



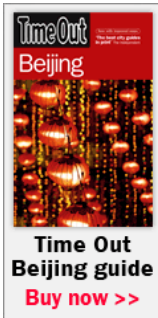
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## Ethical shopping

Thanks to an army of celebrity fair trade advocates, ethical buying has become cool, so take a tip from Chris Martin et al and think before you buy. Time Out tells you where in Beijing you can shop with a clear conscience

### Clothes and accessories

The production of clothing in developing countries for sale around the world is probably one of the most contentious aspects of global trading due to the poor working conditions millions of people have to suffer as a result – from not being paid to collapsing from exhaustion or being beaten. Unsurprisingly, in a country like China it's especially important to support local workers and their rights. According to a [Labour Behind the Label](#) report published this year, 15 million people are employed in the Chinese textile industry, mainly young women, the majority of whom are also migrant workers. Oxfam calculates that four out of five garment sector workers are women under 25, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and that the average wage for a sewing machine operator is 600RMB a month.

Ethical trade can refer to any socially or environmentally responsible trade that takes into account the working conditions of those producing the goods and the impact on the environment of producing those goods. From a consumer point of view, that can mean acting in two ways: buying products from companies or stores who care about the ethics of what they produce; and boycotting the ones who don't. Dr Eva Sternfield, foreign advisor for an environmental NGO in Beijing, puts it in perspective: 'When you buy a sweater from outlets such as the one at The Orchard selling clothes made by poor Shaanxi women, the money is going directly to them and not to a huge company because it is directly marketed.'

It's also a good idea to seek more local and sustainable alternatives. One of the most exciting developments in recent years has been the development of bamboo clothing. Beijing-based designer Sharon Hii has been working with bamboo fibre to create everything from work wear to polo shirts and shorts. 'Bamboo creates an amazing material,' says Hii. 'The fibre is strong yet flexible so the clothes are soft, durable and stretchable and it's naturally anti-bacterial and breathable (two per cent less hot than cotton) so it's also perfect for sports clothes or those with sensitive skin.'

'The reason bamboo is so good for the environment,' adds Hii, 'is because it doesn't need chemicals or pesticides to grow and doesn't have to be bleached because the fibre is naturally white.'

Not only that, but it takes just 60 days to grow bamboo (as opposed to 60 years for a tree) and by nature sucks up toxins from the ground, helping to regenerate the soil damaged by environmental hazards and mudslides.

Still a relatively new phenomenon, Hii says people are only just beginning to realise the benefits of using bamboo and adds that developing the product is great for China's poorer communities too. 'A bamboo manufacturing company and school in Shandong province just opened, employing local people. The good thing about bamboo manufacturing is that it's simple, safe and relatively cheap to do so I'm trying to promote bamboo products so there's a market for it and these people can make money for themselves.'

Similarly worthy of some attention is Shokay, a China based company with outlets worldwide that produces luxury yak down scarves, throws and yarn. Beautifully soft and warm, the fibres are hand-combed from the yaks in Tibet and money made from the product goes straight to the herders because the raw yak fibre is directly sourced. In the long run, by introducing yak down to the world as a luxury fibre, Shokay says they 'hope to increase the value of the raw fibre so that herders in yak-dependant regions such as Tibet, Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan and Mongolia can generate more income for the same amount of fibre sold.'

It's also worth checking out the shop at The Orchard for cute beaded bags (10-50RMB) where all profits go to the children of the Li Ming Family orphanage in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. And don't forget Anya Hindmarch's now iconic I'm Not a Plastic Bag bag (120RMB). Having sold out within minutes in the UK and US, the idea is to put all of your shopping inside instead of relying on plastic bags. It's become something of a fashion statement though, so if you manage to get your hands on one, make sure you actually use it instead of a plastic bag to avoid looking like a rather ridiculous hypocrite.

### Food

When it comes to buying ethically sound food in Beijing, it's harder to know what's above board and what's not as even products carrying the fair trade or organic labels don't always meet the right criteria. Try buying Yage Yak's milk from Tibetan herders (available at Chaoyang [Jenny Lou's](#)) instead of Nestlé niunai, for example. Or tea from the Fair Trade Tea Room in Renmin University that helps individual farmers all over China find a buyer and negotiate their own price for the tea they grow.

Buying organic produce is another way to earn brownie points and is thankfully one trend that's really beginning to catch on in the capital, though as Klaus Griesbach from the Beijing Organic Food Co. Ltd points out, 'The Chinese think the concept of organic has come from Europe but when the first Europeans came to China they discovered that organic agriculture here was very advanced, it was a kind of art and they took the ideas back with them. The Chinese farmers should realise that their country was the first to perfect organic and be proud. China is actually



going back to how it used to do things, not moving forward.'

As well as vegetables, beans and grain available from the [Beijing Organic Food Co.](#), organic meat such as pork will also be available and all products are certified according to Chinese law. Find them at most major supermarkets including Carrefour, Vanguard and WalMart or visit their website to find out about their home delivery service.

Elsewhere, the brainchild of a wealthy Taiwanese businessman, Lohao City is becoming a firm favourite, with several more stores set to open in Beijing before the end of the year. At present only around 35-40 per cent of the produce sold is organic, but that will increase over time. Lohao's organic food is grown on a farm 100 kilometres north east of Beijing out by a lush stretch of the Great Wall, so it's produced locally too.

### Beauty Products

These days it's pretty hard to find a cosmetics company that still tests on animals, but a number of brands still use harmful, potentially carcinogenic ingredients in their products, and while many of them have become much more environmentally aware in recent years, few of them have a perfect record.

Here in Beijing, choice is no more limited than elsewhere, with just a handful of companies producing anything natural or totally ethically sound. The most famous of these is The Body Shop, pioneers of fair trade for 20 years now, none of their products are tested on animals, all do their best to protect the planet, defend human rights and support community trade. Not yet officially available in Beijing, the company's yummy body butters, moisturisers, scrubs and hair products can be found in stores inside the [3.3 Mall](#) and Sunshine 100 supermarket (or alternatively after mugging a friend who's just been to Hong Kong).

The Orchard sells totally natural homemade soaps for around 50RMB each that are gentle enough to be used on the face and even in your hair. Created from herbs grown in their garden, they are 100 per cent organic and vegetarian.

Little known Chinese company Occitown (sound familiar to L'Occitane anyone?) are also a good option for those looking for vegetarian products. Most of their bubble baths are chemical free and claim to use flowers and grasses imported from France. The packaging is fully recyclable, with the ability to be reused 10 to 20 times.

Perhaps the most fun of all the ethically sound bath and beauty products is [Lush](#). Leonardo DiCaprio is said to be a fan of their food-like facemasks and body scrubs, massage bars and multi-purpose shower gels. Seeing as they smell delicious and have names like Two Timing Tart and Sonic Death Monkey, it's easy to see why. Visit their website to get your hands on some.

### Furniture

At Jia Na Ma Ni, the carpets aren't cheap, but they're extremely high quality, woven from cashmere, silk and yak hair. What's more, a percentage of the profit goes to helping the Buddhist Qu Lang Duo primary school in Qinghai Province where student numbers have soared in recent months but where the children are from poor families that struggle to afford basic supplies such as books and clothes.

Where possible, look out for bamboo furniture in the markets and superstores like AIKA too. This wonder material is more sustainable than regular wood and no longer seen as the 'poor man's timber.' For more information or to visit a bamboo showroom, the [International Network for Bamboo and Ratan \(INBAR\)](#) are based in Wangjing. Email [info@inbar.int](mailto:info@inbar.int) for more information.

### For more information and practical advice

[www.maketradeair.com](http://www.maketradeair.com)

[www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

[www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org)

### Three of the best ethical retailers

#### Katharine Hamnett

T-shirts from the high priestess of protest slogans include 'Clean up or die' and 'Worldwide nuclear ban now'.. Ethically made in India from organic cotton, she also uses environmentally friendly printing inks. There's a plain version in a selection of colours as well for the days you feel less militant. ([www.katharinehamnett.com](http://www.katharinehamnett.com))

#### Terra Plana

When you make the effort to source ethically produced clothes you need the shoes to match. Terra Plana produces fashionable shoes from vegetable-tanned and chrome-free leathers – these are kinder to the environment and to the factory workers. Other eco plus-points are that they are made (at least in part) from recycled materials, are locally sourced and are lightweight to help reduce the energy required for transportation. ([www.terraplana.com](http://www.terraplana.com))

#### Zara

Thanks to it's parent company Inditex's efforts in recent years to cooperate with campaigners, Zara's track record when it comes to workers' rights is better than most other international clothing brands. A member of the ETI (Ethical Trading Initiative), Inditex has been proactive in attempting to help resolve a number of cases of trade union oppression and when a factory supplying Inditex in Bangladesh collapsed in 2005, killing 64 workers, it was one of the first to contribute to the relief effort.

### And three of the worst

#### WalMart

According to the New York Times, workers making clothing for WalMart in Shenzhen filed a class action lawsuit against WalMart in September 2005 claiming that they were not paid the legal minimum wage, not permitted to take holidays off and were forced to work overtime. What's more, they claimed, WalMart withheld the first three months of all workers' pay, at the same time refusing to pay the money if they quit. In 2005, China Labour Watch reported that workers making toys for WalMart in Guangdong Province had to meet a quota of painting 8,900 toy pieces in an

eight hour shift in order to earn the stated wage of \$3.45 a day. If they failed to meet that quota, the factory would only pay them \$1.23 for their day's work.

#### Fila

While other sportswear companies (such as Nike, Reebok and Puma) have taken steps to improve their commitment to workers' rights, most importantly revealing the addresses of their supplier factories in Asia, Fila continues to refuse to do so. From the factories we do know about, horror stories abound. In their report 'Offside! Labour Rights and Sports Production in Asia,' Oxfam notes that staff at long term sports shoe supplier to Fila, the PT Tae Hwa factory in Indonesia, reported 'serious labour abuses, including denial of trade union rights, high levels of sexual harassment and intrusive and inappropriate procedures for claiming menstrual leave' (a legal entitlement under Indonesian law).

#### 24-hour suit makers

It may not occur to you when you recommend visiting friends to use a tailor that offers a 24-hour service since it just seems so darned handy, but for anyone to make a suit in that amount of time involves putting in some seriously long hours and the low, low prices we negotiate can only mean one thing for the person making slaving away to make the garment. So where possible, allow at least a week for your tailor to knock up your desired outfit in the in future.

#### Stockists

**Anya Hindmarch** *M2025 Shin Kong Place, 87 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang district (tel 6533 1368).* 朝阳区建国路87号

**Bamboo clothes** For more information contact Nadine Steurer at [n.steurer\\_ibric@hotmail.com](mailto:n.steurer_ibric@hotmail.com).

**Fair Trade Tea Room** *901, Mingde Building Main Hall, Renmin University, 59 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian district (tel 8250 9106 [www.cooperation.ngo.cn/islmd/index.htm](http://www.cooperation.ngo.cn/islmd/index.htm).)* 海淀区中关村大街59号

**Jenny Lou's** *Chaoyang Park West Gate, Chaoyang Park, Chaoyang district (tel 6501-6249).* 朝阳区朝阳公园西门

**Lohao City** *B4, 29 Lucky Street Haoyunjie ([www.lohaocity.com](http://www.lohaocity.com)); 52 Jingshun Lu, Sunhe Qiao, Chaoyang district (tel 8459 0134)* 朝阳区孙河桥京顺路52号

**Body Shop** *British fair trade bath and beauty products available from unofficial outlets at the entrance to Sunshine 100's Bonjour supermarket, C306, 2 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang district; and Shop X, 3.3 Fashion Mall, 33 Sanlitun Beijie, Chaoyang district.* 朝阳区三里屯北街3.3商城; 朝阳区光华路2号阳光100超市

**Occitown** *B1 Pacific Century Place, A2 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang district; B2 The Gate City Mall, Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian district; 3F Lufthansa Jinyuan Shopping Mall, 1 Yuanda Lu, Haidian district. (for all tel 5166 4996).* 朝阳区工体北路甲2号; 海淀区中关村大街新中关村购物广场; 海淀区远大路1号金源燕莎三层

**The Orchard** *Hegezhuang Town, Beigao exit from Airport Expressway, Cuigezhuang district, Shunyi (6433 6270).* 顺义区崔各庄机场路

**Shokay** go to [www.shokay.com](http://www.shokay.com), where to buy for a list of outlets or contact [info@shokay.com](mailto:info@shokay.com) for more information.

**Jia Na Ma Ni** *6 Fangyuan Xi Lu, Chaoyang district (tel 6437 8812).* 朝阳区方园西路6号

Sarah Keenlyside

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