



Clothes & Accessories

Top of the shops

For a friend, for a relative, for yourself – whoever you're out to shop for, don't miss these fine establishments, just some of Beijing's best. Head online for the feature in full

↓ Mega

Give your wardrobe a retro twist

Vintage shopping has always been inconsistent in Beijing, with the emphasis on either piling stock high in an Aladdin's Cave, or curating a cutesy boutique feel – both usually seeing lofty prices and varying quality. Mega doesn't entirely buck those trends, but with many Gulou vintage outlets closing, when you simply have to add a retro flourish to your look, its selection is consistently solid and prices are reasonable enough.

→ 241 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng district (8404 5637). Open flexibly 10am-9pm daily.





← Panjiayuan Glasses Market

Increase your specs appeal

There are actually multiple markets dedicated to glasses around Panjiayuan subway station (Line 10), though the one with a giant pair plastered to its façade makes its purpose known most enthusiastically. They're all home to floor upon floor of vendors flogging eyewear, and with surely millions of frames in one small area, you're bound to find a new set to your taste.

200RMB will usually get you an eye test, decent frames and basic lenses at most outlets, though designer frames from Ray-Ban and such like will obviously set you back more – we can't vouch for their authenticity. Be sure to head up to higher floors to get away from crowds and pushy staff, to more relaxed stalls with a genuine concern for your vision. The sheer surplus of vendors and products may be overwhelming, but stick to it and you'll emerge feeling fly with a flash new pair on your nose.

→ 43 Huawei Beili, South Third Ring Road, Chaoyang district. Open 8.30am-5.30pm daily.

← Paint by Dongliang

The cream of domestic fashion design

Here at Paint, the hutong outpost of long-running CBD boutique Dongliang, the emphasis is on domestic and overseas-based Chinese designers. Catering for the younger and more daring dresser, as founder Charles Wong tells us, collections change, but you'll see anything from bright oversized parkas and vibrant graffiti patterns to slick basics lining its walls. Shoppers can also scoop up vintage accessories and imported perfumes.

84 Guozijian Jie, Dongcheng district (8404 7648). Open 11am-8pm daily.



↑ Sauce Zhan

Denim is the name of the game here

Say what you want about 798's slide into commercialism, but there are some decent shops and boutiques to be found out here. Sauce Zhan is one such vendor of quality, with its line of crisp, selvedge denim jeans alongside other no-frills menswear. Straight, bootcut and slim fits, plus some austere, elastic-free skinnies, are all here (from 239RMB), alongside a range of good quality basic t-shirts (from 80RMB), jackets and coats (from 299RMB), and accessories. The vintage workwear feel – there are even overalls (449RMB) – is of course a little indebted to Levi's, but at a snip of the cost, one can't argue. Bespoke service is offered (from 600RMB), allowing you to pick your fabric and cut for a tailored one-off.

→ Zhong Yi Jie, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang district (WeChat ID: saucezhan). Open 10am-9pm daily.

← Sanlipop

Who said Sanlitun was just for the big brands and high-end designers?

Tucked into the Taikoo Li North basement, Sanlipop looks to bring more of an individual feel to the area – and to your wardrobe, offering cutting-edge apparel, bags, jewels and home accessories for the modern Beijinger looking for that one-of-a-kind find. Started by five friends who studied fashion in London, Sanlipop beams towards the future, and curates an ever-changing line from Asia, Europe and beyond. Such one-offs come at a cost but, fortunately, most are in the three figures, rather than four.

→ Lower ground floor, Taikoo Li North, 19 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang district (8449 1121). Open 10am-10pm daily.



Art & Craft

↓ Jingren's Paperlogue

Pulp affection

If you're of the opinion that Nanluoguxiang is full of tack, then you're probably right on. But a jaunt off its hectic main drag to the adjacent Fuxiang Hutong will lead you to this charming paper store, a worthy spot for those with arty needs. A colourful spectrum of papers and card lines the wall here, with price dependent on thickness and texture (4-15RMB per A3 sheet), while the space opposite hosts a delightful selection of notebooks, postcards, craft works, books and calligraphy works. The place is clearly passionate about paper, with an adjoining workshop and gallery space dedicated to papercraft, book, zine and card design. It's also a reliable stop to pick up plain and printed wrapping papers (from 15RMB per A3 sheet) this festive season.

→ 13 Fuxiang Hutong, off Nanluoguxiang, Dongcheng Hutong (6408 7071).
Open 9am-6.30pm daily.



→ Spring Cameras

Polaroid, film and all things analogue

Despite a summer expulsion from its former hutong digs, Spring Cameras is still the city's best stop for vintage camera enthusiasts, with an enviable selection of analogue equipment and accessories at reasonable prices. Two walls are adorned with old SLRs and lenses from Canon, Panasonic, Nikon, Pentax and smaller brands, plus a glut of fun and funky Polaroids.

The gear here is in varying degrees of working order, but any problems are clearly marked and prices modified accordingly – Liu Yang, the boss, checks all of them, and can repair too. A reliable point-and-shooter will set you back around 200RMB, and film is cheap, with Kodak and Fujifilm rolls starting at 20RMB; the team also develop into both prints and digital formats (from 20RMB, colour; from 30RMB, black & white).

→ Room 206, Fuxue Shangwu Building, 17 Zhong Jianzixiang, Dongcheng district (8408 3323). Open flexibly 10am-8pm Tue-Sun.





↑ Markmeda

Everything the aspiring artist might need

Long the training ground for some of the country's finest contemporary artists, Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts continues to cultivate talent. But what is an artist without materials? Luckily, just a short walk east of the academy is this subterranean art supply dungeon, and it is staggeringly good.

Markmeda has seemingly imported all the wares of every major art brand from every corner of the planet, with a comprehensive inventory of pencils, pastels, charcoals, brushes, watercolours, a mind-boggling array of oils and acrylics and more; onto the harder stuff, there are easels, paper and canvas of all shapes and sizes, and even prefab Caesar busts. Any and every discipline is covered, with prices also remaining impressively cheap for imported goods. And if you don't yet have a discipline, then you might say it's inspiring – enough so to bring out the latent artist in anyone.

→ B1, Building 5, Huajiadi Nanli, Huajiadi Nan Jie, Chaoyang district (8472 2349). Open 9am-8.30pm daily.

EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF?

With their baffling array of products, these marvellous emporiums defy classification, but also defy logic with some bargain prices



Miniso

Fair to say this Chinese-Japanese brand has been a revelation since breaking out big-time circa 2015. Many of its products may prove too *kawaii* for some, but it's endeared itself with its budget homeware, toiletries and electronics. Particular mention must go to its fully serviceable and cheap charger heads, cables, battery packs, Apple-inspired headphones (just 15RMB), and excellent quality Bluetooth speakers under 130RMB. Life-savers.

→ Multiple locations across Beijing.



Nome

This new kid on the block is going toe-to-toe with Miniso. Supposedly recruiting a team of Nordic product designers, it's a more aesthetically conscious take on Miniso, but largely at the same price. And it's convincing: its range of decent quality, stylish enough homeware is bigger and better than its counterpart, and it also boasts a line of clothing. Do it like a Dane.

→ Multiple locations across Beijing.

Head online for our round-up of some of the best value knock-offs available at both these stores

Books & Music

→ Page One

We're here for the books, we promise

The newest branch of bookshop chain Page One is a spectacle in itself – a design fest littered with sleek staircases, brushed wood fittings, multi-floor bookshelves, glass panels and an awesome view out towards Tiananmen Square. Indeed, many people are here just to pose for social media snaps, but the book selection is worth the trip too: its selection of art and design albums and guides is, fittingly, the best in the city, while English-language fiction and other titles are similarly well stocked. Prices can be expensive at times, but there's a good chance of finding what you're after.

→ Beijing Fun, 13 Langfang Toutiao, Xicheng district (6318 3761). Open 24 hours.



↑ Polyphony

Comics never felt so luxe

Crisp white walls and minimalist design may feel more Apple Store than comic-book shop, but then Polyphony isn't your average comic-book shop. It stocks a wide range of imported American comics, with *Batman*, *Deadpool*, *Spider-Man* and more (38-150RMB), but also an eclectic selection of jazz and classical vinyls featured on the opposite wall. These records aren't for sale, but sign up for a free membership via the shop's WeChat account, and kick back with a copy of *X-Men* to Duke Ellington's greatest in one of the soundproof listening booths. Live your best life.

→ First floor, Topwin Center, 1 Sanlitun Nan Lu, Chaoyang district (WeChat ID: fudiaofudiao). Open 11am-10pm daily.



→ Indie Music

For the hardy record collector

We may live in the era of streaming, but in the quest to stock music new and old for those who prefer the real, physical deal, no inch is left uncovered here at Indie Music. The store is divided right down the middle, with one wall full to the ceiling with domestic pop, metal, post-rock, hip-hop and folk (from 80RMB for CDs and around 200RMB for vinyl), while the other caters to international acts, with all the classics and a selection of new releases on show. Ask the *laoban* for some hot recommendations.

→ 24-3 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng district (134 6677 5001). Open 12-9pm daily.

Make a house a home

→ FNJI

Swanky haute-design wooden wares

On quiet Guozijian Jie, FNJI (pronounced 'fanji') stocks high-end furniture from Chinese and Japanese designers – and it is sleek, with mostly polished ash and walnut pieces. With all that high design comes a high price tag, but there is a selection of handmade home décor and stationery available at a more accessible price point. If you're not in the market for high-end furniture, that's okay, as the expertly renovated courtyard is still worth a trip – stop in its sunny café where you can simply take in the view over a latté.

→ 41 Guozijian Jie, Dongcheng district (5367 2899). Open 10.30am-7pm daily.



↑ The Bulk House

Saving the earth, one reusable item at a time

Recent news has made pretty grim reading for the future of our environment, but Beijing brand The Bulk House is leading the way in the anti-plastic fight, promoting zero-waste and minimalist lifestyle through its WeChat account, at all kinds of community events and here at its Gulou shop – Mainland China's first fully fledged zero-waste store. The team sell a variety of carefully sourced and own-brand products to help us all reduce our output at home and beyond, including reusable grocery bags, biodegradable toothbrushes, sponges, eco-friendly soaps, metal straws and much more. Start doing your bit.

→ 24-2 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng district (WeChat ID: TheBulkHouse_China). Open 11am-9pm Tue-Sun.

↓ Vintage Watch Workshop

Time for something classy

This delightful little place in Sanlitun's pleasant C5 courtyard must go down as one of Beijing's most unique shops. The passion project of its founding horologist – who collects, repairs and sells some truly exceptional timepieces – its back wall hosts a charming display of antique mantle clocks and radios, while cases up front sport vintage wristwatches from Rolex, Citizen and Cartier, among others; pocketwatches here are a rare sight of old. No prices are labelled, but expect zeros. In any case, come and see – it's all rather beautiful.

→ Building F, 5 Sanlitun Xi Wu Jie, Chaoyang district (136 8334 6661). Open 3-7pm daily.



A piece of Beijing

→ Plastered 8

Capital-inspired prints and clothing

Plastered 8 has been in action for over a decade with its colourful graphic designs highlighting iconic imagery, the best of Chinese pop culture and all the quirks of Beijing life. The brainchild of expat entrepreneur Dominic Johnson-Hill, their three outlets (this, plus a Wudaoying Hutong spot and one in 798) peddle these designs on t-shirts, hoodies, bags and other small giftables, and have become a go-to in recent years for the festive season's most inimitable gift – they famously sold cans of 'Beijing air' in 2016, and smog globes a year later. We're excited to see what 2018's seasonal gag is.

→ 61 Nanluoguxiang, Dongcheng district (6407 8425). Open 9.30am-10pm daily. Head online for address details of other branches.



↓ Jingcheng Baixing

#JustBeijingThings

While most of the surrounding shops on the Guozijian strip are trending towards high-end boutiques, this snug little shop brings more earthly pleasures – its name itself a reference to Beijing's everyday folk. Housing all manner of traditional handicrafts, from small enamelware, propaganda-sprawled pottery and wooden toys to archery bows, birdcages and decorative gourds, this is the spot to pick up a truly Beijing-flavoured souvenir or gift.

→ 44 Guozijian Jie, Dongcheng district (181 8479 2250). Open flexibly 10am-10pm daily.



↓ Neiliansheng

A truly Beijing shoe

This 'Beijing Time Honored Brand' was founded in 1853 during the Qing Dynasty, and is one of China's oldest handmade shoe companies. Its formal boots were once worn by officials in Imperial China, and more recently the casual canvas slippers (from 300RMB) have been sported by everyone from Mao Zedong to Jackie Chan. Making the handmade shoes involves nearly 100 steps, but the intricate process makes them both durable and light; branches are across the city, but head to the brand's Dashilar outlet to find master craftsmen still making shoes by hand.

→ 34 Dashilar Jie, Xicheng district (6304 1068). Open 9am-8pm daily.





↑ Ruoshuitang

Stand under my umbrella

Souvenir shops across the city, nay, the country, peddle traditional Chinese umbrellas – the contraptions are, after all, believed to have been invented here – but Ruoshuitang's are the real, robust deal. Handmade by the store's crafters, their mechanisms are fully wooden, with durable oil paper canopies, all treated to prevent rain damage – these aren't purely decorative, and they'll be a hell of a statement piece on a rainy day. The cheapest, an 84cm canopy with a simple one-colour design comes in at 180RMB, while more sizeable offerings with complex and often one-off painted motifs will set you back a little more.

→ 144 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng district (6406 4496). Open 10am-9pm daily.



↑ Sanshizhai

A delightful family run kite-maker

Sanshizhai, or Three Stones Kites, packs three generations of kite craft into one beautiful little shop. Owner Liu Bin learned the traditional Chinese art from his grandfather over 20 years before opening this spot back in 2003. Amazing birds, butterflies, long-tailed fish and dozens of other lucky Chinese creatures hand-painted onto sturdy bamboo frames fill the tiny space, and they will custom-make one for you if you desire something that flies a little higher. Shaped as everything from swallows to dragons, these gorgeous paper kites start from 100RMB, while the top-of-the-line ones cost over 10,000RMB.

→ 25 Di'anmen Xi Dajie, Xicheng district (8404 4505). Open 10am-7pm daily.



↑ Feiyue

The nation's favourite plimsoll

We tell a lie, as Feiyue is actually a Shanghai brand, but their classic plimsolls have been worn by many a Beijing foot. Comfortable, cheap and remarkably durable, they've also got iconic branding – no shoe says 'Oh, yeah, I've been to China' quite like a pair of these. White with red and blue chevrons (59RMB) are the standard, though the slightly less clunky iteration at 109RMB might be the prime choice. Not all of their styles are great, but Feiyue's trainers are all good value, with none straying far beyond 200RMB. ■

→ 42 Nanluoguxiang, Dongcheng district. Open 10am-10pm daily.