《老外眼中的北京鼓楼》

Five reasons to live in Gulou, Beijing

Wandering through history ????????

Central Beijing was once a warren of courtyard houses and narrow interconnected alleyways, known as hutongs, which have been progressively demolished to make way for wide boulevards and ring roads. But while old gable-ended concave roofs have gradually been displaced by skyscrapers, it is precisely within these dwindling districts that the best atmosphere is retained. ??

Gulou, the most central of these hutong neighbourhoods, is named for the tower at its centre.

Drums inside the building were used to announce the time for centuries, a practice only abandoned at the end of the last imperial dynasty of China, the Qing, in 1911/12. ????????????????????????????????

Read here how one of the Prince of Wales's charities helped rebuild an old Beijing hutong.

Offbeat shopping ????????????????????????????????1911-12???????????

Gulou Dongdajie, the main road, ends at the ancient drum tower, which is well worth a visit. But the street itself is a thriving hub of independent shops, full of vintage clothes and trinkets, and unusual bars and cafés.

Houhai skating ????????

In winter, skating on this scenic lake is a brilliant way to see Gulou from a new vantage point. Houhai lies just north of the Forbidden City, the ancient palace compound that is now a museum. The only thing lacking is a warming house. ??

Lama temple

Very close to Gulou lies this serene oasis in the heart of frenetic Beijing. Constructed in the 17th century as a residence for court eunuchs, the building was later transformed into a Buddhist monastery, which miraculously survived the tumult of the Communist era and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, it is a lovely spot to wander, burn incense and contemplate eternity for an afternoon. ????

Susu restaurant ??

Renovated hutongs are the most stylish places to be seen in Beijing. Susu is a stunningly redecorated courtyard house that dates back 140 years. It has been transformed into one of the city's hottest restaurants and serves Vietnamese cuisine.

Recommendations include make-your-own spring rolls, banh mi sandwiches, the caramelised clay-pot fish and the fried sea crabs. ???

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Susu????

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SuSu????????????????(banh mi sandwiches)??????(caramelised clay-pot fish)??????

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