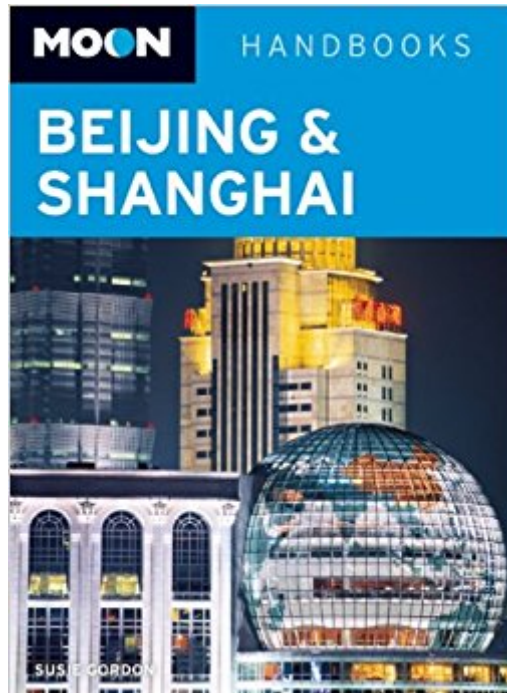




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Moon Beijing & Shanghai (Moon Handbooks)



Synopsis

Journalist Susie Gordon offers her insider's perspective on Beijing and Shanghai, from experiencing the grandeur of the Forbidden City and slurping noodles at the open-air night market in Wangfujing to shopping in People's Square and strolling through Old French Concession. Gordon also includes many unique travel strategies, including Essential Beijing, Whistle-Stop Shanghai, and City Contrasts; a 10-day itinerary for a tour of both cities. From Beijing's well-preserved old hutong alleys to Shanghai's ultra-modern Pudong district, Moon Beijing & Shanghai gives travelers the tools they need to create a more personal and memorable experience.

Book Information

Series: Moon Handbooks

Paperback: 328 pages

Publisher: Moon Travel; 2 edition (March 27, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1612380557

ISBN-13: 978-1612380551

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 5.5 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,711,582 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #93 in [Books > Travel > Asia > China > Shanghai](#) #105 in [Books > Travel > Asia > China > Beijing](#) #832 in [Books > Travel > Food, Lodging & Transportation > Hotels & Inns](#)

Customer Reviews

Susie Gordon was born in Lancashire, England, and studied English at Oxford University before moving to London to work as a web content writer for an internet agency. She became interested in China at an early age, listening her grandfather's stories about the time he spent there as a shipping merchant in the 1950s and '60s, but it wasn't until 2008 that she saw the country for herself. After just one week there, she was already hooked: she was intrigued by Shanghai's mix of the contemporary and the historic; from the neon and steel of the modern skyline to the tree-arched lanes of the Old French Concession; and she fell in love with the contrast between the austerity of Communist architecture and the romantic, painted eaves of the Forbidden City in Beijing. After her vacation in China, Susie was so enamored of Shanghai that she decided to move there permanently. She has worked as a freelance journalist for a wide

range of publications since then, including City Weekend magazine, Shanghai Business Review, That's Shanghai, and ChinaTravel.com. She has also appeared as a token Westerner in several movies and soap operas. Susie enjoys reading modern literary fiction, traveling in Asia, and learning foreign languages (her current goal is to master the notoriously difficult Shanghainese dialect). After having lived in Shanghai for three years, she is happy to be able to call it home.

Discovering Beijing & Shanghai with Susie Gordon

1. Beijing and Shanghai are vastly different. How would you describe each city? As the capital of China, Beijing is a tapestry that reflects the nation's history, culture, and politics. It's calmer and more confident than Shanghai. With its low sprawl of ring roads and straight avenues, its layout is comfortably uniform. Dotted all around the city are cultural relics and ancient sites; it's a historian's dream. Beijing has its modern side too, with a burgeoning nightlife scene and plenty of culture. Shanghai is the rebellious younger sibling, with a relentless drive for progress that typifies China's forward motion on the world stage. New restaurants and bars are constantly opening. The large expat population gives the downtown districts an international feel, and the shopping malls, designer boutiques, and coffee chains testify to the city's ever-increasing Westernization.
2. When is the best time to plan a trip? Spring and fall are the best times of year to visit Beijing and Shanghai. Summer in both cities can be stiflingly hot; in the winter, the temperature can drop below zero, and there are biting winds. Spring (from early April until mid-June) is pleasant, with sunshine and warm evenings. The Plum Rains, however, hit Shanghai in late May, which is something to bear in mind. The summer starts to cool down in September, and the weather stays relatively warm until the end of October. Public holidays like Chinese New Year (late January or early February) and Golden Week (early October) are best avoided, as crowds gather at the tourist sights.
3. What are some key Chinese phrases you recommend learning before visiting? It's good to know the basic greetings, such as Ni hao (Hello), Ni hao ma? (How are you?), Zai jian (Goodbye), and Xie xie (Thank you). If you don't understand something that is said to you, Ting bu dong is useful. Ask how much something costs with Duo shao qian? or Zenme mai?, and apologize with Bu hao yisi. To tell someone your name, say Wo jiao...; and ask to ask theirs, use Ni jiao shenme?
4. Name a few of the most interesting historical sites. Beijing is filled with history, from the sprawling Forbidden City to the idyllic Summer Palace and colorful Temple of Heaven. The White Cloud Temple is also worth a visit, as is the Old Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan) that was destroyed by French and British troops in 1860. The Great Wall is a must-see, of

course—especially its the less popular and more remote parts. Shanghai has fewer historic spots, but there are several that are worth a look. The Old City is filled with treasures, such as the popular Yu Garden and the City God Temple. Slightly less famous but equally interesting are the Chenxiangge Nunnery and the remains of the Ming Dynasty city wall. The old French Concession has hundreds of Art Deco villas and apartment blocks, and the former Jewish Quarter, north of the Bund, is replete with history.⁵ Do you have any tips for shoppers? Shopping in Chinese markets can be daunting if you're not used to bargaining. The trick is to be confident, and always offer a third of the original price. Once you've reached an agreement with the vendor, never go back on it and refuse the deal. This is very bad form, and can cause great offense. While Beijing and Shanghai have lots of modern shopping malls, there are also plenty of independent boutiques and stores that are worth seeking out as well. The fake markets, although tempting, are often crowded, and the vendors there can be aggressive.⁶ What's the best way to get around in Beijing and Shanghai? Both cities have excellent modern metro systems with cheap fares and signs in Chinese and English. The bus system is slightly more complicated, as signs and timetables tend to be written only in Chinese. Taxis in both Beijing and Shanghai are cheap compared to Western cities, and are plentiful at all times of the day and night. Most taxi drivers don't speak English, though, so keep your guidebook handy and point to the Chinese name of your destination. Beijing is famous for its bikes, and cycling is a great way of getting around if you don't mind the traffic. There are dedicated bicycle lanes in both cities, and riding around Shanghai's old French Concession is a great way to spend an afternoon.⁷ What are a few of Beijing's best art museums? Beijing's art scene is flourishing, and there are some excellent galleries and museums. The most famous art hub is the 798 complex in the northeast part of town, which contains a huge number of galleries of all sizes and specialties. Highlights include Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) and Art Scene Beijing, which has a sister gallery in Shanghai. Slightly further afield is the Caochangdi Art District, which contains Pekin Fine Arts, Courtyard, and other galleries. Closer to the center of town, Red Gate Gallery is one of the oldest foreign-run art spaces in Beijing.⁸ China is steadily growing more popular as a business destination for travelers; what are some highlights for those with limited time? It's possible to see most of Beijing's important attractions in just a couple of days if you organize your time well. Start at the Temple of Heaven, then explore Qianmen and the Legation Quarter before walking through Tiananmen Square to the Forbidden City. Next, head up through the hutongs around Houhai and check out the hip Gulou area. Finish in Sanlitun to experience the capital's nightlife. You can get the flavor of Shanghai in a short amount of time if you start at

Pudong to the Lujiazui Financial Zone to check out the skyscrapers, cross the river and walk down the Bund to the Old City, head west to People's Square, then finish up in the old French Concession.9. Where can travelers find the best food in both Beijing and Shanghai, and what dish do you consider a must-have?Shanghainese food is typically sweet, with many dishes steeped in alcohol. Popular local delicacies include the autumnal harvest of hairy crabs from Yancheng Lake, and xiao long bao soup dumplings, which are filled with pork and crab. If you're feeling brave, seek out a 'stinky tofu' stand (you'll know it by the stench), which sells a special sort of tofu that's been fermented in a brew of herbs, brine, and milk. Beijing's star dish, meanwhile, has to be roasted duck, which is served in restaurants all across the city. The Wangfujing street market is the place to go for strange and interesting street snacks like octopus on a stick.10. Where is the best place to go to get a taste for traditional Chinese life?Although most have been razed for modern developments, Beijing's hutong alleys still buzz with local life. Some, like Nanluoguxiang and Wudaoying, have been transformed into shopping and eating hubs, but most remain as residential lanes. The hutong networks around Houhai are particularly interesting. Local Shanghai life also thrives in many parts of the city, with narrow lanes running off from even the busiest of modern thoroughfares. In both cities, a trip to the park early in the morning offers a view of local life, as elderly people practice tai chi and qi gong among the ponds and trees.

I usually buy one guidebook for each destination on my trip, so I can only compare this book to guidebooks I've had for other locations. I pick the guidebook based on reviews, but for my 4-day trip to Beijing I had a hard time because most of the Beijing (and China) guidebooks were a few years old. This was the most recent I could find, even though it didn't have many reviews (hence this one). The Eyewitness book was the most popular, but my own personal style favors fewer pictures and more information than Eyewitness generally does, so I went with this one instead.Note that this review is for the Beijing part of the book only.Pros: This is a fairly good guidebook with a decent selection of things to do, and a good amount of information on each. It was good at pointing me to the highlights of each attraction, and was generally helpful for trying to decide what I wanted to do. When I actually showed up to Beijing, I had to modify my plans because of all the smog (didn't want to stay outside too long). I carried the guidebook around with me to find indoor places to visit. It is a good size (not too large like general China guidebooks) and has good maps.Cons: Although it had a decently sized blurb for each attraction, I like it when the guidebook tells me a little more history about the place (rather than just what I can see when I show up). Also, the organization was a little

strange- museums are listed under "Arts and Leisure", separate from the "Sights" (temples and palaces, mostly), though within each section it's geographic. For me, it would have been useful if all the "attractions" I might be interested in were just listed in one place by geography. I like that the Lonely Planet guidebook (which I flipped through in the bookstore) has intonation marks on the Chinese words- this makes it easier to pronounce things. I'm an American-born Chinese but mediocre at reading, especially Simplified characters, so intonation marks would help. imo though, the greatest flaw to this book is the transportation directions. Metro stops are listed for each attraction, but it doesn't tell you how to get there from the metro stop. This can make it confusing to get to places that are a little more hidden or far away. For example, we tried to go to 798 Art District. The book gave the metro stop as Sanyuanqiao, which IS the closest stop, but it's also VERY far away from 798. You would be able to see this on the map, but listing a metro stop under the description is a bit misleading and implies that it's reasonable to go there from the metro stop, which it isn't. Luckily I was staying with a local friend who insisted we take a taxi. Overall, it's not a bad guidebook, but there are ways for it to improve. I didn't notice anything incorrect and it takes care of the basics. If I went again, though, I'd probably go for Lonely Planet, since I think their next edition is set to come out this spring.

the content is excellent but the maps are not good on the kindle. printed copy would be better. Two words more.

I bought this book for my 11 day stay in Beijing-Shanghai. I used it for overall information, in addition to recommendations from a local which I met on the airplane.

MOON is my go-to guidebook, but this one really missed the mark. The Shanghai Subway map is completely missing Line 10 - which opened in April 2010. This is a line right through the city center. Missing this subway alone counts for 1 star deduction. Misplaced marker for popular Li Qun restaurant in Beijing. It's possible the restaurant had moved since publication, right? But once we arrived (after telephoning), the restaurant had clearly been in the same spot for many many years. Marker in map on page 11 of book incorrectly shows the location directly next to Urban Planning Exhibition Hall - in reality the restaurant is a 15-20 minute walk away. Minus 2 stars. Granted most of the China guide books I looked in to buying all had bad reviews, this one really stands out as a guidebook I cannot recommend.

Checked this out in a bookstore. Found it very nicely organized, lots of good entries on things to see, restaurants, side trips, etc. Decided to buy Fromer's Shanghai as it seemed a bit more complete. Also, there was no date on the Moon book, so wasn't sure it was up to date.

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