

Relocating to Guangzhou

Welcome to one of the most populous, energetic and rapidly growing places in China. Estimated to have a population of about 16 million, Guangzhou is a thriving hub where people from all corners of the world converge for everything from business to pleasure.

Under the flashy surface of this modern metropolis, lies a rich cultural tradition and a history that spans more than 2200 years. With so much on offer, it is no wonder that families are now choosing to call this city home. Many of our families say that moving to Guangzhou has been one of the most rewarding and fascinating decisions that they have made. If you're in the midst of considering the big move, here is some handy information that will help you with your decision.

Residential Options

The majority of expats reside in Tianhe, the most developed downtown area. Several commercial buildings such as Center Plaza (P&G Headquarters), Teem Tower, Citic Plaza and China Shine are located here. This eastern district is also convenient for its proximity to bus, subway and rail links to Guangzhou and the rest of China. Grandview Mall and Teem Mall provide endless shopping options for families. Tianhe is home to several expat-friendly compounds such as Fraser Suites, Regal Court, Hilton Sunshine, Greenery, Favorview Palace, Concordia, Castle Peak and Citic Apartments, and luxury five star hotels like the Sheraton, Sofitel and Westin.

Zhujiang New Town, a newer and pricier area that is also part of Tianhe District, is home to the city's tallest buildings and several shopping malls such as GT Land and Happy Valley. It's also home to Xingsheng Lu (a stretch of culinary offerings), the International Finance Center, Canton Tower and several prominent five-star hotels such as the Ritz-Carlton, W, Sofitel and Grand Hyatt. The most popular high-rise compounds in this area are Ascott IFC Serviced Apartments, Starry Winking, Poly Champagne, Canton Mansion, Apex and Top View, amongst others. On the other side of the river, Haizhu district abounds. This district is home to Party Pier (a late-night entertainment hub) as well as Pazhou Complex, which hosts the very popular bi-annual Canton Fair.

Panyu, a booming district in the south, is also gaining momentum. Mainstream compounds like Clifford, Riverside, Star River, Agile, Huanan Garden and Cape Coral offer larger living spaces at reasonable prices.

Yuexiu District, primarily the old CBD of Huanshi Dong Lu, which sprawls around the Garden Hotel, China Hotel and around Kecun, has stylish nightlife spots, restaurants, leisure and shopping facilities. Compounds such as Magnificent Hill, Central Plaza and Glorious City Garden are popular with smaller families, while Victory Gardens offer larger-sized apartments.

Away from the hustle and bustle of downtown, you will find a quiet enclave called Ersha Island. Featuring upscale low-rises and villas, this green space is scenic and has several jogging paths along the Pearl River. Residential compounds like Oakwood Gold Arch Residences and New World Casa California are located here.

Closer to The British School of Guangzhou and just north of the city is Baiyun District, where several large-scale and picturesque compounds thrive, such as Lakefront, Nandu Royal Hillside, Yihe Golf Chateau, Golden Lake and Castle Hill. Homes in these compounds are larger and many have backyards, making it feel a touch more natural.

At The British School of Guangzhou, our school buses service most residential compounds around the city. Bus drivers are all licensed and police-verified prior to starting. The school has more than 40 bus routes, serving major residential compounds and districts. Each bus is staffed with a monitor, who keeps a record of parent contact details. For more information regarding our bus routes, please check our website [HERE](#).

Transportation and Driving

Guangzhou has an inexpensive metro system, a bus network and taxis for traveling within the city. Bus fares are RMB2, metro fares start at RMB2 and taxi fares start at RMB10. An extensive railway network runs from Guangzhou to Hong Kong and cities in the Pearl River Delta and around China, from both the East Railway Station in Tianhe district and the South Railway Station in Yuexiu district. Ferries to Hong Kong can also be taken from the Nansha Pier. Many expressways and tunnels have recently been constructed to ease congestion. Uber, a premium, private car service, has just been introduced to Guangzhou and has lessened the problem of finding transportation during peak hours.

The nearest airport, Guangzhou Baiyun International, is the third largest airport in China and is accessible via all modes of public transportation. It is rapidly expanding, with new flight routes being introduced regularly. The airport is approximately 30 minutes from The British School of Guangzhou.

While roads are large and organized, traffic can be an issue at peak times, especially in the centre of town as minor accidents and bumps can magnify traffic issues. Many expats now own cars and are confident in navigating around the city. One must obtain a Chinese driver's license before driving in China.

Pollution

As Guangzhou is a thriving manufacturing hub, air quality can be an issue, but it is still far less of a problem when compared to other cities in China like Beijing, Shanghai or other large industrial or commercial centres.

In China, air quality is categorised into five grades. Below 50 is considered healthy; 51-100 is moderate; 100-200 range is unhealthy; 200-300 range is very unhealthy; and a reading above 300 is considered hazardous.

In Guangzhou, the Air Quality Index reading is usually between 75 and 150. There are several sources of air pollution data. The most widely used index is CN AQI.

At The British School of Guangzhou, we are fortunate as our green lakefront location and 10km buffer from the most polluted areas works with us as we make every effort to ensure we provide a safe environment for our students to learn in. Current readings are accessed from <http://aqicn.org/city/guangzhou/> three times each day with action taken according to school policy as appropriate. The school's full air pollution policy and procedures can be viewed [here](#).

Medical care

The majority of expats choose to visit western-run clinics, which are staffed by foreign doctors. Rates can be very expensive so it is advisable for you to have a comprehensive insurance policy in place upon arrival. The major international clinics are United Family Guangzhou, Eur-Am, Global Doctors and CanAm.

There are some Western-style hospitals, including Clifford Hospital, a large modern facility in Panyu, and Guangzhou Elizabeth Woman's Hospital, a maternity facility in Liwan district. While the quality of care is improving, many still prefer to travel to Hong Kong, which is only two hours by train from Guangzhou, for routine medical care.

Until you adapt fully to Guangzhou life, you may wish to consider medicines bought from your home country for easy access if this is of particular concern.

Safety

Guangzhou, while one of the largest cities in the world, is generally safe when compared with other urban areas of similar size. It comes with all the usual caveats with regards to con-artists, petty crime and personal safety so we advise common sense and vigilance when visiting or as you go about your everyday business as a resident. If any issues do arise, the police should be contacted immediately on 110.

Food and Drink

Only bottled water should be consumed at all times, as tap water is generally considered unsafe for consumption. Recent food scandals have led to an increase in imported food supplies. There are now several supermarkets and stores selling everything from New Zealand milk to Argentinian beef. The most common places for imported products are Metro, Ole, Park 'n' Shop, Taste, Corners Deli, Oliver's and Union Store. For those who prefer to shop from home, www.gzgrocery.cn and www.taobao.com provide several choices, with delivery to your doorstep. For more hard-to-find products, Hong Kong is a stone's throw away (2 hours by train) and provides more options for those in need of some western home comforts.

At The British School of Guangzhou, nutritious lunches are prepared onsite for all our students and staff, with fresh ingredients bought from Metro Supermarket. Chadwell's, a division of the British company, Compass, are our dedicated catering company. They ensure that all our students' needs are catered to, including any dietary restrictions or allergies. For monthly menus, please refer to our website [HERE](#).

Public Holidays

China has seven legal holidays in a year that last from a day to a few days, including New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Qingming Festival, May Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Day and National Day.

During these holidays, civil service departments, consulate offices and large private enterprises are closed. Commercial business establishments however, actually flourish, so there's no need to worry about shopping, dining or entertainment options. If travelling during the holidays, it is advisable to plan early to avoid high costs and disappointment, as flights, buses and trains often become fully booked around the holidays.

For information regarding school and termly holidays, please refer to our website [HERE](#).

Shopping

Guangzhou is a shopper's paradise. You can find everything from high-end brand names as large, upscale malls like TaiKoo Hui, La Perle, Happy Valley and Grandview Mall to mid-range malls like TeeMall, China Plaza, Wanda Plaza, GT Land and several more that dot the city. Many of the malls offer both local and foreign brands like H&M, Uniqlo, Bershka plus a hoard of other smaller names. Wholesale and retail markets are aplenty and tend to be located in Yuexiu District. The pedestrian shopping street of Beijing Lu is popular and bargaining is permitted and at times, even expected! Those who are savvy often shop online on www.taobao.com, where just about anything can be bought with a few clicks and a local debit card. Note that foreign items particular to your country may be difficult to come by so if there is something you crave each week, you may want to stock up or further investigate availability before you arrive.

Useful numbers

It's important to be safe at all times. Here are these useful numbers to store in your phone for easy access.

- Police: 110
- Fire: 119
- Ambulance: 120
- Information: 114
- Weather forecast: 121
- Traffic accidents: 122
- Taxi hotline: 96900

Choosing between schools in Guangzhou

Choosing a good school for your child is an essential part of the relocation process.

There are currently excellent schooling options in Guangzhou for the British, International Baccalaureate and American curriculums. Before you start, it may help to come up with a list of five things that are most important to you (and your child) in your choice of a school. You will need to think about what will work best for your child's characteristics, personality, strengths, needs and interests. You might also consider how different schools' cultures and values sit with your family values and family life.

It is a good idea to speak to other parents and children in the community to get an idea of their impressions of the school, and to remember that what may suit one child may not suit another. The best way to make an informed choice is by visiting a prospective school during the course of the day to see the students and teachers interacting. During your visit, take advantage of the opportunity to meet the Heads of School so that you can ask relevant questions about curriculum, as well as creativity and innovation as it relates to teaching instruction. Getting a feel for the school in person makes it easier to tell if that school is a good fit for your child.

Contact Us

Our Admissions team is always willing to provide further advice and support if required. Please get in touch with us on admissions@bsg.org.cn and we will endeavour to get back to you within two working days.

