



**COUNTRY GUIDE**  
**EA INTERNATIONAL - CHINA**

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### THE LEGAL MARKET

China is one of the world's most important emerging economies and is home to a fast-paced and dynamic legal market. As the economy experiences robust growth and capital markets become increasingly sophisticated, the legal market continues to expand. The legal market is dominated by international players working alongside large domestic firms, with the majority of the leading UK and US firms boasting established and growing teams in Shanghai and Beijing. For Australian and New Zealand lawyers, China offers impressive opportunities, particularly in the fields of finance, capital markets and M&A and in recent years as the regulatory framework has developed firms have invested heavily in building their competition, regulatory and litigation practices in mainland China. In most cases, lawyers will not be required to re-qualify in the local jurisdiction and instead will simply work as a 'foreign registered lawyer'.

### SALARIES AND TAXES

In China, salaries at US and UK law firms vary, corresponding to those in New York and London. China has a progressive personal income tax system with rates of between 5 and 45%. However, since many firms employ people on a secondment basis through the Hong Kong or London offices of international firms, they tax equalise pay to ensure that lawyers in Shanghai or Beijing are at parity financially with their counterparts in Hong Kong. Generally speaking this is reflected in a roughly 20% uplift on HK salaries to compensate for the higher tax rates in mainland China. The basic range of salaries at leading UK law firms in Shanghai and Beijing is as follows:

Newly Qualified – HK\$85,000/month

1 PQE – HK\$90,000/month

2 PQE – HK\$95,000/month

3 PQE – HK\$100,000/month

4 PQE – HK\$105,000/month

### COST OF LIVING

Beijing and Shanghai were respectively ranked 20th and 24th in a recent Global Cost of Living Survey. The following offers a good guide to a variety of expenses in Shanghai:

- Pint of beer – 4 RMB
- Rental apartment – 6000+ RMB / month
- Coke – 1.2 – 5 RMB

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- Starbucks coffee – 22 RMB
- Set Lunch – 60 – 300 RMB
- Private health insurance – 3000 RMB/ Year
- Home Phone – .12 RMB / minute
- Unlimited broadband – 1400 RMB / year

### VISAS AND WORK PERMITS

Australians and New Zealanders working in China will require a work permit, which is typically achieved through sponsorship by your employer. Most international firms are well versed in running this process for foreign lawyers. The spouse of a successful applicant will also be granted rights to live and work in China for the duration of your visa period.

### LIFESTYLE AND CULTURE

#### Shanghai

Shanghai is a vibrant, fast paced and rapidly growing city with a rich history in Chinese and European affairs. With a population in excess of 20 million, Shanghai has risen to become the jewel in China's economic crown and major global financial powerhouse. As one of China's major port cities, Shanghai has been central in China's trading relationship with the West for centuries. Shanghai's modernity and rapid expansion is a stark illustration of China's place on the world stage. The global nature of Shanghai is represented architecturally in the modern skyline that dominates the Pudong. Shanghai also retains aesthetic links to its past, with some areas maintaining a strong Portuguese influence in architecture.

#### Beijing

China's capital city is steeped in history, yet it has embraced transformation like few other international cities. As the cultural and political heartland of China, Beijing has a wealth of attractions to entice visitor and resident alike. Its architecture is diverse, with highlights including the Forbidden City and the iconic Tiananmen Square, and the futuristic site of the 2008 Olympics including the Birds Nest and Watercube. The city is well serviced by public transport with a total of 9 train and metro lines traversing the city. Beijing enjoys a humid continental climate, with wet summers and dry, windy winters influenced greatly by the vast Siberian anticyclone. The city's air pollution problems are well documented, however the Chinese government has spent \$17 billion to try and alleviate its effects and continue to seek long term solutions for the Shandong region. Beijing has always had a strong expatriate community of embassy staff and officials, however with the growth in China's international business this community has significantly expanded. Thousands of foreign professionals in a broad array of industries now add to Beijing's eclectic mix.

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND USEFUL LINKS:

<http://www.shanghaiexpat.com>

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[www.cityweekend.com.cn/en/beijing/](http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/en/beijing/)

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>

**For more information on living and working in Shanghai or Beijing contact one of our international experts on +61 2 9266 2900 or Email at [ea@eaint.com](mailto:ea@eaint.com) or visit our website: [www.ea-int.com](http://www.ea-int.com).**