing's most famous park, Jingshan is just north of the Forbidden City. Visit early in the morning (perhaps just before a trip to the Forbidden City) to see tai chi practitioners and even some of China's famous pensioners' square dancing groups.

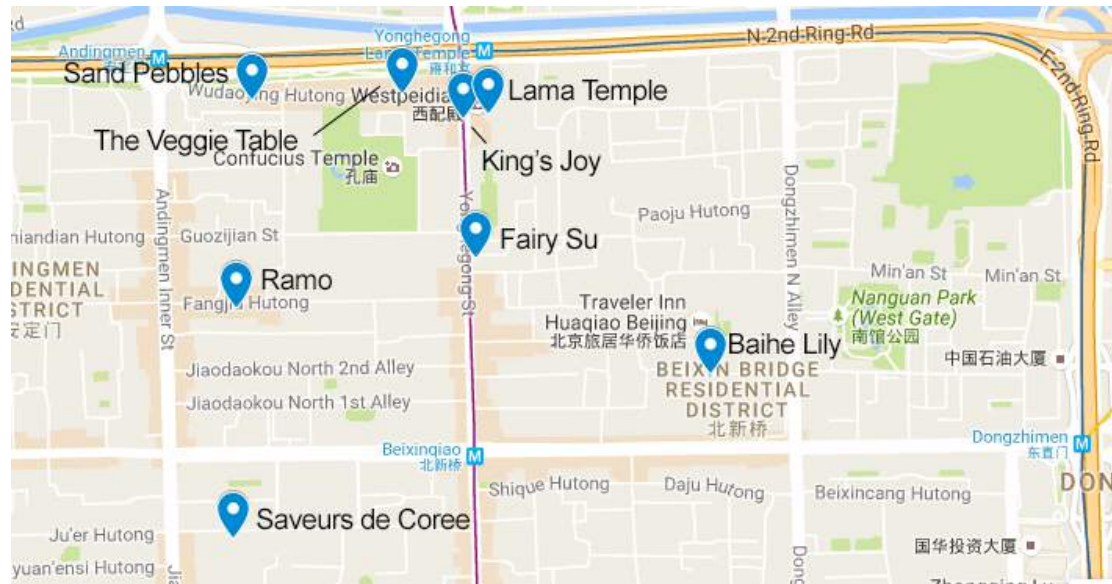
For vegetarian restaurants, see the Forbidden City.

LAMA TEMPLE / YONGHE LAMASERY

The most famous Tibetan temple outside of Tibet, Lama Temple is a must-visit in Beijing. As Lonely Planet says, "if you only have time for one temple in Beijing (and the Temple of Heaven doesn't really count), make it this one".

Impressive in terms of its architecture, frescoes, roofs, arches and tapestries, Lama Temple won't disappoint.

You're never far from a vegetarian restaurant when you're in close proximity to a Buddhist temple, and Lama proves that. All of the following restaurants are less than a kilometre way from Lama Temple.



King's Joy

Not even a tenth of a kilometre away and one of the best restaurants in Beijing – see Beijing's 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants, a trip to Lama Temple would be a great chance to try King's Joy, ranked third of *all* restaurants in Beijing by Tripadvisor. (See section: Beijing's 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants)

The Veggie Table (vegan - Western & international food)

19 Wudaoying Hutong, Dong Cheng District

Fairy Su (vegetarian - Chinese dishes and nightly buffet)

30 Yonghegong Da Jie, Dongcheng District

Sand Pebbles Lounge (vegan-friendly Tex-Mex)

74 Wudaoying Hutong

Ramo (vegan-friendly pizzeria)

64 Fangjia Hutong, Andingmennei St

Baihe – Lily Vegetarian (vegetarian - Chinese-style food)

23 Caoyuan Hutong

Saveurs de Coree (vegan-friendly Korean restaurant)

128-1 Xiang Er Hutong

BEIJING: A WRAP-UP

From Peking Duck to zhanjiangmian, there's no reason you can't savour Beijing's most famous dishes – sans meat. Just don't forget the golden rule of travelling in China as a vegan: look for the Buddhist temple. There will almost certainly be vegetarian restaurants in close proximity.

Finally, keep your eyes peeled for vegan versions of Beijing's most famous dishes:

- Peking duck (vegan version available at Pure Lotus – see Beijing's 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants)
- Zhajiangmian (soybean paste noodles with pork; a vegan version is available at King's Joy – see Beijing's 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants)
- Mongolian Hot Pot
- Jiaozi (dumplings; vegan versions are available at many vegetarian restaurants)
- Gong bao chicken aka kung pao chicken (vegan version available at Baihe Lily Vegetarian – see Lama Temple)

Tip: If you want to meet others over a vegan meal, check out the Beijing Vegetarian & Vegan Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Beijing-Vegan-and-Vegetarian-Meetup/>

You can download your Beijing map here: <http://bit.ly/paulbeijing>

Have a fantastic trip. Happy travels and eat well!