

HIKING AROUND **BEIJING**



**Seema Bennett
Nicky Mason
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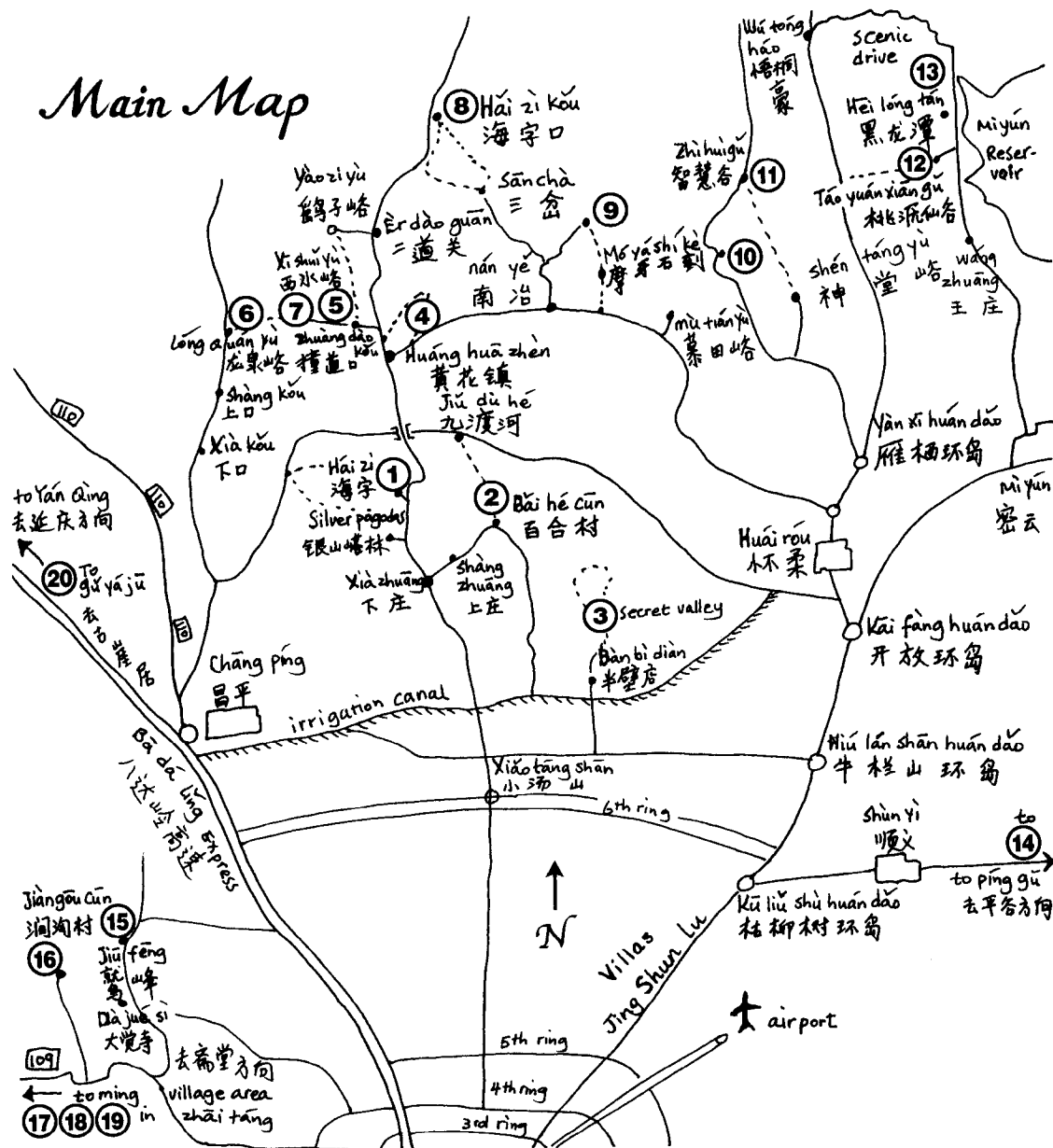
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Main Map





This book is dedicated to Laure Fuller and our children

Aisha, Edward, Ellis, Emily and Ming Ming.

May all your paths lead to happiness.

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This book would not have been written without the help of many, including Laure Fuller, Gary Pinnegar (aka Gary Lewis, hairdresser extraordinaire of BJ Hikers), Paul White, all our friends who have tried and tested the hikes and helped us on the walks, and our housekeepers Guan Ya Ping, Yu Xiao Ping, Zhao Shou Rong and He Bao Ling, who made it possible for us to have long days out. A special thank you also to our drivers, Jing Song, Zhao Bao Jun and especially to Li Chun Sheng, who have painstakingly taken us to all the destinations and brought us home safely.

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FOREWORD

It was a French expatriate, our friend Laure Fuller to be exact, who having been in Beijing barely 6 months, conceived of this strange and what appeared to me at the time, rather bizarre idea of writing a book about hiking around the mountains of Beijing. I mean, what did we know? So, I willingly volunteered to help in this project and we were lucky enough to enlist the help of Huilin Pinnegar (of BJ Hikers) to join our group. After Laure left in the December of 2001, we enlisted the help of another enthusiast, Nicky Mason and she is now an integral part of the team. Huilin is married to our wonderful friend and hairdresser, Gary Lewis (Pinnegar) who persuaded Huilin to get involved after Laure discussed her idea with him (whilst of course getting her hair cut... the things we tell our hairdressers!) Well it was a godsend and Gary has been involved too and it is a huge team effort that has allowed us to put this book together. We must not forget our wonderful drivers, who diligently drove us to all sorts of places, over dirt tracks and stony canyons, as we explored the myriad of different trails. They were always waiting patiently for us at the end of a route and always drove our weary bodies home.

It is so amazing, that an hour from most of the housing compounds and an hour and a half from the centre of Beijing another world awaits, one of rugged mountains and paths, of temples and pagodas and people speaking incomprehensible dialects, living in a completely different world to ours.

You must keep an open mind whilst traversing this book, we have tried our level best to give you names of villages and roads but "CHANGE" is the watchword for Beijing and China as a whole. As things develop and move on to another level here, village names change, as do signs and where there were shops and houses one week, they vanish in the clouds of building, cement and construction that is going on all the time.

We initially started writing this book with families in mind, so that they could "get away from it all" and enjoy a happy day or afternoon in outside activity. We have since revised our plans and now include walks possibly suited

for many different people. We have tried to classify the hikes as well as possible so you know which ones will suit you and your family.

We hope you will have as much pleasure as we do when going out and doing the hikes. The feeling of peace and solitude on the top of a mountain or deserted part of the Great Wall and the achievement of getting there can't be easily described. This has to be felt, like the clear breeze that fills your face and hair as you get to the top or through a rugged valley and view the vista in front of you.

As for me, the best thing has been the camaraderie of friends enjoying the moments; watching with awe at the different world that we found ourselves in and sensing the surprise of the people we met. They found it incredible that "women on their own" would want to "Pa Shan" or hike the mountains of Beijing and willingly submit themselves to this torture.

For my part the torture was well worth it and the words, "Allez, allez, courage!" would ever fill my head, as we would bravely go onwards, even when we were extremely lost or tired. The walks have been tried and tested by us, so hopefully you won't suffer the same problems we did, i.e. wonder where on earth we were and would we ever get down from this godforsaken mountain. Of course, we always did and the coffee or tea waiting for us at the end of the trip was always a warm welcome as we collapsed into the car.

So sit back and enjoy the hikes, or better still, go on a few and become passionate like us.

Seema Bennett

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR SAFE HIKING

When hiking in often-secluded areas it is necessary to take a few common-sense precautions such as those shown below:

- Always travel in a small group, never on your own.
- Always take a mobile phone so that if you do get lost you can contact someone. Coverage is not guaranteed in some areas.
- Take a compass; a walking stick can be useful, as can something to sit on.
- Always tell someone exactly where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Take enough provisions, especially water. At least 3 litres per person in the summer.
- Wear suitable clothing and footwear for the hike and for the season e.g. hats in summer, covering your neck if possible, as the sun can be relentlessly hot, waterproofs when wet etc. Footwear should be well worn in and slip proof for most conditions. There is often loose shale around and so even on a dry day it can be slippery underfoot. Wear long sleeved tops and long trousers where it indicates that the hike is bushy to protect arms and legs.
- Use insect repellent in the summer and autumn

months. Be aware that snakes do inhabit some areas. We have only ever seen a couple of snakes but it is best to be vigilant, although most snakes are more scared of you.

- Be aware of plants e.g. stinging nettles.
- Take secateurs to cut away branches and help maintain paths.
- Take a first aid kit.
- Take some money, including smaller notes.

When describing how to get to the hikes, all distances and timings have been given from the villa complexes on the Jing Shun Lu (Beijing Riviera and River Garden Areas). In addition to a detailed description of each hike, we have provided a sketch map where possible. (Maps are not to scale). The timings on the maps are cumulative and do not include any rest stops. There is a key, describing in which season it is best to do the hike as well as the type of hike.

The authors have taken every care in the accuracy of this guidebook. However the authors and the publisher cannot accept any responsibility for any accidents or consequences resulting from any errors in the use of this guide.

DIFFERENT SEASONS IN BEIJING

- December, January and February are very cold and Beijing becomes brown and colourless. It is, however, still a good time for hiking, especially for people who don't like the heat. At this time of year the trails are much more visible and the weather is often sunny and clear with good visibility. The countryside and the Great Wall are especially beautiful after snow. Take a daypack, water, lunch, good hiking boots, walking stick, hat, gloves, wear layers of clothes, a windbreaker, extra socks and clothing for hiking in the snow. Down jackets are not recommended. A flask of hot water or hot drink will make your hike more enjoyable. The snow can stay on the mountain trails for weeks after it has snowed. Waterproof shoes and trousers are recommended for hiking after snow.
- March, April, May are very pleasant. The cherry blossoms will be out in late March and early April and many flowers will appear in May. In March and April it is getting warmer but there may be some sandstorms. May can be very warm. Always take an extra lightweight sweater when hiking in spring.
- June and July will be too hot for some people but there are many more wild flowers in bloom. There are several shady valley hikes with water to cool off hot feet. These months are also good for hiking on

higher altitude trails. July and August can have a lot of rain and be very humid. The valleys are lush and green and from mid-August the temperature begins to cool down. Take a daypack, plenty of water, lunch, good hiking boots, walking stick, waterproof hat, sun block, and sunglasses. You should bring 3 litres of water per person. The best thing to do is to freeze half bottles of water the night before and fill up the bottles with cold water the next morning so that you have cold water to drink all day. If you freeze the whole bottle, it may not melt in time for you to drink it. Wrap your bottles in a towel or newspaper to help keep them cool. A shirt with sleeves and collar is also very effective for protecting yourself from the sun. Put a silk scarf under your hat as this protects your neck from the sun and keeps it cool. Zip-off trousers are best, you can always zip on the legs when the trail gets bushy and take them off when it is clear. Take a change of clothes for hiking in the rainy months. If you are caught in the rain on the hike, changing into dry clothes will make your journey home more pleasant.

September, October and November are excellent because of the blue skies and autumn colours. September is probably one of the most pleasant months of the year. Always take an extra lightweight sweater when hiking in autumn.

KEY TO LEVELS

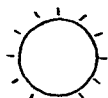
We code our walks from 1 to 5 degrees of difficulty, so that you have a clearer understanding of what you are committing yourselves to:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Level 1 | is very easy with little climbing, normally takes one hour and is suitable for families with young children (no strollers at any time). |
| Level 2 | takes around 2 hours and would be suitable for children over 8. |
| Level 3 | takes around 3 hours, is normally hilly but is still reasonably easy and is suitable for children over 10 years of age. |
| Level 4 | takes up to 4 hours and may be difficult for people who are not used to hiking. |
| Level 5 | takes up to 5 hours, is usually physically challenging, may involve steep climbing and is only suit-able for experienced hikers. |

KEY TO SYMBOLS



Suitable in spring



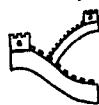
Suitable in summer



Suitable in autumn



Suitable in winter



Hike with a Great Wall view



Hike with a vista



Hike with a temple



A valley hike



Hike on the Great Wall



Hike with water