

Ribozyme conference – useful information for foreign participants



Guangzhou International Bioisland 广州国际生物岛. The conference will be held in the Mulian hotel on Guangzhou International Bioisland. This is very tranquil, comprising mostly high-tech companies and labs. It is totally safe, any time of day. Bioisland is a tear-shaped island surrounded by the Pearl River. Road vehicles reach the island by tunnels. You can take the Guangzhou metro from the Guanzhou (官洲) station in the center of the island (see island map) that connects to the whole city.



The metro station is a 10-minute walk from the Mulian (exit from the back west door of the Mulian). There is also a driverless bus that runs a circular route that connects the Mulian hotel to the metro station.



But make sure you take the correct one (light blue, see picture) because there are now several robot buses, and they don't all stay on the island. In fact there are many robot vehicles on the roads of Bioisland. And even making deliveries inside the Mulian !

Bioisland has running and cycling tracks around the perimeter, so bring running shoes if you want to use it. You can rent shared bikes (e.g. Meituan 美团 the yellow ones) but you need the right app on your phone (complicated !).



The Mulian hotel. 木蓮莊酒店 星島环南路 1106 号 This is a large, well-appointed, 15-floor hotel with both personal accommodation and the conference meeting room.



You enter (from the main, east door) in the large hotel lobby where you check in on the right, and then take elevators to the rooms. There is also a connection to a small supermarket that could be useful for snacks, toiletries and other useful items. The hotel has internet access.

Both accommodation and scientific sessions will be held within the hotel. The meeting room (#1) is on the second floor of the hotel, reached by elevator or the large staircase.

Reaching Guangzhou. Guangzhou is well connected by air, rail and even by river. Baiyun airport (广州白云机场) is international, and has many daily flights to most Chinese cities. There are a number of railway stations. Most of the fast trains (gao tie 高铁) go into the south station (广州南站), that is about 45 minutes from Bioisland by subway or taxi. Another possibility is to travel directly to Hong Kong Chep Lap Kok international airport by boat down the Pearl River. It takes 2.5 hours, but is very relaxing and avoids immigration into Hong Kong. We (organizers or students) will pick you up from Guangzhou airport or rail stations if you give us your itinerary in advance.



Eating on Bioisland. Breakfast is provided on the second floor of the Mulian, and we'll organize meals during the conference. There are three pretty good Chinese restaurants within walking distance of the Mulian (one is within the hotel itself) as well as smaller places to eat close by.

Climate. It is almost never cold in Guangzhou, and is often very hot. But rain can be torrential, so be prepared. This may be another bonus for having the whole conference under the same roof ! However, if you plan to go north (e.g. Beijing), in November it could be -10C, so you'll need warm clothes.

Money. The currency is RMB (\$1 ~ 7.5 RMB). But China is virtually cash-less now. Most people pay using their phones. This was a problem for foreigners, but I believe Alipay can now be set up with foreign credit cards. I suggest you look into that before coming.

Electrical connection. Plug sockets are somewhat variable, but most are similar to US plugs, with flat pins. That will certainly work in the Mulian.



Communication and VPN. Many internet services you will want to use are blocked in China. e.g. Google, WhatsApp. So a good VPN is essential. University VPNs tend to work better than commercial ones in China. Look into that and install before coming. I would also recommend getting wei xin (微信 known as We Chat in the west) installed on your phone for communication. This kind of communication could be vital when we are trying to locate you within a massive railway station for example. Please give us your cell phone number before arriving. For non-Chinese speakers having a translation app on your phone will be good.

Visas. Some of you will be able to enter China visa free. This applies to EU citizens for example I believe. It **does not apply** to **US or UK** citizens. But check this for yourself, don't rely on us ! And apply in good time if you do need a visa. The process will probably take several weeks.

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