
PROPERTY OWNERSHIP & DIFFERENT TYPES OF LANDLORDS

Property Type and Ownership

Property types in Beijing are the same as they are anywhere else in the world. With ReFoX, we can offer you Apartments, Townhouses, semi-detached villas and fully detached houses (also known simply as “villas”) There is another housing type which is only found in Asian countries. That being a “courtyard” style home. This style of home dates back far into China's history and merges the outside and inside of a home together. Many modern courtyards have been renovated and maintained over the years, making them very comfortable to live in. Unfortunately, plumbing and wiring are largely hit and miss with these homes. It comes down to careful inspection and pre-planning if you wish to move into a courtyard or so called “Si He Yuan”. This would be a big first step for any newcomer to Beijing.

Ownership of Property

Property available for rent in China is either owned by individual landlords or developers. Especially with individual landlords, the price for an identical unit in the same compound may vary quite a lot. As the furnishing and material used for renovation can vary from very basic to high end, this strongly affects the price for each apartment. Generally speaking, properties owned by individual landlords tend to cost approximately 10-20% less than those owned by developers. Firstly, a good developer will hire a professional interior designer to plan and carry out all decoration. All apartments come in the same style and quality, and therefore there usually is a wider range of similar apartments to choose from. Secondly, the quality of the decoration and furniture purchased by the developer is usually higher than what the average individual landlord uses. Last but not least, the level of service provided to the residents differs immensely: in contrast to individual landlords, developers usually have a whole team of service staff and workers, providing 24 hours service.

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF DURING PROPERTY VISITING

Washer and Dryer

Most Chinese washing machines only connect to the cold water service. If you wish to have hot water services, a high-end machine can electrically heat water during the cycle. Clothes dryers are not common in China with many people simply hanging their clothes out to dry. If you require a clothes dryer, consult your property manager and ReFoX agent so one can be organized and installed.

Air Conditioning

Beijing's weather jumps from extreme to extreme with summers sometimes exceeding 40 degrees and winters reaching well below zero. There are several kinds of air conditioning and heating system used in Beijing. First, either only hot or only cold air is available depending on the season, i.e. in summer only cold air is available while in winter only hot air available.

The management office will only have one temperature of air flowing in the respective season. There are exceptions in high end buildings that may run multi-pipe systems. You should pay attention to and make it clear when your heating will be turned on in your building and who is paying for it. Heating may in some cases be turned on and off centrally in the whole building. In some cases there are both the hot water heating radiators and air-conditioning units in each room.

Dish Washer

Like clothes dryers, it's uncommon to see dishwashers installed in many homes in China. However, it's becoming more common to see them in newer buildings. Check with your landlord to ensure one is installed or can be installed prior to your arrival. Note that some apartments have 'UV Sterilizers' which appear similar to dish washers but do not function in the same way.

Insect Screens

Be sure to maintain and inspect any screen doors before you move in. Mosquitoes can be troublesome in the warmer months and high quality screens can ensure you and your family will be protected.

Tap Water

It's not recommended that you drink any form of tap water while in China. This is due to the age of some plumbing systems and reservoirs. Large water filter systems can be purchased and installed in the kitchen. It is common practice that water can be delivered to your home on a weekly/bi-weekly or monthly basis. It's best to organize delivery from a trusted bottled water company. Ask your neighbors and landlord if there are any regular 19 liter bottle deliveries in your area. Inspect each delivery to ensure that you are receiving sealed, clean water and not just repackaged tap water which can be potentially hazardous to health.

Bed Mattresses

In China people believe that a very firm mattress is good for health and wellbeing. Please ensure that your ReFoX consultant is made aware of the type of mattress you and your family will be comfortable to sleep on so that we may try to negotiate this for you. It may also be worth inspecting the mattress before it's installed as the term 'comfortable' is extremely subjective.

Internet Access

If you and your family are big internet users back home, chances are you'll need access to a fast connection. Be sure to let your ReFoX agent know this beforehand so we can search for homes that can be connected to high speed internet, and also make sure it's included in the offer letter and housing contract. Many homes are fitted with only one wall socket/phone line so arranging for others to be installed ahead of time is vital. However: even a fast internet connection by Chinese standard may not live up to what you are used to have in your home country.

International TV Channels

Developer owned properties usually have international TV channels including HBO, CNN, usually up to a maximum of about 15 English Channels only. Properties owned by individual landlords often don't even have that many, and may not have any English programs. Families can request an international satellite dish at the cost of 5,000RMB as installation and 2,000RMB for a yearly subscription.

Double-glazed Windows

Be sure to confirm double glazed windows in any apartment/villa facing the road or nearby construction site. This will reduce the noise pollution, but also in general help with the temperature inside your home: keeping Beijing's icy winter, respectively sizzling summer air outside.

Voltage

The standard voltage in China is 240V at 50Hz. If you are going to bring any electrical appliances make sure that the label specifies it's Ok to operate up to 220V. If the appliance must be run on 110-120V ensure you are using a step-down transformer that will convert the house current in your China home to 110V that you may then safely plug your appliance into. Additionally be aware the electronic appliances with any sort of timer in them may not work properly in China if they don't safely convert differences in frequency.

Property Facing

Beijing winters can be particularly cold. Many of our clients opt for southern facing apartments in order to take advantage of any natural sunlight during the day. It's recommended that you inspect an apartment during the day to see the amount of natural sunlight available.

Basement

Basements provide our clients with fantastic additional storage space and even can be used as an additional room. However, due to Beijing's humid conditions in the warmer months and very heavy rainfall, it's vital that they are checked for mold, mildew and leaks. Always inspect the condition of a basement area prior to moving in and signing a lease. A de-humidifier is also vital in the warmer months to ensure a buildup of moisture doesn't damage building foundations.

Beddings and Kitchen Utensils/Appliances

Most of the time bedding, kitchen utensils and appliances are not provided by the landlord. It is advised that clients either bring some from home or they can be purchased cheaply upon arrival. Apart from the possibility to stroll around the countless markets in Beijing, you may check any of the big supermarkets or even IKEA to conveniently purchase a starter kit.

THINGS TO UNDERSTAND WHILE VISITING PROPERTIES

Price Quotation

Many of our clients view a number of properties prior to arriving in Beijing. There has been some confusion as to when the exact same properties are listed at different prices with different landlords. The following points will list things to take note of when searching for a new property.

What's included?

The monthly rent proposed and quoted by agents will usually include management, heating and tax fees. Other companies may only quote the net rental price.

What factors will influence the rental?

- Landlords- Some landlords are eager to begin getting returns on their properties as fast as possible. Others may be content to let the property sit while the market fluctuates around it. If a particular landlord isn't co-operative on letting their property go it may be a good indication that the price could be negotiated much cheaper and that other negotiations down the line may be difficult.
- Level – The higher that a property is located is usually met with higher prices.
- Decoration and furnishings – The rental for a modern decorated and furnished property will be

higher than for a similar one in the same building and floor with simple, low budget furnishings.

- Timing and state of the market – Rental price will keep on changing due to supply and demand on the market. Ask your ReFoX agent for ideal timings to enter the market.

Negotiating Price

- Number of tenants – Often, you may negotiate a lower rent if the number of occupants is fewer.
- Start of lease term – Beginning a lease earlier is favorable to most landlords.
- Length of lease term – Usually a longer lease term is preferred by most landlords. However, we understand you may not want to “lock” yourself into a long term contract. Speak with your ReFoX agent in regards to rent prices rising in the second year of contract renewal.
- Refurnishing – If you wish to furnish the apartment/villa yourself this may cause the landlord to charge for the removal of existing furniture. However it may also help rent price negotiations if the home is already unfurnished prior to moving in. There may also be costs if you require removing existing furniture from the property prior to moving in.

Noise Pollution

- Brand new properties – It's common that many landlords own a number of different properties in a complex. This means that any renovations may not take place simultaneously and may be carried out over an extended period of time.
- Properties with large open empty lots nearby – Empty lots don't stay empty for long in Beijing. Be wary that this may mean that loud and dusty construction may impact your living conditions nearby.
- Properties facing the road – Many homes in China do not feature double glazed, sound proof glass. Be sure to check with your landlord and ReFoX agent about this.

Smell/Paint Quality

- Some landlords elect to use cheap, infective paint to furnish their apartments. So if you choose a newly decorated property, check with your ReFoX

consultant to check what brand of paint the landlord used to decorate this property. You may also request for an environmental assessment of the property if you have young children or sensitive allergies/breathing conditions.

TIPS ON LEASE NEGOTIATION

Before you sign any Lease Agreement, make sure you consider carefully ALL of your requirements fully and ask your property consultant to negotiate them with the landlord. All the agreed requirements must be clearly written in the lease contract to legally protect both the tenant and landlord in case of dispute. Never rely on any kind of verbal agreement as an alteration to a contract, as this cannot be proven in court in case of a dispute.

Replace Furniture & Buy New Furniture:

If you choose an unfurnished property you choose or you would like to ask the landlord to change some of the existing furniture you should consider the following points. Please keep this in mind to prevent some common problems from arising.

1. Make sure that the contract contains a list of all the items you wish to purchase. . Include product names and model numbers if possible.
2. Organize a suitable "furniture budget" which can accommodate for entire homes furnishings. Usually, for an unfurnished property, an amount equal to two to three month's rent should be sufficient to purchase all furniture and electrical appliances.
3. If you want to purchase the furniture covered by the furniture budget, never buy anything without the landlord's permission. It is best to let the landlord go with you to buy all the furniture, and let the landlord pay for it since the furniture will ultimately belong to the landlord.

4. If the landlord is too busy to accompany while buying the furniture, he might give you the money to purchase the furniture by yourself. Be sure to keep the original and copy of all receipts and try to buy all furniture within one month.
5. Ensure that all copies of the furniture list are signed by both you and the landlord once all furniture has been bought and delivered.

Lease Term

The standard length of lease is usually one year. It is possible to extend this or organize a slightly longer stay. Be sure to consider the following points before altering a lease term:

1. Ask your ReFoX agent if it's likely that the rent will increase for your property in the case of an extension. If your assignment is for two years in Beijing, we recommend that you negotiate a two year lease term with a breaking clause in order to prevent the rent from increasing in the 2nd year.
2. If your time in China will be equal or up to the length of one year, a lease with break clause protects you against the chance of early termination and deposit loss. However, some landlords do favor candidates who will commit to a longer length of stay. Speak with your ReFoX consultant to ensure that both you and your landlord will be happy with the lease length.

Damage & Compensation

During the lease term, do not make any permanent marks on the property. This includes drilling holes for photos, painting walls or replacing bathroom mirrors. It would be best to ask the landlord or management office to have their people or the management carry out these tasks. Otherwise the landlord is entitled to deduct money from your deposit as damage compensation. Please make sure your agent carefully notes down all damage that was done before your move in and takes record of this (you and the landlord should both sign on it) this may even include any paintings or photos if necessary.

Rental

If your time in China will be equal or up to the length of one year, a lease with break clause protects you against the chance of early termination and deposit loss.

However, some landlords do favor candidates who will commit to a longer length of stay. Speak with your ReFoX consultant to ensure that both you and your landlord will be happy with the lease length.

Clubhouse Membership

Some apartment complexes (Villas in particular) give residents access to a clubhouse for a membership fee. This fee isn't usually part of any initial contracts and needs to be negotiated. A standard membership usually accommodates to two adults and one child (under 14 years old) larger families will have to negotiate additional memberships with the landlord and property management. It's also worth noting that even with a membership, some facilities such as tennis court and swimming pools may also incur an additional fee. Each clubhouse is different and has their own policies, so be sure to outline these terms in the final contract.

Pest Control

Pest control is usually requested by our clients as it is not a standard practice in China. Pest control is available upon request and the service fee should be negotiated before the leasing contract is signed.

Pets

Most apartment complexes in Beijing do not permit pets. Do not bring any pet to your home without first notifying your landlord and housing management. Dogs that are kept legally in China need to be registered. Dogs over 30cm in height are not permitted within the city.

Back-up Plan:

The Beijing market is very fast paced. Once you find the home that feels like the perfect fit, you should act quick and secure it. However we recommend that upon finding a house you are happy to sign a lease on, to find two or three 'backup homes' in case things fall through with your first choice.

AVOID DURING YOUR HOME SEARCH

- I. Before deciding on any property: don't base your expectations on photos alone. If you have a trusted party in Beijing to inspect the property on your behalf it may speed up the search process, but generally speaking you should always visit the apartment by yourself. Pictures may look stunning, whereas reality might be far from that.
- II. Do not sign any lease for a property still in its construction stage. It is always best to choose an apartment ready for you to move in, or maybe with some final decorations to be finished. This way you avoid being disappointed by the results.
- III. Be aware that renting a brand new property might be met with noise pollution from surrounding apartments still being decorated.
- IV. Be mindful of who you give you contact information to as some landlords will pass it on to advertisers. ReFoX will do the best we can to ensure this doesn't happen.
- V. If this is your first time overseas we recommend that you (and your family) concentrate on expat-friendly compounds. Your ReFoX representative will be able to cater your search around these locations. This will make the transition phase easier for all involved.

OTHER TIPS

Cleaning services

Before hiring any maid or cleaning service, be sure to review any prior employment and recommendations. Some maids may cover entire neighborhoods at a time: it may be beneficial to get recommendations

from neighbors. Check the employment record and health certificate of any maid you intend to hire. Last but not least: don't expect to work perfect from day one. Usually you will have to train the maid to do the housekeeping just like you want it to be done.

Temporary Resident Permit

If you have friends or family visiting, please keep in mind that any visitor from overseas has to register with the local police station. At a hotel, the reception will take care of that for you. If you have visitors staying with you for more than 24 hours they are expected to register at the local police station within 24 hours. Check with your agent for more details.

Trouble-shooting

At ReFoX we are committed to providing services throughout your stay in Beijing. You are welcome to contact us at anytime when you run into any problem related to your home and your stay in the city. If you have any suggestion or advice for our service, please feel free to contact Marlen Weitzel, Marketing & Customer Relationship Manager at ReFoX Relocation Services at marlen.weitzel@refoxrelocation.com. Your feedback is highly appreciated.