

Property

Liangmaqiao

Bank on it

Our trusty skipper **Roseann Lake** sails down the Liangma River and brings you the best from each side of the bank

Lined with weeping willows and inviting benches, the Liangma River is one of the best places in town to watch septuagenarians stripping down to their skivvies and taking a dunk in green murky waters (if that's what floats your boat). Although Sanlitun is just a short walk away, the subdued hum of electric bikes and casual joggers provides the dominant soundtrack in these parts, which are surprisingly peaceful, despite their proximity to major hotels and the traffic hub of the Third Ring Road. The silent but vigilant guards from the many surrounding embassies ensure that the banks of the canal make a safe place for a relaxing stroll at any hour, though beware of ravenous mosquitoes during the early evening.

Live

1 Soho Residences

This development is a spacious, stylish, no-brainer for those looking for a place that strives to resemble a boutique hotel in Barcelona. The model apartment we viewed was magazine perfect, with plush beige carpets, sleek black lacquered furniture, roomy closets with full-length sliding mirrors, and one of those spotless kitchens that people too busy to cook always seem to have. The location of the Soho Residences is as hard to dispute as its hip factor. It's just minutes away from Line 10, the Lufthansa Center, plus a giant intersection that swiftly links it to the embassies, the airport and the CBD. **Prices (per month)** 12,000RMB for 70sqm/1Br; 24,000RMB for 160sqm/2Br; 40,000RMB for 260sqm/3Br (with an open terrace). **Agent** Laura Zhu (134 3638 1865; laura@wanhai.com.cn).

2 Eight Sanlitun Beixiaojie

Nestled into the rather non-residential area of the embassy district, this traditional Chinese building houses a few fairly priced gems. We were pleasantly surprised by the two bedroom converted into a roomy one bedroom and equipped in a modern way. The decor was a bit too doll's house – there's just something about floral-printed bed skirts – but the location, in a leafy area across from the water, is unbeatable. **Prices (per month)** 3,500RMB for 45sqm/1Br; 4,000RMB for 60sqm/2Br; 5,000RMB for 85sqm/3Br. **Agent** Cao Song Cheng (137 1842 0976; caosongcheng2010@yahoo.cn).



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Eat, rest and play

3 Sanyuanli Market

Hit this place in the late afternoon, and you'll see many chefs from Western restaurants strolling the aisles and stocking up. While the sight of pig heads and the smell of raw meat can be stultifying, the endless varieties of nuts, spices, herbs, fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy at considerably lower prices than Western supermarkets makes it well worth the trip. The seafood selection is dappled but reliably fresh. *Shunyuan Jie, Chaoyang district (8342 8214). 朝阳区顺原街*

4 Fei Fei Tailor

While a bit pricier than the run of the mill tailors on the Sanlitun circuit, Fei Fei does most of the work on the premises, which means that your bespoke threads won't be outsourced to neighbouring sweatshops. She's particularly popular with the embassy crowd and makes a mean silk-lined suit, although the selection of fabrics here is limited, so if you want to get creative, then BYOB – bring your own *bu*. 35-1-103 Xinyuan Jie (near Capital Mansion and the Hotel Kunlun), Chaoyang district. 朝阳区新源街 35-1-103 号

5 In & Out

The sidewalk tables of this Lijiang-themed restaurant make an ideal setting to munch through a plate of *jingpo guji*, or chicken with cilantro, onions and lime. This and other specialities from eight different Yunnan minorities pepper the menu with light, fresh flavours. The costumed waiters are admittedly a little bit over the top, but the food more than makes up for the cheesiness factor. 1 Sanlitun Beixiaojie, Chaoyang district (8454 0086). 朝阳区三里屯北小街 1 号

6 Alona Pilates Studio

Take the elevator of the Westin Chaoyang to the fifth floor and enter a green tea-scented world of well-being. Here, you will have the option of taking a dip in the Westin's pricey penthouse infinity pool, or signing up for a pilates class with Alona, Beijing's source of all things tight, toned and excruciatingly painful. You will undoubtedly feel the burn, but you will also feel the difference. *Heavenly Spa, Westin Chaoyang, 1 Xinyuan Nanlu, Chaoyang district (139 1029 0260). 朝阳区新源南路 1 号*

Views from the mews

Valeria Tyapaeva



'I love this neighbourhood, mostly because of the surrounding embassies. It's very quiet, green, clean and neat. The Liangma

River is a big attraction for me, and is definitely one of the most pleasant places in town for a stroll or a jog. I often refer to the Liangmaqiao area as 'strategic', because it's very close to the Third Ring Road, Line 10, and is also connected with several buses. As a bonus, Sanlitun Village and Bar Street are just south of my house. After a night out, I can crawl home if I need to, although when I prefer quiet, I'm still a peaceful distance from the chaos. The building that I live in is a local-style one, originally built to house Chinese workers at the surrounding embassies. Now, it can be rented to anyone, but unfortunately our contract is up. We'll be scouting out our new place in the same hood.'