

BEIJING WALKS

LIKE A FLYING FEATHER
THROUGH THE HUTONGS

MAO XIANG



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Dedication

To my parents who have always loved me, although I have always disappointed them. This book was written mostly during a very tough period of my life, and they suffered for me later. At that time and as a comfort to them, I hoped to present them with a contract offer to this book, but I did not obtain a contract. Now, I can present this book to them.

To my grandmother, a great ordinary Chinese woman who suffered a lot during the painful and turbulent modern history of China, but lived an upright life and worked very hard to raise the family. From my grandmother, I see the traditional virtues of Chinese woman.

To all those, well-known and unknown in history and today, who loved and still love the way Beijing was, and are still making efforts to protect the flavor and valuable culture of that Beijing.

To the people who feel sad and deep disappointment for the loss or passing culture of that real Beijing but can not do anything.

Acknowledgement

When you enjoy a delicious course at a restaurant, you should know that the chef is not the only one who contributes. And that chef should know this too.

Quite a few people helped me complete this book. I would like to give my special thanks to my friend Greg Jones. He suggested I write a book on walking tours in Beijing after he joined one walking tour I organized in 2007. He also helped me connect with my publisher. Without your suggestion, Greg, I probably would not be able to think of writing an English book like this.

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Preface

How would you like to discover the world of Beijing beyond the tourists' spots? If you are coming to Beijing, you probably will go to five main tourist attractions: the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, and the Great Wall. Indeed, these great sights are amazing. But is this all that is worth visiting? Suppose you have a few more days to stay, or you come here again for a business trip, or have lived in Beijing for quite a while, to either work or study, then where would you go on a nice day if you have been to those big sites before and want to see more.

Certainly, Beijing has other interesting cultural and historical places to visit. I would like to introduce you to fifteen walking tour routes. Walking through old Beijing hutongs (small lanes) and streets, you will pass or visit a few sites that probably you can not find in a general tour guide book on Beijing. That place might be an old residence of a famous Chinese writer or artist in a quiet Chinese courtyard with exhibits about his life; an old house of a famous historical figure, like the last emperor or empress; a temple with either an impressive building or interesting history; a church with a surprising historical event; an old Embassy Row with some western architecture; the best site for watching the sunset or the best route for jogging; some imperial court agencies' offices; places related to certain famous foreigners in old Beijing, a well-known commercial street with old shops; and much more. Some sites are unknown even to most Chinese people and the stories you will read in this book are interesting, moving, educational, or impressive.

Don't worry if you only have a little knowledge of Chinese history and culture. Figures, events, and history to be introduced to you are more or less related to the knowledge you have, so you won't feel too foreign and overwhelmed, but can link them with things you know. Furthermore, your knowledge of China will be expanded and deepened through these walks. After all, this is the purpose for you to tour in Beijing, know more about this old city, the country, and the people. Moreover, you will connect with some events or people introduced elsewhere when you visit one site in this book. So, gradually you will link many things together and in a way have a full picture of modern history on Beijing and China.

This book tells you something about a story, an event, or a person, and also brings you into a certain feeling; into the history of circumstances, then of sentiments, grief, disappointments, admiration, appreciation, and historical reminiscing. They will stimulate your mind. You will be connected with that period of history, with the people that are introduced in the walks, and you might even feel what they felt.

During the walk, you will go through some old hutongs, the back streets, by following the given map, knowing the past of these hutongs and having a glimpse of ordinary Chinese people's life.

Do not be afraid of getting lost when you walk through the hutongs. You have a good map to follow for each walking route in this book, with clear signs at each hutong.

The author will also introduce you to two individual cultural and historical places to go for they cannot be included in a walk. Delicious local food is always needed on a tour, and these