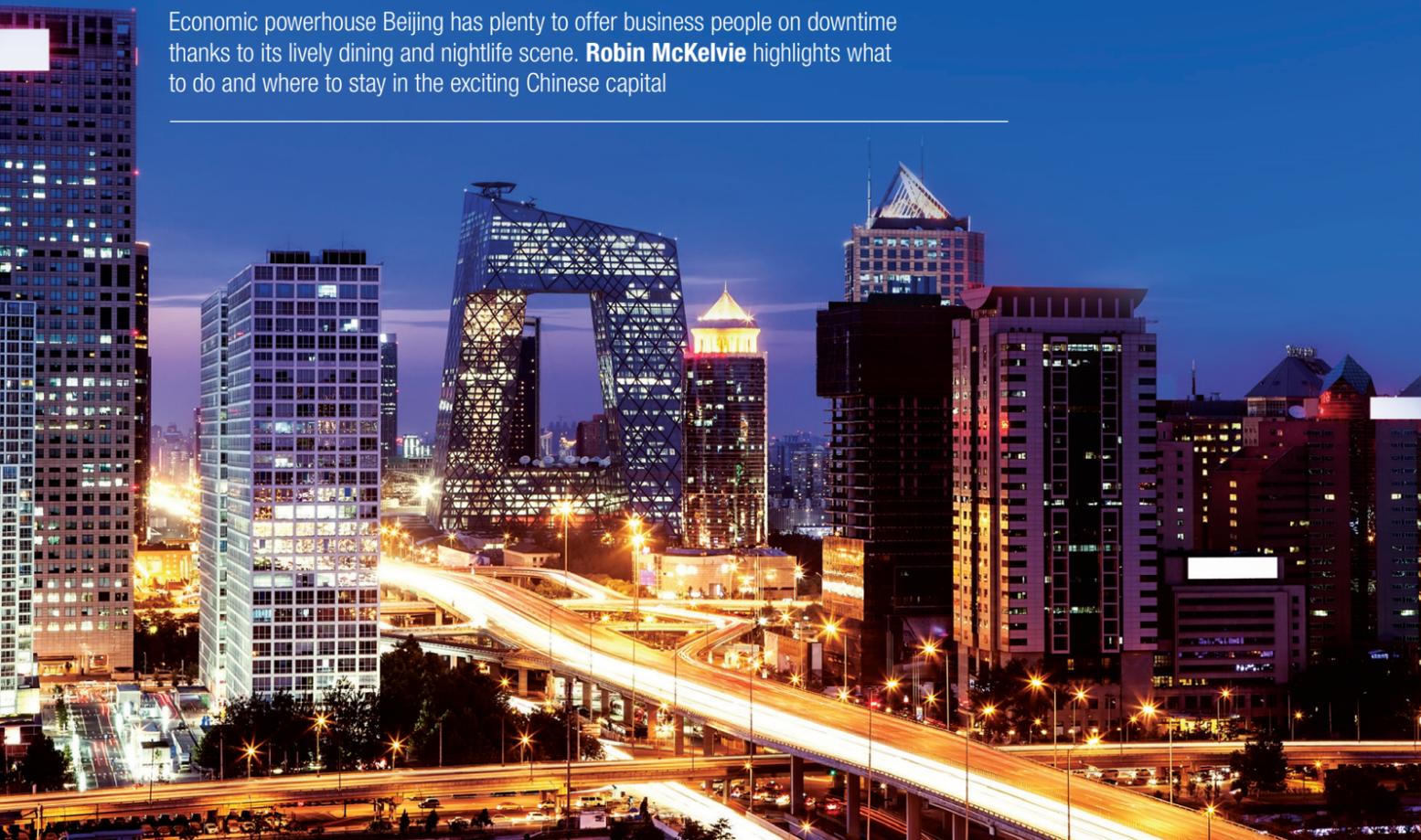


Business in Beijing

Economic powerhouse Beijing has plenty to offer business people on downtime thanks to its lively dining and nightlife scene. **Robin McKelvie** highlights what to do and where to stay in the exciting Chinese capital



Long gone are the days when China's capital was a forbidden and forgotten city for global business people. Today this thriving, sprawling metropolis of more than 20 million inhabitants – the hub of one of the world's most impressive emerging economies – is very much open for business and houses a flurry of international companies intent on exploring the swathe of opportunities available in the world's most populous country.

The success of Beijing as a business destination is exemplified by its steep office rents. Cushman

& Wakefield have rated the city as having the fourth highest rent per square metre per year in the world at US\$1,412, putting the Chinese capital ahead of both New York and Tokyo.

Beijing accounts for around 14 per cent of China's GDP and is also home to more than 40 Fortune Global 500 companies as well as the headquarters of many of the largest companies in the country. It is also the nation's key transport hub, lying at the centre of China's growing high-speed rail network and is home to Beijing Capital

International Airport, the second busiest airport in the world.

The city's skyline is another sign of the modern Beijing, with a vault of glass and steel skyscrapers joining the more traditional architecture. Filling the buildings are offices from the likes of Hewlett-Packard, Motorola, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Samsung and UBS. Beijing is the ideal base for making forays around the rest of this vast and multifaceted nation and for engaging in the bureaucracy sometimes involved in more in-depth business.

During downtime Beijing overflows with attractions that fan out around a flat city centre laid out on a grid system. These range from the legacies of the imperial days of the emperors, through to its green spaces and temples. It also holds host to the world's most thrilling dining and nightlife scenes, which, like the city around it, has firmly opened its doors to the world.

Pictured: The impressive Beijing skyline reflects the thriving global business destination the city is today



WHERE TO STAY

Over the last decade Beijing has welcomed a flurry of new luxury hotels. The multi-award winning Aman at the Summer Palace is a stand out hotel, set by the eponymous palace in a collage of 19th-century pavilions and courtyards, it embraces traditional Chinese architecture. With easy access to cultural landmarks such as the Great Wall and the Temple of Heaven, as well as the best of Beijing's restaurants and art galleries, it is an ideal luxury base to explore the city.

While at the heart of the financial and technological district is The Shangri-La. A 670-room luxury hotel unashamedly aimed at the visiting business community, it boasts facilities such as a well-equipped business centre and a swathe of banquet and conference rooms. And after a long day in the office, guests can relax in the hotel's 3,000-sqm garden, complete with soothing waterfalls and koi ponds; it serves as a perfect escape from the urban confines of the city.

Meanwhile, an impressive wave of boutique hotels has opened in Beijing, one of which is the swish Opposite House Hotel. An oasis of cutting edge design with a stylish

bar, metal basin swimming pool as well as its very own contemporary art gallery with a striking sculpture collection, it represents a truly unique stay for art enthusiasts and businessmen alike.

Aman at Summer Palace
www.amanresorts.com

Shangri-La
www.shangri-la.com/beijing

The Opposite House
www.theoppositehouse.com/

DINNER AND DRINKS

Beijing is one of the world's great culinary capitals with much of its social and business life conducted in its myriad eating outlets. These range from simple dumpling and hot pot stands, through to signature Peking Duck restaurants, such as the Da Dong outlets, and world-class molecular gastronomic temples like the Brian McKenna @ The Courtyard.

While Sanlitun is still the hotspot for nightlife, the city's necklace of bars and clubs have spread out to neighbourhood 'hutong' quarters such as Nanluogu Xiang. Stylish lounge bars now serve slick cocktails alongside the local favourite beer Yanjing. Apothecary has much more character than the hotel cocktail bars and they know their shaken from their stirred concoctions here, as recognised



by the appreciative local cognoscenti. Proving hotel bars can be stylish too, Xian Bar offers smooth cocktails and service, plus a less hurried atmosphere than many Beijing bars.

Da Dong
www.dadongdadong.com

Brian McKenna
www.bmktc.com

Xian Bar
www.xian-bar.com

EXPLORE

The number one tourist attraction is not even in the city centre, but instead stretches of the iconic Great Wall that await in the surrounding municipality, while Badaling is easiest to reach and is perhaps the most visited, Jinshanling offers a more authentic and unique experience of the Great Wall.

The legacy of China's imperial past is the main pull back to the city with the Forbidden City – for centuries the secretive hideaway of the omnipotent emperors – is an unmissable stop. Exploring its vast halls, epic squares and quiet gardens requires a whole day.

Another key imperial site to visit is The Temple of Heaven, a stunning complex of religious buildings where the emperors sought divinity, while their



Clockwise from left: Discover Beijing's imperial past at the Summer Palace; relax at the Shangri-La; indulge at Brian McKenna @ the Courtyard

summer playground, the Summer Palace, is a beautiful ensemble of lakes, gardens and palaces that serves both as a popular tourist destination as well as a recreational park.

Beijing's collage of old and new is thrilling, while the vast expanse of Tiananmen Square, the fourth largest city square in the world, is deeply symbolic in China's history, visitors can also discover the emerging and rapidly changing skyline of the 'One Country, Two Systems' modern Beijing and its gleaming testaments to the country's new wealth. ■

The Palace Museum
www.dpm.org.cn

Temple of Heaven
<http://en.tiananpark.com>

Summer Palace
www.summerpalace-china.com