

China Travel Guide



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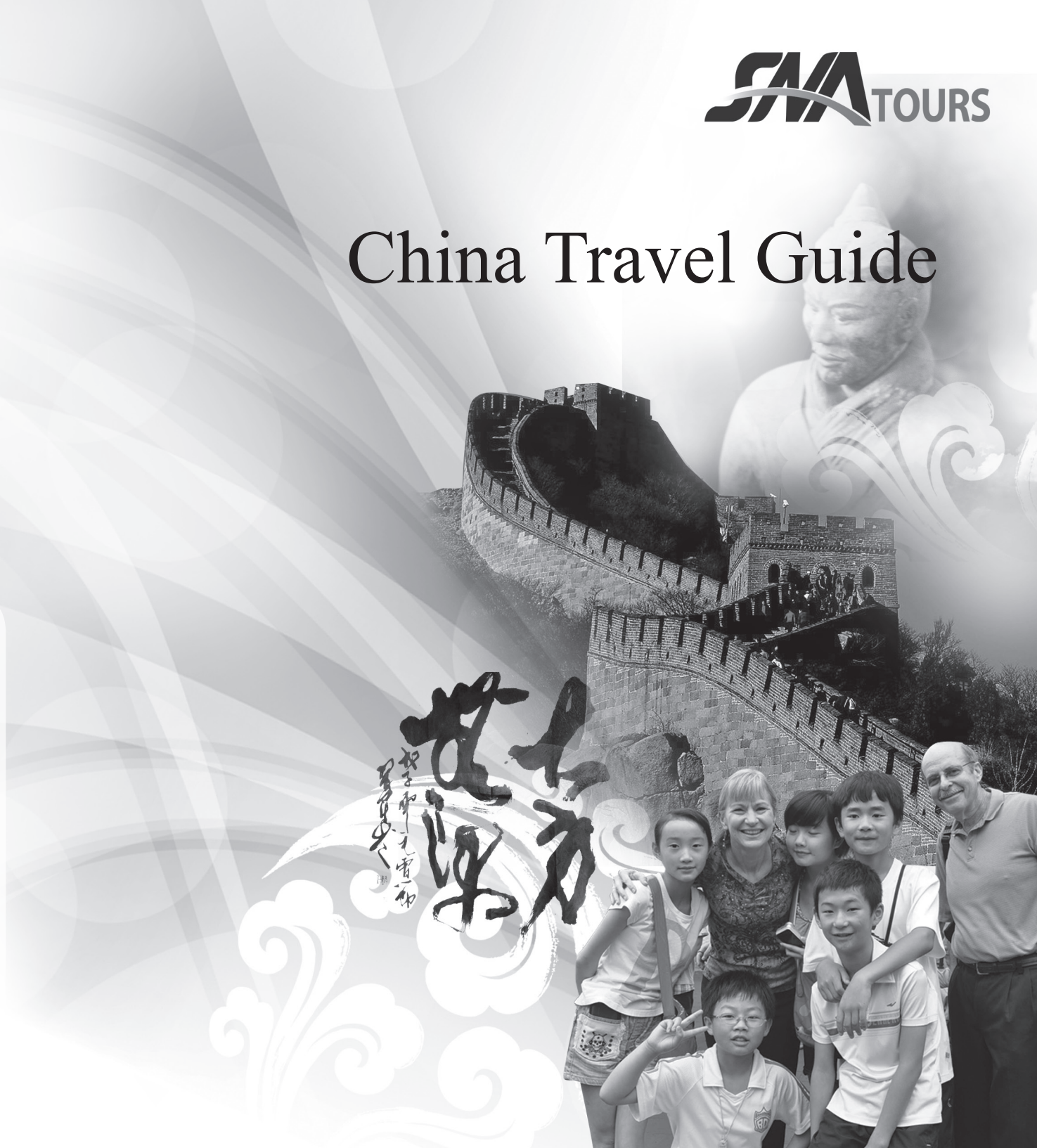


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China In Brief

When viewing the world map, you will find that China is a vast country situated in the eastern part of Eurasia along the western coast of the Pacific Ocean. Covering a land area of 3,706,581 square miles (9,600,000 square kilometres), China is the third largest country in the world, after Russia and Canada. China stretches 3,231 miles long from east to west and 3,417.5 miles long from north to south. With the entire territory shaped like a rooster, China's northernmost end reaches Mohe in Heilongjiang Province; the southernmost is at Zengmu Ansha in Nansha Islands, the easternmost at the conjunction of Heilongjiang River and the Wusuli River, and the westernmost at the Pamirs. China's continental coastline extends for about 18,000 kilometres, and its extensive sea surface is studded with more than 5,000 islands, of which Taiwan and Hainan are the largest.

Land Formations & Rivers

China's land drops off in escarpments eastward to the ocean, letting in humid air currents and leading many rivers eastward. Among the 220,000 kilometres of rivers the Changjiang (Yangtze), Huanghe (Yellow River) and Zhujiang (Pearl River) are the most famous. China has a beautiful landscape, with numerous mountains ranges, highlands, plains, basins, and hills. The highlands and hill regions account for 65 percent of the country's total land mass, and there are more than 2,000 lakes. The highest mountain peak is Qomolangma (Everest), the highest in the world, 8,848 meters above sea level; the lowest point is the Turpan Basin, 154 meters below sea level.

Weather and Climate in China

China has a continental climate with latitudes of nearly 50 degrees. Much of the landmass is situated in the temperate zone, with the tropical and subtropical zones to the south and the frigid zones in the north, so temperatures differ strikingly across the country. The northern part of Heilongjiang Province has long winters but no summers, while the Hainan Island contrarily has long summers but no winters. The Huaihe River valley is marked by its distinctive seasonal changes, but it is spring all year round in the south of the Yunnan - Guizhou Plateau. In the northwest hinterland, the temperature fluctuates dramatically. China's high tundra zone is situated in the Qinghai-Tibet, where the temperature remains low for all four seasons, and it plummets in the winter. Some desert areas are dry all year round. The rainy season is during the summer months of July and August with the ideal climate conditions for travel emerging in late September and lasting until the first half of November.

Tourism in China

The travel and tourism industry in China is very competitive. There are many reputable and ethical agencies, and then there are the others. It is worth remembering that if a tour operator is offering a trip that seems amazingly cheap, then the difference will be compensated in some other way. Sometimes guides and drivers will pay the agency for the right to guide the visitor, ("buying" travelers), and they will then find ways to recover this monetary investment from the visitors. Sometimes the agency will use non-accredited suppliers, for example employing riverboat services instead of those that meet the government standard.

Population in China

China is the most heavily populated country in the world with over 1.3 billion inhabitants (as of 2007), contributing to nearly 22 percent of the total world population. Stringent population controls have been in place for several decades, and the government aims to limit the mainland population to 1.37 billion by 2010. The most populous part of China is found in the eastern coastal areas. Almost 94 percent of Chinese people live in the southeastern part of China, which covers 43 percent of China's land area; while the other six percent people live in the northwestern areas that cover 57 percent of China's territory. The population of the capital Beijing, for example, is approaching 15 million, and the cities can be crowded and noisy in parts, as can the buses, trains and tourist sites.

Ethnic Groups in China

China is a multiracial country with 56 ethnic groups, including Achang, Bai, Bonan, Blang, Bouyei, Korean, Daur, Dai, De'ang, Dongxiang, Derung, Oroqen, Russian, Ewenki, Gaoshan, Gelao, Hani, Kazak, Hezhen, Hui,

Jino, Gin, ingpo, Kirgiz, Lahu, Li, Lisu, Lhoba, Manchu, Maonan, Mongolian, Monba, Miao, Mulam, Naxi, Nu, Primi, Qiang, Salar, She, Sui, Tajik, Tatar, Tu, Tujia, Va, Uygur, Uzbek, Xibe, Yi, Yuigur, Yao, Tibetan, and Zhuang. These 55 ethnic minorities mainly live in Chongqing, Gansu, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hainan, Heilongjiang, Hubei, Hunan, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Liaoning, Ningxia, Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, Xinjiang and Yunnan and account for only 8 percent of the overall population.

Administrative Units

Founded in 1949 by the Communist Party of China, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a unified multiethnic country. China is divided into 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities under the direct jurisdiction of the Central Government, and 2 special administrative regions. The 23 provinces are Hebei, Shaanxi, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Guangdong, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Hainan; The five autonomous regions are Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, and Tibet; The four directly-governed municipalities are Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing; Hong Kong and Macau are the two special administrative regions.

China Growth and Development

Thanks to the Reform and Opening-Up Policy, China has been able to strengthen its economy and advance its science and technology. Currently, China's economy has been growing rapidly, with the GDP dramatically increasing yearly. In 2005 and 2008 the GDP growth rate of the first half year of 2008 has reached 10.3. China successfully launched the Shenzhou-6 and Shenzhou-7 manned spacecraft and the unmanned spacecraft, Shenzhou-8 will be launched in 2011. In August, 2008, the XXIX Olympics was successfully held in China's capital Beijing. Most Chinese people are now living a well-to-do life and enjoy their happiness in this stable and harmonious society.

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Time Difference

Time Zone of China

Geographically, China covers five time zones (Zhongyuan Time Zone, Longshu Time Zone, Tibet Time Zone, Kunlun Time Zone and Changbai Time Zone). However, the standard times used in Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan Province are the same, for they are all in the same time zone (UTC+8), which is 8 hours ahead of the Universal Time Coordinate.

Beijing Time (GMT+8)

For the sake of unity, the whole China adopts Beijing Time as its standard time, which is also in the time zone (GMT+8). Beijing Time is worked out and released from the National Time Service Centre, Pucheng County, Shaanxi Province, which is almost geographically located at the exact centre of China. Unlike western countries, China does not follow the daylight savings time. For the current local times, please refer to the World Clock.

Time Difference between China and the World

The time in China is 13 hours ahead of New York, 12 hours ahead of Toronto, and 2 hours behind Mel

City	Time	City	Time	City	Time
Baghdad	06:00	Helsinki	06:00	Pyongyang	13:00
Bangkok	11:00	Ho Chi Minh City	11:00	Rangoon	10:00
Berlin	05:30	Honolulu	18:00	Rio de Janeiro	01:00
Berne	05:00	Irkutsk	12:00	Rome	05:30
Bombay	09:30	Jakarta	11:30	Rwanda	05:00
Brussels	04:00	Karachi	09:00	San Francisco	20:00
Bucharest	06:00	Khartoum	06:00	Santiago	24:00
Budapest	05:00	Kuala Lumpur	11:30	Seoul	13:00
Buenos Aires	01:00	Leningrad	07:00	Singapore	11:30
Cairo	06:00	Lisbon	04:00	Sofia	06:00
Calcutta	09:00	London	04:00	Stockholm	05:00
Cape Town	06:00	Manila	12:00	Surabaya	11:30
Casablanca	04:00	Melbourne	14:00	Sydney	14:00
Colombo	09:30	Mexico City	21:00	Teheran	06:00
Conakry	04:00	Montreal	23:00	Tirana	05:00
Copenhagen	05:00	Moscow	07:00	Tokyo	13:00
Damascus	06:00	New Delhi	09:30	Tunisia	05:00
Geneva	05:00	New York	23:00	Vancouver	20:00
Guatemala City	22:00	Osaka	13:00	Vienna	05:00
Haiphong	11:00	Panama City	23:00	Warsaw	05:00
Hanoi	11:00	Paris	04:00	Washington	23:00
Havana	23:00	Prague	05:00	Wellington	16:00

Jet Lag Precautions

Due to the time difference between China and North American, jet lag will naturally occur when your body's inner clock falls out of sync with daily cycles of light, rest and meals as you cross the globe to reach China. Common symptoms of jet lag include fatigue, irritability and vague disorientation. It is impossible to prevent jet lag from completely taking its toll on you, but you can minimize its effects. The following are some suggestions on how to do so:

- Get several good nights of sleep before your departure.
- Set your watch to your destination time when you board the plane, and adjust your sleep and meals accordingly.
- Try to sleep on the plane.
- Walk around the plane occasionally and do isometric exercises during the flight.
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of liquids while flying.
- Avoid alcoholic and caffeinated drinks during and after the flight.
- Upon arrival, immerse yourself into your new schedule, avoid naps, and try to stay awake until your normal sleeping time at home.

History of China

China is an ancient country with a profound history. Originating in the eastern area of the Yellow River Region, China's civilization is over 5,000 years old and was considered one of four ancient civilizations of the world, along with the civilizations of the ancient Babylon, ancient Egypt and ancient India. The first dynasty of Chinese history started from the Xia Dynasty (2070BC-1600BC) and the last one was the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), while the most glorious periods were the Qin (221BC-206BC), Han (206BC-220), Tang (618-907) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties. Through thousands of years of feudal ruling, Chinese people have created brilliant science and art culture, like the Four Great Inventions, poetry, paintings and Chinese calligraphy. In addition, a great amount of cultural relics such as the Great Wall and the Terra Cotta Warriors left behind by their Chinese ancestors have become national treasures and are considered as wonders of the world.

Ancient Times (from Antiquity to A.D. 1840) China, has a recorded history of nearly 4,000 years.

Anthropologists have uncovered the remains of China's earliest discovered hominid, "Yuanmou Man," who lived approximately 1.7 million years ago. "Peking Man," who lived in the southwest of modern Beijing 400,000 to 500,000 years ago, had the basic characteristics of Homo sapiens. Man in China has passed from a primitive society to a slave society during the 21st century B.C., with the founding of China's first dynasty, the Xia dynasty. The subsequent dynasties, the Shang (16th-11th century B.C.) and the Western Zhou (11th century-770 B.C.) saw further developments of their slave-driven society. This era was followed by the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770-221 B.C.), marking the transition from a slave society to a feudal one. In 221 B.C., Ying Zheng, a man of great talent and bold vision, ended the rivalry among the independent principalities in the Warring States Period and established the first centralized, unified and multi-ethnic state in Chinese history under the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.). He crowned himself Shi Huang Di (First Emperor), historically known as Qin Shi Huang, or First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. During his reign, Qin Shi Huang standardized the script, currency, and weights and measurement systems, established the system of prefectures and counties, and constructed many monumental structures including the world-renowned Great Wall, a large palace, mausoleums and temporary regal lodges respectively in Xianyang, Lishan and other places. At the end of the Qin Dynasty, Liu Bang, a peasant leader, overthrew the Qin regime in cooperation with Xiang Yu, an aristocratic general. A few years later, Liu Bang defeated Xiang Yu and established the strong Han Dynasty in 206 B.C.

During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), agriculture, handicrafts and commerce were well developed. During the reign of Emperor Wudi (Liu Che, 140-87 B.C.), the Han regime reached its peak of greatest prosperity. The emperor conquered the Xiongnu nomads, and sent Zhang Qian as an envoy to the Western Regions (Central Asia), and during this process he pioneered the legendary route known as the "Silk Road" from the Han capital Chang'an through Xinjiang to Europe. In 33 B.C., Wang Zhaojun, a

palace maiden, married Huhanye, who was the chieftain of the Xiongnu, leaving a moving story about marriage ties between the Han and the Xiongnu as a profound Chinese legacy. Soon the multi-ethnic country became more consolidated. The Han regime lasted for a total of 426 years. The Three Kingdoms Period (220-265) of Wei, Shu and Wu then followed it.

The Jin (265-420), the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589), and the Sui Dynasty (581-618) followed the Three Kingdoms Period. In 618, Li Yuan founded the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Later, Li Shimin (r. 626-649), son of Li Yuan, ascended the throne as Emperor Taizong, who was one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history. After the Tang Dynasty, there came the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960). In 960, General Zhao Kuangyin of the Later Zhou Dynasty rose in mutiny, and founded the Song Dynasty (960-1279). In 1206, Genghis Khan unified all the tribes in Mongolia and founded the Mongol Khanate. In 1271, his grandson, Kublai Khan, conquered the Central Plain, founded the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and adopted Dadu (modern day Beijing) as the capital. During the Song and Yuan dynasties, the handicraft and domestic and foreign trade industries grew exponentially resulting in a wave of merchants and travelers coming to China from abroad. Marco Polo came from Venice and travelled extensively in China, later depicting the country's prosperity in his Travel journals. The "four great inventions" of the Chinese people in ancient times—paper making, printing, the compass and gunpowder—were further developed in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and introduced to foreign countries during this time.

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang founded the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in Nanjing, and reigned as Emperor Taizu. When his son and successor, Zhu Di, ascended the throne, he began to construct the Forbidden Palace, temples, city walls and the surrounding moat in Beijing. In 1421, he officially pronounced Beijing as his capital. In the late Ming Dynasty, the Manchus in northeast China grew in strength. Under the leadership of Nurhachi, the Manchus invaded the Central Plain for three generations in succession, and finally founded the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The two most famous emperors of the Qing Dynasty were Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) and Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1796). The Kangxi and Qianlong reign periods were known as China's "times of prosperity."

Modern Period

The Opium War of 1840 marked a turning point in Chinese history. In early 19th century, Britain smuggled large quantities of opium into China, causing a great outflow of Chinese silver and grave economic disruption in China. In 1839, the Qing government sent Commissioner Lin Zexu to Guangdong to enforce the prohibition on opium trafficking. When Britain initiated the First Opium War in 1840 in attempt to protect its opium trade, the Chinese people rose in an armed struggle against the invaders under the leadership of Lin Zexu and other patriotic generals. But the corrupt and incompetent Qing government capitulated to the foreign invaders time and again, and finally signed the Treaty of Nanjing with Britain, which was a treaty of national betrayal and humiliation. From then on, China was reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country.

After the Opium War, Britain, the United States, France, Russia and Japan forced the Qing government to sign various unjust treaties, seizing "concessions" and dividing China into different "spheres of influence." To oppose the twin evils of feudal oppression and foreign aggression, the Chinese people waged heroic struggles, with many national heroes coming to the forefront of rebellion. The Revolution of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1851, led by Hong Xiuquan, was the largest peasant uprising in modern Chinese history. The Revolution of 1911, a bourgeois-democratic revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, ended the rule of the Qing Dynasty. The monarchical system was discarded and the provisional government of the Republic of China was established. The Revolution of 1911 is of great significance to modern Chinese history. Nevertheless, concessions on behalf of the Chinese bourgeoisie soon compromised their fruits of victory, and the country entered a period of domination by the Northern Warlords led by Yuan Shikai. The common people of China lived in an abyss of misery during this period.

New Democratic Revolution Period

Under the influence of the October Revolution in Russia, China's May 4th Movement arose. During this great anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolutionary movement led by patriotic students, the Chinese proletariat mounted the political stage for the first time ever. The monumental May 4th Movement marked China's transformation from the old democratic revolution to the new democratic revolution. It enabled Marxism-Leninism to further spread and infiltrate into the Chinese people's revolutionary practice, and prepared the ideology and the cadres necessary for the founding of the Communist Party of China.

In 1921, Mao Zedong, Dong Biwu, Chen Tanqiu, He Shuheng, Wang Jinmei, Deng Enming and Li Da, representing the communist groups of different regions throughout the nation, held the First National Congress in Shanghai, founding the Communist Party of China (CPC). In 1924, Sun Yat-sen, pioneer of China's democratic revolution and the founder of the Kuomintang (KMT), collaborated with the Communist Party of China to organize workers and peasants for the Northern Expedition (historically known as the Great Revolution). After Sun Yat-sen's death, the right-wing clique of the KMT headed by Chiang Kai-shek staged a counter-revolutionary coup d'état in 1927, murdering Communists and revolutionary people, and founded the Kuomintang regime in Nanjing. Thus, the Great Revolution ended in failure. After that, the CPC led the Chinese people to wage the 10-year Agrarian Revolution War against the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang, which is also known as the "10-Year Civil War". In July 1937, Japan launched an all-out aggressive attack on China. The Kuomintang armies initiated a series of battles, which threw relentless blows at the Japanese invaders. In the enemy's rear area, the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army, lead under the leadership of the CPC, fought against most of the Japanese forces, and almost all the puppet armies under extremely difficult conditions, thus playing a decisive role in the victory of the War of Resistance against Japan.

From June 1946, the Kuomintang armies launched an all-round attack on the Liberated Areas led by the CPC, and an unprecedented large-scale civil war started. In attempt to emancipate the Chinese people, the CPC led the army and people in the Liberated Areas to start the nationwide War of Liberation. Through the Liaoxi-Shenyang, Huai-Hai and Beiping-Tianjin campaigns, the CPC overthrew the rule of the Kuomintang and won a great victory in the new democratic revolution in 1949.

Contemporary Period (1949-now)

From September 21 to 30, 1949, the First Plenum of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was held in Beijing and attended by various political parties, popular organizations, non-Party democrats and representatives from all walks of life. The CPPCC drew up a Common Program, which served as a provisional constitution. It elected a Central People's Government Council, with Mao Zedong as Chairman, and appointed Zhou Enlai as the Premier of the Government Administration Council and concurrently Minister of Foreign Affairs. On October 1 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong solemnly proclaimed the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The early days of New China were a period of economic recovery as China established and expanded basic industries necessary for full industrialization. The 10-year period from 1957 to the beginning of the "cultural revolution" in 1966 was the period in which China started large-scale socialist construction. The nation's total industrial field assets quadrupled between 1956 and 1966, and the national income increased by 58 percent in terms of constant prices.

For more Information please visit www.history-of-china.com



Introduction to Beijing

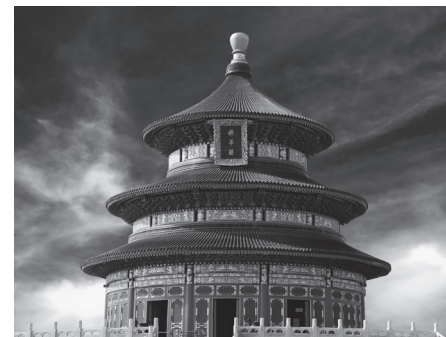
The capital city of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Beijing (Peking) is a fast-growing, dynamic metropolis that, while courting foreign businesses and visitors, maintains a firm grasp on its rich cultural heritage and a strictly Communist social order. Beijing is a monolithic showcase that can present a distorted view of China to foreign visitors. Beijing is a modern city with high-rise buildings, shopping malls and vast international hotels connected by an intricate freeway system crisscrossing the city. During rush hour, traffic jams can match those of any major city around the world and the ringing of mobile phones is incessant. However, the modern buildings conceal traditional hutongs, parks, numerous architectural treasures and exquisite yellow-tiled temples whose prayer flags and wind chimes sway in the breeze created by the passing traffic.

Beijing became China's capital in 1421 and was to remain so until the collapse of the imperial regime in 1911. It was not until the late 19th century that Westerners were allowed to reside there and all trading links had previously been restricted to Canton. From 1911 to 1949, Beijing suffered, as did the rest of China, from the wars fought between various factions trying to seize control of the whole country. A bitter civil war followed the Japanese invasion in 1931, which finally led to Communist supremacy under Mao Tse Tung and the founding of the People's Republic of China with Beijing as the capital. The first ten years of his rule were successful in many ways. Stability returned to the whole country and great advances were made in the industrial, agricultural, educational and health care sectors of the country. However, in 1966, Mao launched the Cultural Revolution, an attack on his more liberal political colleagues, which resulted in several years of anarchy throughout the country. Following Mao's death in 1976, China gradually become more extroverted, welcoming foreigners as investors and as tourists and the local Chinese people were granted permission to set up businesses. Beijing is now keen to prove what a thriving commercial capital it has become.

A good place to start exploring the city is Tiananmen Square, the exact place where Mao Tse Tung declared the foundation of the People's Republic. Today, the Square is more closely identified with the suppression of the student-led pro-democracy protests of 1989. To stand alongside thousands of visitors and gaze at the imposing lure of the majestic Forbidden City to the north and the vast portrait of Mao Tse Tung displayed on the Tiananmen Gate is to appreciate the awesome hold that China's rulers have always had on its people.

An inevitable experience is a morning visit to one of Beijing's public parks. This is when people let their hair down by indulging in their favourite physical activities, be it Tai Chi, jogging, singing or even ballroom dancing.

Beijing is at its best in late spring and autumn. Autumn is a particularly pleasant time to visit as the days are warm and the leaves of the many trees in the city turn into glorious shades of red and gold. The heat and humidity of the summers and the biting wind in winter can be extreme though.



Chinese Language

Mandarin

As one of the six official languages used by the UN (United Nations), Chinese has now earned itself a greater status in the world. The official language of China is Mandarin (Standard Chinese), which is also known as 'Hanyu' or 'Putonghua', belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages.

Putonghua, the standard form of modern Chinese, is a parlance in mainland China. It is the lingua franca of all modern Han nationality people. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, it is called 'Guoyu' while in Singapore and Malaysia it is often referred to as 'Huayu'.

Mandarin Chinese is based on the Beijing dialect and other dialects spoken in the northern areas of China. Students are often taught the Chinese language as 'Yuwen' in their schoolbooks. The Chinese language once had a domineering influence on the languages of neighbouring countries and characters, such as Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. English is a mandatory course in China and enjoys great popularity among students. Nowadays many Chinese people can speak basic English, especially the younger generations, students, and staff of hospitality trades like hotels, restaurants, airlines, banks and post offices. In large cities, more people are able to communicate with foreigners in English compared to people in smaller towns & cities. Some may master a second foreign language like French, German, Japanese, Italian or Spanish. However, in rural and remote areas, few people can speak English or other foreign languages.

Nowadays language barriers do not pose problems at all to those who wish to come to China. Here we offer some basic expressions in Chinese for daily use:

Basic Expressions in Chinese and reference can also be made to the Learning Chinese section on our forum.

Chinese Learning Resources

- Learn Mandarin on MandarinTube.com
- Learn to speak Chinese for free: Practice Chinese on Internet before leaving on a journey and download the mp3 and pdf files to take away the expressions abroad.
- Learn Chinese Online: professional school to learn Chinese online at Chinese.travel-way.net. Use the Simplified Chinese characters and Pinyin to provide some useful phrases for travellers. The phrases can be seen and heard.
- 1on1 Mandarin-Learn Chinese in Beijing, China: 1on1 Mandarin specializes in practical Mandarin, the spoken word, and proper pronunciation. Our goal is to help you Speak like a Chinese, see
- online sample videos of our Students' Chinese.
- Mychinese: provide multimedia Chinese learning support to the overseas learners, and offer Chinese courses to meet different learning outcomes.

Dialects

Since many Chinese dialects can be quite diverse, obvious issues of mutual unintelligibility can be seen, especially among the non-official Chinese dialects.

Categories	Dialects	Spoken in Areas of China
Official	North China	Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei Province, Henan Province, Shandong Province, Liaoning Province, Jilin Province, Heilongjiang Province, Part of Inner Mongolia
	Northwest China	Shanxi Province, Shaanxi Province, Gansu Province, Part of Qinghai Province, Ningxia Province and Inner Mongolia
	Southwest China	Most areas of Hubei Province (southeastern and eastern parts excluded), Yunnan Province, Guizhou Province, Sichuan Province, north sides of Hunan Province and Guangxi Province
	Yangtze-HuaiRiver	Areas along the northern and southern banks of Yangtze River in Anhui Province, Northern areas of Yangtze River in Jiangsu Province (Huizhou excluded), Southern areas of Yangtze River (northernmost to Nanjing and southernmost to Zhenjiang)
Non-official	Wu	Southern part of Jiangsu Province; Zhejiang Province
	Gan	Jiangxi Province
	Xiang	Hunan Province; northern part of Guangxi Province
	Yue	Guangdong Province; Southeast part of Guangxi Province
	Min	Fujian Province; Taiwan Province; Guangdong Province (Chaozhou, Shantou), Hainan Province
	Hakka	Eastern and northern part of Guangdong Province; Western part of Fujian Province; Southern part of Jiangxi Province; Taiwan Province

Characters

The Chinese character has more than 3,000 years of history. Chinese characters are classified as a hieroglyphic, which originated from carapace-bone-script in the Shang Dynasty (16th - 11th century BC). It was then developed into different forms of calligraphic handwritings like large seal scripts, small seal scripts, official scripts, regular scripts, cursive scripts and running scripts. There are altogether 80,000 Chinese words or so that originate from ancient times; however, only about 3,000 words for daily use are available to express over 99% of the information in written form because a Chinese word may contain several different meanings. The Chinese character is now of two kinds - Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese. Simplified Chinese is often used in mainland China, Singapore, and overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, whereas the latter is more prevalent in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and overseas Chinese communities in North America.

Minorities

Interestingly enough, spoken Mandarin and Chinese characters used by Han people are used as the lingua franca for other minorities. Among all the 55 Chinese ethnic minorities, the people of Hui and Man nationalities also use Mandarin Chinese and its characters. 29 ethnic minorities have their own traditional languages like Tibetan, Yi, Mongol, Uygur, Kazak, Lahu, Chaoxian and Kirgiz. Some minorities, like Dai nationality and Jingpo nationality, use even more than one kind of language.



Chinese Food

“Food” has a special meaning to the Chinese people. The ‘waste not, want not’ ethos means that a surprising range and variety of plants and animals, and every part of a plant or animal is used. This has nurtured a remarkable diversity among the regional cuisines, but to Westerners it can be overwhelming –surprising, fantastic, delicious, horrifying or disgusting—and above all, different. Travelers are often surprised that authentic Chinese cuisine is not like the Chinese take-out restaurants back home. Nevertheless, China is a gastronomic paradise, and the food can be outstanding, that is if you know what to order. Chinese cuisine includes an impressive array of fresh vegetables, meats, noodles, rice, fish dumplings and regional specialties, with an amazing number of ways to prepare, spice, serve, pickle and preserve the food.

- Most restaurants provide tea free of charge. This is normally green tea, or something similar.
- Cutlery can be ordered if wished.
- Tipping is not expected, although service fees may be charged at the more expensive restaurants.
- Street food can be excellent – and prepared right before your eyes while you wait. However, you should be aware that sometimes that noodle broths may contain traces of horse meat or other creatures that are not usually eaten where you come from.
- Bottled water: Bottled drinking water is available for purchase everywhere. It is not advisable to drink tap water, as you will not be used to the natural composition of the local water.
- Soft drinks and beer: Soft drinks and beer along with tea and rice wine are the most common drinks in local restaurants. There are many local and imported beers available.
- Wine: The Chinese have been making wine for 4000 years, and the grape wine industry is currently expanding, with “Great Wall” and “Dynasty” being two of the more successful local brands. Imported spirits, wines or beers will cost more than the local products. Some of the local spirits are extremely high in alcoholic content, and bottles of white wine that have been fermented with snakes, scorpions or other creatures may startle you.
- Tea: Chinese Tea is usually green tea, often scented with jasmine. Black teas may also have a stronger flavour than you are used to. Some Chinese hotels may provide tea bags, but be prepared to taste teas you have never experienced before.
- Coffee: Coffee is becoming more popular as international chains such as Starbucks are expanding in major cities (along with Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds).
- Milk: Milk is consumed more often soymilk than cow’s milk, but the latter is served in hotels that cater to westerners. Fresh, dry or preserved forms of milk are purchasable at convenience stores, as is yoghurt and delicious yoghurt-based drinks.



Chinese People

Population

China, with over 1.31828 billion people (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) as of May, 2007, is undoubtedly the most populous country in the world. According to the census at the end of 2004, the ratio of the sexes is about 51.5% male to 48.5% female. Surveys indicate that 41.76% of the population resides in the urban cities and towns while the rest is in rural areas.

Family Planning

China houses almost 20% of the world’s total population. To control rapid population growth and to ensure the quality of life, ‘Family Planning’, has been one of China’s basic state policies since 1978. As a measure to avoid over population, late marriage and postponement of childbearing means fewer but healthier babies, something that is greatly encouraged by the government. In 1979, China became the first country to launch the ‘one child per couple’ policy. However, for those who endure strenuous lifestyles in countryside and where there is a greater need for manual labour, they are allowed to have their second child several years later after the birth of their firstborn. A more liberal policy is also followed in ethnic minority areas. Generally, two children are allowed for one family, and sometimes three. For extremely under populated minorities, there are no restrictions on childbirth.

Ethnic Groups

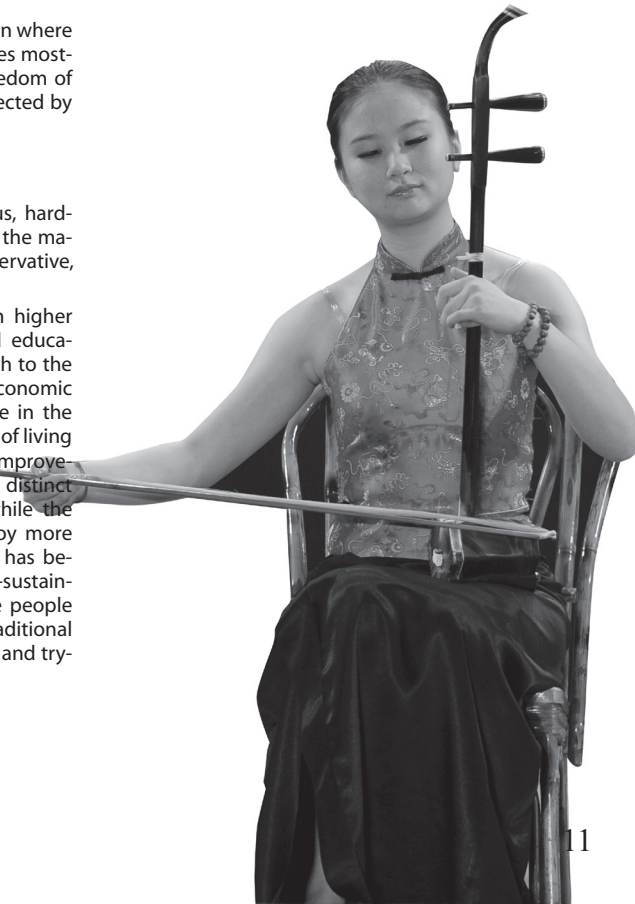
China is a multiracial country consisting of 56 ethnic groups, with the most populous being the Han who form about 91.59% of China’s total population, while 8.41% are the other 55 ethnic minorities. All the ethnic groups live in pockets spread out over vast areas while some live in individual concentrated communities in small areas. Although there are fewer people within the Chinese minorities, they are widely distributed throughout the country.

Yunnan Province is the multi-national region where there are 25 ethnic minorities. The minorities mostly have their own religious beliefs, the freedom of which is highly respected and legally protected by the Chinese government.

People’s Character and Life

The Chinese are known to be industrious, hard-working, peace loving and strenuous, with the majority of the people being hospitable, conservative, modest and generally easy to approach.

Nowadays, Chinese people enjoy a much higher standard of living, with greatly improved educational facilities, a fact that contributes much to the overall quality of life for the entire nation. Economic growth means that within due time those in the poorer regions will enjoy a higher standard of living but with such a large population, these improvements will require time. There has been a distinct improvement in the status of women; while the rights of senior citizens and children enjoy more protection and attention. Chinese society has become more open, accommodating and self-sustaining during these new times. However, the people never forget to embrace and pass on the traditional Chinese virtues while accepting new ideas and trying new things.



Chinese Dress Etiquette

Different countries have different dress codes, but they do share a common rule of thumb: people should always dress accordingly. As we know, westerners are particular about their outfits in the sense that for different occasions, they dress differently. These occasions may include weddings, parties, church events, holidays, business outings, and recreational activities and so forth. However, some people still hope to be special and stand out amongst their fellow attendees. For instance, when the dress code asks for a black tie, some may opt for a striking yellow one that screams for attention; when they are invited to an outdoor barbeque, they may choose to sport a swallow-tailed coat instead of khakis and sandals. In any case, a dress code is just dress code but not everybody abides by the same one.

Much like their western counterparts, Chinese people also pay much attention to their attire. As China is a very traditional oriental nation, it attaches a great value to social etiquettes. Take female dresses for example. It is believed that as a display of respect to both the public and themselves, women should wear a decent and unrevealing dress. Therefore, it is uncommon to see Chinese women strolling down the streets in a short and revealing dresses or skirts. For the odd few who dare to challenge the societal norms, they are certain to invite a few disapproving glances from onlookers.

As a foreign tourist travelling around the coastal cities of China, you will seldom see girls lazing on the beach in strappy bikinis. In many aspects, easterners are more conservative than westerners are. Therefore, if you are a western female, it is advisable to wear a more conservative swimsuit. Otherwise, you may become a very eye-catching icon among the people.

During traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival, it is customary for Chinese people to dress up fancily for the many banquets that such festivities usually entail. Middle-aged woman like to wear cheong-sam (traditional Chinese dresses) or skirts and men usually wear formal suits. Indecent attire may cause what the Chinese refer to a loss of "face" or in other words, a loss of self-dignity. Unlike the elders, youngsters will dress themselves semi formally even for banquets. Fortunately, the seniors are always very kind and forgiving about the juniors.

In addition to this, Chinese people also favour the colour red. During festivals or great ceremonies, they prefer to wear red clothing. For those who do not fancy the colour red, they choose brightly coloured clothes instead. For the Chinese people, red symbolizes good luck and fortune and only bright and bold colours can match the festive atmosphere. If you travel to China or visit your Chinese relatives during the Spring Festival, please prepare some brightly coloured clothes in advance. This is a time when the saying "When in Rome, do as Romans do." really comes into play.

If you are going to visit a local Chinese family, there is no need to fret too much about what to wear. Even though Chinese people do value various etiquettes, they are not very fussy about their guests' attire. As long as you do not wear anything too avant-garde or too revealing, it will be fine. Casual wear is also widely accepted for such visits.

When you have been arranged to go on a package tour, it would be best to prepare at least one formal outfit, as sometimes the travel agency will arrange formal dinners, concerts or operas for you. If you look too unkempt due to attire, there is a possibility that you will not be allowed to enter.



Living Standard in China

China is undergoing remarkable and rapid transformation. Many of the elders have struggled through times of incredible hardship and famine on a scale that is not often fully appreciated in the west. Now economic prosperity is spreading rampantly, but noticeable differences between rural areas, the big cities, the Eastern seaboard and deep inlands remain. In some of the more remote regions, there are still people who allegedly "cannot even afford themselves." However, as more areas open themselves up to tourism, changes and grand opportunities to improve their living standards emerge as well.

In the big cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, monthly salaries are increasing steadily. Although they are not yet equivalent to western cities, they are steadily getting there. This increase is accelerating with the country's newfound prosperity, strengthened foreign trade relations and rapidly rising educational standards in major city centres.

Chinese Money

The currency in China is the Renminbi (RMB or CNY) or in Chinese "Ren-min-bi" which translates as "the people's money"; and is generally used in the same way we use the word 'dollars'. The basic unit is the yuan (also known as "kuai"), which is used to express all quantities including prices in shops etc. The yuan comes in paper notes of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 yuan notes, and 1 yuan coins. 1 yuan equals 10 jiao (or mao). Always check your change to ensure that you have not confused jiao and yuan. Jiao notes and coins can be useful if you want to donate small change to beggars' bowls.

Photos of Chinese Money Notes



100 Yuan Note(New)

100 Yuan Note (Old)

20 Yuan Note

50 Yuan Note (New)

50 Yuan Note (Old)

10 Yuan Note

5 Yuan Note

2 Yuan Note

1 Yuan Note

Shopping in China

Icons of Chinese Culture



Jade

In China “Yu” or Jade is known as the imperial gem of China. China’s rich and abundant natural resources of jade allow for a diverse selection of Jade stones in various shades ranging from vivid emerald greens to mystical pinks and purples. Composed of natural substances born from the majestic mountains and flowing waters of China’s picturesque landscape, Jade is not only appreciated for its aesthetic beauty, but also for its significant cultural connotations.

In Western cultures, there is a comedic saying that diamonds are a woman’s best friend. In Chinese culture, Jade can be considered as a Chinese woman’s best friend since this precious stone is thought to be an ideal example of three indispensable qualities a woman should possess: beauty, grace

and purity. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Jade is something only to be appreciated by the women, as Jade is also a reflection of the moral integrity that all Chinese people should possess. With its lustrous polish and brilliancy, compactness and durability, blunt angles when carved and interior flaws of translucency, Jade respectively symbolizes purity, intelligence, justice and sincerity. With its subtle iridescence and alleged protective powers to prevent fatigue and delay the process of aging, Jade is a timeless fashion statement and a bold symbol of the Chinese people’s intellectual and artistic tastes..

You will be given the opportunity to visit a prestigious Jade-carving factory that houses the largest jade collection in China. From this collection of thousands of precious jade, jadeites and handcrafted jade-carvings, you will be able to handpick thoughtful souvenirs personally for your loved-ones or even new precious additions to your jewelry boxes back home.



Pearl

With initial intentions to search for food, the fortunate scavengers struck a gold mine when they came across a gleaming pearl instead. Ever since this discovery, the Chinese have then been able to transform this petite oceanic gem into intricately designed jewelry and even cosmetic products which were originally used by the royal family of the Qing Dynasty, resulting in a country with the oldest tradition of producing cultured pearls.

Although pearls are a common sight at jewelry stores worldwide, pearls harvested in China boast a unique advantage against its global competitors in terms of

quality. China’s waters provide optimal pearl-breeding conditions with its broader breeding grounds and ideal water temperatures. Along with advanced and globally competitive breeding techniques, pearls harvested in China are not only superior in quality, but they also play a dominant role in the development of Chinese culture.

Silk

Among the several firsts in world discoveries, the Chinese people were the first to discover much of today’s widely used commodities such as green tea leaves, gunpowder and the ever luxurious silk fabric. Silk fabric was first woven in China and it was originally considered a treasured textile reserved only for the imperial family. With time, the exclusive tradition of wearing and giving silk items as gifts by royals gradually spread outside the imperial walls and rooted itself geographically and socially in Chinese culture and trade. Due to silk’s supple texture and lustrous sheen, the popularity of silk soon extended beyond Chinese borders to other countries. The renowned Silk Road and the silk trade bridged the gap between Eastern and Western cultures at that time by promoting international trade and communications.

In order to experience a patch of traditional Chinese culture, you may choose to lavish yourself with beautifully designed silk clothing tailor-made to your personal liking or to enjoy a good night’s rest under the lightweight, soft, warm and durable silk quilts or duvets. If you are interested in purchasing silk quilts or duvet sets, you will need to take note of your mattress size.

Tea

Drinking tea plays such an integral role in people’s lives, that it is hard to imagine a world without tea. It has become a global phenomenon with millions of people the world over enjoying their cup of tea on a daily basis. While the Eastern world has been consuming tea for more than 40 decades, tea was a secret of the Orient and remained foreign to their Western counterparts for most of this time.

Discovered in China, green tea has exerted a profound influent on societies and cultures throughout the world, spawning unique tea ceremonies internationally along with the social etiquettes concerning the preparation of tea as well as social customs regarding how, when and where to drink it.

Legend has it that tea was first discovered by the Chinese Emperor, Shan Nong, in 2737 B.C. The Emperor had a habit of boiling his drinking water. One day while he was in his garden a few tea leaves happened to drift into his boiling water which then gave off a surprisingly rich and alluring aroma. The Emperor, upon drinking this brew, discovered it to be refreshing and energizing. He then immediately ordered tea bushes to be planted in the lush gardens of his palace. Thus, the custom of brewing fresh tealeaves in hot water was born and it quickly spread throughout the country.

Since the discovery of tea, the tradition of drinking tealeaves steeped in boiling water has been firmly entrenched in China. Today tea enjoys an unparalleled and enduring popularity with the Chinese due to its rich source of antioxidants and health benefits. Different brews of tea provide different health benefits such as relief from insomnia, increased blood circulation and even cancer prevention.

With tea being the second most widely consumed beverage in the world after water, coffee lovers should be aware.



Recommendations

In order to enrich your experience in China even more, we also recommend famous and popular products and services in China. With low-priced prescription glasses, famous tailoring services that even embassy officials often employ for their suits, and relaxing massages by professional masseuses, you will be able to treat yourself to the indulgences that the local Chinese people also enjoy from time to time.

Optical Lenses

Most people know what a big dent in their wallets prescription glasses can cause, especially when certain customizations such as double vision (progressive) or colour deterioration lenses are required. The optical stores, a local secret hidden in the streets of China, can provide you with an economic solution to your optical woes.



Optical stores in China are popular with both the local Chinese people and visitors due to the attractive prices and good quality eyewear they offer. Progressive and other special lenses are usually priced at approximately half of the price in North America and the stores offer a wide selection of both trendy and classic frames.

If you are interested in visiting an optical shop, you will need to bring along your prescription and contact your tour guide for further arrangements.

Tailor-made Clothing

Whether you are a fashion guru or just looking for a well-fitted suit, nothing fits or looks better than a garment made exclusively for you. Tailored clothing has been and still is very popular in China with even embassy officials having their work attire tailor-made. With China producing some of the most reputed tailors, it is no wonder why some leave China with stacks of tailor-made garments. You may select your dream dress or suit from a wide array of designs and customize the material, colour, fit and even the style, all for a very good price.



If you are interested in having clothing tailor-made, you will need to contact your tour guide for further arrangements. The tailor will pay you two visits in total- the first for the initial measurements, design details, and the second for the fitting, both of which are done in your hotel room- and the finished garment will require 2-3 days to complete.

Foot and Body Massage

After a long day of walking and sightseeing, nothing relieves tension more than a wonderful full-body or foot massage right within the comforts of your own hotel room. The professional massage therapists offer various massage techniques and styles ranging from relaxing and soothing western massages to traditional Chinese massage techniques such as acupressure and reflexology. A massage during your visit in China is a great way to experience a moment of bliss amidst the hustle and bustle of touring and to re-energize for the adventures that await you the next day.



If you are interested in receiving a massage during your tour in China, you will need to contact your tour guide for further arrangements.

Tips for Shopping in China

With the increase of products being stamped with “Made in China” sign, China is becoming a shopping paradise for foreign visitors and procurement teams alike. From must-go retail places to shop until you drop such as the Knock-off Market to the swarms of street vendors in busy tourist areas, China is definitely a place for testing your bargaining skills.

Most foreign visitors may share the same feelings towards their shopping experiences in China: a dizzying sea of products ranging from apparel, accessories, cosmetics, souvenirs, electronic gadgets, fine jewelry, and luggage to other trinkets, surprisingly low prices and often-aggressive vendors. For those who wish to shop in China, they should be prepared to bargain with the vendors. Although each person’s shopping experience may differ, the following are some basic guidelines to help make your shopping experience the most enjoyable possible:

1. Shopkeepers and street vendors

Depending on whether you are shopping at a store or buying from a street vendor, be aware that most vendors can only speak little English. They have been trained to mostly say staple words such as “cheap, cheap,” “come, come,” “good quality,” “higher, higher,” “you say how much,” “no profit” or “highest price.” The vendor’s strongest linguistic abilities are numeric, so be sure to negotiate using simple and basic English. In order to avoid confusion, you will often see them punching in numbers on a large calculator to present their prices.

2. Patience is key

At first approach, the vendors will market their items by saying positive things about them and when you show interest and inquire about its price, their first price will often be very high. Consider this price 2-3 times the price of the final price for which you should be able to purchase the item. Remember not to let the initial price scare you away and ask for a cheaper price in a friendly manner. Bear in mind that the bargaining process can take some time, so be patient and wait until you are able to negotiate a good and lower price.

3. Do not be shy to offer a low price

Do not hesitate to offer a low price to the vendors in fear that the bargaining may upset them since bargaining has become a part of their daily lives.

For example, if the vendor’s opening price for a coat is RMB 800, just counter offer with your lowest price, which may be RMB400. The reasonable prices for apparel are usually RMB80 for shirts, RMB 50 for T-shirts, RMB 120 for jeans, RMB 200-300 for coats, RMB 100 for silk scarves, etc...)

Also, be aware that when the vendors say “dollars” they are usually referring to American dollars. For RMB currency, they will usually say “yuan” (Chinese pinyin for RMB). Always be sure to confirm and even double confirm the prices and currency.

4. If you are not satisfied with the price, just walk away

A very effective method to lower their prices to your expectations is simply to walk away from the street vendor or shop. For some buyers it may be difficult to do, so just force yourself to walk out if the need arises. It is most likely that the vendor will call you back. If they do call you back, this means either that you have secured the sale at your desired price or that you are getting closer to the final price. If they do not call you back, this usually means that your price is too low and you may try to either offer a higher price or try another shop. Do not worry if this happens as many vendors sell similar items if not the same. You can try your luck again at the next vendor.

5. Emotional Vendors

Sometimes the vendors may display emotions of distress or anger by shouting or flinging items around. Do not be alarmed since this is just a sales tactic they use to intimidate or embarrass you. The best thing to do is to keep smiling and stick to your price.

6. The more the better

If you buy multiples of an item, there is a good possibility that you will receive a better price for them. Do not be afraid to stock up on an item you particularly like as the products in China are of good value compared to their American and European counterparts. The extras can either be given as souvenirs for friends or family or even saved as early Christmas presents.

Bringing Your Newfound Treasures Back Home

The exotic value attached to the many trinkets and souvenirs you acquire during your trip in China will depreciate if they do not successfully make it back home with you. To diminish your chances of encountering any hassles when crossing customs, it is best to educate yourself first about their policies and restrictions regarding goods purchased abroad.

Receipts for valuable items such as jewelry, jade, handicrafts, paintings, calligraphy or other similar items purchased in China should be kept in order to obtain an export certificate from the authorities upon departure. Without this documentation, such items cannot be taken out of the country.

Canada Duty-free Exemption

- When shopping in China, retain the receipts for all of your purchases. Upon reentering Canada you should be ready to show customs officials your newly acquired keepsakes from China in inspection is required. Each resident returning to Canada is entitled to one of the following personal exemptions based on his/her time absent from Canada (including all goods and/or gifts purchased or received abroad):
- Travelers who have been out of the country for up to 24 hours are entitled to a duty-free quota up to a maximum of CAN\$50
- Travelers who have been out of the country for a minimum of 48 hours are entitled to a duty-free quota up to a maximum of CAN\$400
- Travelers who have been out of the country for 7 days or more are entitled to a duty-free quota up to a maximum of CAN\$750
- The aforementioned exemptions include alcohol and tobacco products. See the information below for the quantity restrictions regarding these items:
- 1.5 L of wine or 1.14 L of liquor or 24 x 355 ml cans or bottles (8.5 L) of beer or ale. You must be of legal age in the province of importation.
- 200 cigarettes, 200 tobacco sticks, 50 cigars /cigarillos or 200 grams of manufactured loose tobacco (Special duty may apply).
- A Declaration Card detailing your purchases must be completed before crossing Canada Customs.
- Please check the guidelines for residents of Canada returning to Canada and the updated information on Duty-free exemptions available on the Canada Border Services Agency web site.

U.S. Duty-free Exemption

- Effective November 4, 2002, the standard personal duty-free exemption is \$800 if you are a returning U.S. resident and the items you acquired abroad in China accompany you. Please make sure that you retain the receipts for all your purchases as you might be required to produce them by customs inspection agents.
- Duty on items that you have purchased at tourist stores that offer door-to-door shipping services mailed home to yourself will be waived if the value is \$200 or less. Antiques that are at least 100 years old, and fine art may enter duty-free, but folk art and handicrafts are generally dutiable.
- Only 1 liter of alcohol and 200 cigarettes or 100 cigars may be included in this exemption. Items purchased in "Duty Free" shops are subject to duty if the value of your total purchases exceeds \$800.
- Family members living in the same household and returning together to the United States may combine their standard personal exemptions. Children and infants are allowed the same exemption as adults, except for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

Dual Nationality in China

What is dual nationality?

Dual nationality refers to a citizen has two nationalities of both his motherland and another country at the same time

Is dual nationality recognized in the world?

Many countries and regions in the world recognize and respect dual nationality as a legitimate status. Such countries include the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia. Most countries do not think that a citizen will lose the nationality of his homeland if he succeeds in gaining another country's nationality.

Does China recognize dual nationality?

China does not recognize dual nationality. The third article in the China Nationality Law states that the People's Republic of China does not and will not allow a Chinese citizen to possess a nationality other than China's. Moreover, Article 9 of the China Nationality Law declares that as soon as a Chinese citizen claims a foreign citizenship, he or she will automatically forfeit his or her Chinese citizenship.

Why does China refuse to recognize dual nationality?

There are mainly two reasons why China enforces a nationality regulation contrastive to that of other countries:

First, Chinese Nationality Law has great historical significance. After the liberation of China in 1949, many overseas Chinese people with dual nationalities caused many doubts and troubles in some countries, especially Southeast Asian countries. Although the root of the problem was merely a misunderstanding, it did erode ties between China and other countries.

Second, China considers unique nationality as proof of a citizen's loyalty to his or her country and its political administration. It also makes it easier for more precise judgments to be made in law cases.

Who can be regarded as a Chinese citizen?

Anyone possessing any of the following characteristics may be regarded as a citizen of China:

- Persons belonging to any of the nationalities in China
- Any person born in China whose parents are both Chinese nationals or one of whose parents is a Chinese national
- Any person born abroad whose parents are both Chinese nationals, or one parent who is a Chinese national
- Any person born in China whose parents are stateless, or of uncertain nationality, and have settled in China.



Photography in China

Remember to bring a conventional camera with enough film (usually more than you think you will need) or a digital camera with a sufficient amount of memory for your China trip. China's vast territory will impress you with its divine landscape.

You can purchase film or digital memory cards in China, but we suggest that you purchase them before your departure since not all of the films or memory cards available will be compatible with your camera.

Here are some tips to enhance your photographic experience in China.

- Do not buy roll film or memory cards in local tourist areas.
- Bring what you need from home.
- Your camera bag will be considered as a personal item and can be carried onboard flights in addition to your carry-on baggage.
- If you are using a conventional camera with film, you should be aware that when flying U.S. domestic and trans-pacific flights, all undeveloped film cartridges should be stowed in your carry-on baggage. The repeated security screening performed on checked baggage will damage the undeveloped film. Most X-ray machines in China's airports and railway stations are marked "film safe". However, films with a higher ASA rating could be fogged by the repeat exposures to X-rays. Therefore, you should carry such film by hand.
- Bring extra batteries and adaptor units for recharging batteries.
- Keep weather conditions in mind to gain the best photographic effects. Do not take photos in politically sensitive areas such as military bases, or on airplanes.
- For religious reasons and for relic protection, most scenic spots such as museums, grottoes, temples, monasteries, palaces and cultural relics do not allow photos. 'No Photos' signs mark restricted areas. Certain places or backgrounds may incur fees. Be sure to clarify the fee amount before taking pictures.
- Before taking pictures of local Chinese people performing their daily activities or public street scenes, you should ask for permission first.
- In special areas such as Tibet, photography is strictly limited.
- Typical local customs and religious places such as palaces or monasteries cannot be photographed. Always ask permission in such places.
- Film processing is convenient and fast in China, with good print quality.
- Photography studios are easily found in most Chinese cities.
- Besides still photography, video recording is also a good way to remember your trip and reminisce about the memories back at home.



Beijing



Great Wall



Xian



Tibet



Shanghai



China Panda

Useful Information about Traveling in China

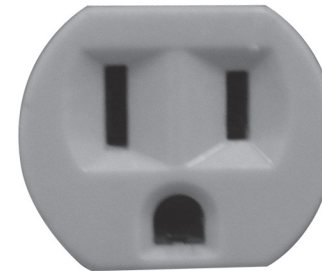
Weather Conditions

Please visit the following website to check for the local weather forecasts in China: <http://www.weatherforecastmap.com/china/>

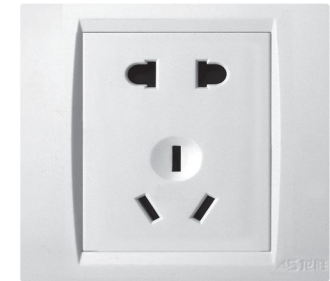
Electricity

China's electrical current is 220V, 50 cycles AC, which means that most foreign electrical appliances you bring will require an electrical voltage converter that will allow a normal 110-volt Canadian appliance to take 220 Volt Chinese current. In addition to this, electrical plugs and outlets in China come in various shapes and differ from the ones found in North America. This means that if you plan to use any electric devices purchased in North America, you will also need an adapter / transformer that can change the shape of the plug prongs.

Most hotels provide a hair-dryer in each room. Most hotels also have adapters and converters readily available at the concierge desk but keep in mind that there may only be a few available for loan. If you plan to borrow adapters or converters from the hotels, be sure to notify Housekeeping or the concierge of your request as soon as you check-in. Bearing this in mind, if you require a constant use of the adapter or in case of urgent situations, you are advised to bring along your own personal adapter or converter. Small adapters for international travel can be purchased at appliance or hardware stores in Canada (e.g. London Drugs, Future Shop or Superstore). If your electronic devices are recently purchased, please bring the receipts with you.



North American Power Outlet



China Power Outlet

Currency

China is very much a cash-based society, so bring a money belt or bag with secure pockets to carry around a fair amount of local cash. You will need local Chinese currency for taxis, shopping at street vendors, and for smaller shops and restaurants. While local paper bills are accepted, keep in mind that local coins usually are not, since Chinese banks do not accept coins as a proper form of cash deposit.

Please note that the Chinese currency RMB is not internationally exchangeable; you must wait until your arrival in China to convert your money to the local currency and either exchange it back to US / CD dollar or spend it all in China before your flight back home. The CAD/USD can be exchanged for Chinese currency at licensed currency exchange facilities in China arrival and departure airports, Bank of China branches or at the hotels. The exchange rates used at these places are standardized so it is unnecessary to shop around for a better rate. For the sake of convenience and safety, it is suggested that you exchange your currency at the hotels. Remember to retain the receipts of any currency conversion transactions because the receipt slip is required to convert the Chinese RMB back to your home currency before your departure.

Major credit cards are accepted at hotels, tourist stores, and upscale shops and restaurants. It is recommended that you use credit cards towards big purchases at the stores and that you also purchase insurance for any items you wish to ship back home. Please notify your credit card company of your proposed trip to China to ensure that they will not decline any transactions made during your stay in China. This notification becomes crucial especially in urgent situations.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) are also available; however, it is best not to rely on them for credit card cash advances as these services are not common in China. In sizeable cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, cash advances against major credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Cirrus and Plus) can be arranged, although a service charge is usually added. Otherwise, the majority of ATMs in China can only be used for RMB cash withdrawal. The exchange rates used for the ATM withdrawal transactions are similar to those used by credit card companies, but there is a maximum daily withdrawal amount.

Major brands of Traveler's cheques are accepted at licensed currency exchange facilities in China, but Traveler's cheques are not always accepted, particularly in the smaller cities and local hotels in China. If an urgent need arises and you find yourself stranded without local cash, cash particularly in the form of US dollars is always much more welcomed than a traveler's check. Please note that if this circumstance arises, foreign coins will not suffice and all foreign paper bills should be in good condition without tears or defilements. Local vendors will reject partial, badly worn, or defaced foreign bills.

Tips:

- It is recommended that you bring a minimum of \$500.00 USD/CAD for the trip. This will easily cover your daily needs.
- All cash should either be safely secured in a money pouch (when carrying money), or in the hotel safe. Usually each room at the Hotels will have its own safe. If not, then there will be a communal safety deposit box available at the front desk.
- For those travelers who plan to shop, any dollar amount that exceeds \$750.000 Canadian dollars will be charged duty when passing through customs.
- Retain your receipts wherever possible.
- If you plan to take more than \$10,000 USD/CAD, you must report it before leaving Canada.

Health Care

The local handling travel agency requires exclusion in China of any person rendered unsuitable for long trips by health conditions such as mental illness, serious, chronic ailments, contagious diseases, advanced pregnancy, senility or infirmity. Vaccinations are not mandatory for travel to China, but it is highly advised that you check with your physician to verify your specific medical needs. Vaccinations against tuberculosis and Japanese encephalitis are sometimes advised.

The following is a list of some of the diseases present in China:

- Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis) is endemic in the central Yangtze River basin. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water in this area.
- Hepatitis E is prevalent and Hepatitis B is highly endemic in the northeastern and northwestern parts of China
- Sporadic outbreaks of avian influenza (also known as the bird flu) have occurred in China, so avoid close contact with any wild bird species for precautionary measures
- Rabies is present. If bitten by a wild animal, medical advice should be sought immediately
- There are occasional outbreaks of dengue fever

Please check with your family physician or travel clinic for current required or recommended inoculations and for the latest overseas health travel information, you may contact the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by visiting www.cdc.gov/travel or by calling toll-free 1-888-232-3228.

Tourists are also recommended to drink bottled water when they are traveling in China to offset any possible risks of dehydration or heat stroke during the summer months. Apart from bottled or distilled water, all water used for consumption, brushing teeth or freezing should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Outside the main city centres, eat thoroughly cooked meat and seafood and avoid raw foods to decrease the risk of food poisoning or contracting preventable diseases such as Salmonella. Health insurance is strongly recommended for anyone who wishes to travel abroad.

First Day / Airport Itinerary

Time and location to meet at the Airport

Please arrange for your own airport drop off and pick up in your home country. Information about the airline schedule and hotel confirmation for your trip will be included in the "Final confirmation Package" which will be sent to you approximately one month prior to your scheduled departure date for the China trip.

Arrive at the airport at least 2.5 hours prior to the scheduled flight time. The Tour Manager will be located near the airline check-in counter for international departures. You will also receive baggage tags from us. Make sure you that have your Passport and flight itinerary prepared and ready for check-in.

Arrival Procedures in China

An SNA representative will greet you in the China airport arrival hall once you have cleared the Customs area and claimed your checked baggage. Please wear your nametag, make sure it is clearly visible and place the designated SNA baggage tags and sticker labels on your baggage for easy identification.

When entering the arrival hall look for a SNA Tours sign. The representative will then allocate you to a designated area where all the tour participants will congregate.

Hotel Facilities

In-Room:

- Large work desk and chair
- In- room safe
- In-room coffee / tea making equipment
- Direct dial telephone with voicemail
- Separate bath / shower
- Satellite television with international channels
- Mini bar
- Steam iron and ironing board Free
- High-Speed broadband Internet access
- Toiletries (Shampoo, conditioner, lotion, slippers, combs, toothbrush / paste, robes, etc.)



Communal:

- Swimming pool (Swimming cap required)
- Business Centre with internet and fax services
- Gym
- Spa
- Lounge and Bar Restaurant
- Dry Clean Services
- Souvenir store



Hotel Check-in

After arriving at each hotel, please present your passports to the Tour Manager. The Tour manager will complete the hotel check-in on your behalf at each hotel.

Hotel Check-out

Please check-out of your room 30 minutes ahead of the scheduled meeting time when you are leaving the hotel.

Shopping

Allotted time for shopping will be arranged during your tour at various sites for your convenience. We are not responsible for any damages, payments, shipping or other problems associated with your purchases. It is each tourist's own responsibility to contact the stores directly.

Meals

In addition to the full buffet breakfasts served at the hotels, most tours include lunch and dinner at select, on-site locations. Breakfasts included in the China tours are usually an American style buffet breakfast offering a wide selection of both western and oriental delicacies to fuel you for the eventful day ahead. Scheduled lunch and dinners are usually served at local Chinese restaurants with a set menu served in a family style way. Not to be underappreciated, this Chinese family style way of service is highly implicative of Chinese customs and culture. A regular lunch or dinner is composed of 6-8 dishes placed on a lazy Susan shared by 8-10 people dining around a round table. One cold beverage (mineral water, beer or soda) per person per meal is provided at no additional charge. Farewell dinner parties are arranged near the end of some tours, and most itineraries include a special dinner, such as Beijing Roasted Duck dinner in Beijing, the lunch at a local family home etc.

- Travelers can request for more food if they have not had enough. We will arrange for the special food needs of the travelers (e.g. related to allergies / vegetarians).
- You may have to pay for additional drinks at lunch and dinner (\$10.00 yuan for a 500 ml coke). Tea is always free.
- Water - the bus drivers will provide each traveler a free bottle of water at the beginning of the day. Extra bottles of water can be purchased from the bus driver.
- Make sure that you eat whenever the opportunity is offered to you.

Tap water is not considered safe to drink in China despite the fact that water in China is commonly chlorinated and processed. Only drink bottled or boiled water. Bottled purified water and soft drinks can be easily obtained at reasonable prices. All the hotels you stay provide two complimentary bottles of water daily and a water kettle, with which you can safely make hot beverages.

Safety

Please be aware that all hotels provide an in-room safe or locked security boxes at the front desk. Be sure to store valuables such as money, passports, or other important documents at the hotel. If there is a problem, report it immediately to a security guard or the police.

Telephone Access

Each hotel room has direct access to international phone calls. Please contact the hotel front desk or customer service centre to provide you with this service. When you check-out of the hotel, you can simply pay your bill at the front desk.

Roaming agreements for mobile phones exist in China with most major international mobile phone companies. Coverage is fairly good in regions throughout the country, but coverage in rural areas can be sporadic. Be aware that roaming charges (especially data) can be very expensive. You should check with your mobile phone carrier about their specific international roaming charges or if they offer any special roaming mobile plans. Otherwise, if you have an unlocked tri-band mobile phone, you may purchase a

local prepaid SIM card in China to insert into your mobile phone for use during your trip. The prepaid SIM cards are usually priced at about 100RMB for a reasonable amount of talk time and are often a less expensive option than the local IDD services provided by the hotels.

How to make calls in China: To make local calls, just dial the number you want directly. To make domestic long- distance calls, remember to dial the area code before dialing the number you wish to call. To make an international call, you should first dial 00, the country code and the area zip code before dialing the number of the person you wish to contact (if the area code of a given country begins with 0, omit it when you make the call).

To call a number in China from abroad, first dial the international access code (00), the country code for China (86), then the local area code of the number you wish to call (if the area code begins with 0, omit it when you make the call).

Internet Access

You may access the internet from your room at the hotels (the hotel provides you with an Ethernet cable but does NOT provide you with a PC), so you may wish to bring along your personal laptop. Some hotels offer free internet access from the hotel room but most hotels do charge for this convenience. Most hotels in China do not have Wi-fi access or limit their guests to public Wi-fi hot spot areas usually located within the hotel lobbies. If you do not have your laptop with you during the trip, you can also visit the business centre of your hotel and pay for the internet on an hourly or per minute basis. Internet is also available in many areas of China outside hotel vicinities; there are Internet cafes in Beijing and many other major towns and cities.

Internet censorship in China is stricter than it is in North America. Beijing routinely blocks access to sites run by the prohibited spiritual movement groups such as the Falun Gong, civil rights groups and some foreign media groups. Public postings by opinionated bloggers are now being actively curbed and closely monitored. Please note that as of 2005, popular global social networking sites such as Facebook have been banned in China. Therefore, for the time being, you will be unable to access or share your photos on Facebook during your China trip.

Mail Services

If you wish to boast about what a splendid time you are having in China to friends and family back home, hotels in China offer postal services that allow you to send postcards and letters overseas. It usually takes more than 10 days for a postcard to reach North America. The postage fee charged in Chinese RMB amounts to about 50 cents for a postcard and 80 cents for a letter up to 20 grams.

Media in China

China publishes various newspapers and magazines in English. Among them, China Daily is a popular English newspaper and it is complimentary at most hotels. Imported publications like the Times, Newsweek, and The Economist can be found at certain hotels. International television programs such as BBC, CNN or even HBO are becoming more commonly available in most tourist hotels as well.

Business Card and Gift Giving

During your trip, (Hutong family visit, local school Visit, interactive or networking events) you will meet many new friends. We suggest that you bring some little gifts from USA/Canada and present them as gifts to the people you meet in China. Ideal gift ideas would be national pins, key chains, flags or small souvenirs that are symbols of your country, city or school would. In addition, prepare some business cards for seminars and banquets. Keep that in mind that you are not only going to meet some Chinese business people, but you will also meet a lot of people from different countries as well on the tour.

What to Bring

Please travel lightly! Whenever you travel, make sure your daypacks and baggage are as compact as possible—avoid turning into a pack rat. It is strongly recommended that you try to bring only 1 piece of checked baggage, 1 personal carry-on bag and 1 day bag per person. Carrying a light day bag will ease your trip, making it more comfortable and letting you fully enjoy the many pleasures of traveling.

The best packing question a traveler can ask oneself is “Do people where I am headed live without this item?” Avoid packing items that will be readily available in the hotels or easily obtainable at shops where you will be staying. Resist cramming your suitcase with unnecessary items in order to reserve room for the “treasures” you will collect along the way. Remember that you will have access to the following:

- Convenient and reliable laundry services. For your convenience, your hotels will offer same-day laundry services. If you send clothes in the morning, you should have them back in the evening, however, hotel express laundry services can be quite pricey. For an economic option we suggest that you have your laundry done at any local Chinese full-service laundry shop outside the hotels. Laundry services not operated by the hotels will require 2-3 days before your laundry is ready for pick-up, if you intend to use these services for your laundry ensure that you allow a sufficient amount of time for it. For any destination city where you stay two or more nights you can opt to do laundry instead of over-packing your suitcase with clothes.
- A hair dryer and iron are readily available at most hotels for your use; if you cannot find any in your hotel room simply contact Housekeeping.
- Complimentary toiletries in your private bathroom include a disposable toothbrush and toothpaste, comb, soap, shampoo, body lotion, sewing kit, sanitary bag, shower cap etc.
- You can easily purchase a shoulder bag or a small piece of luggage to carry your purchases back home.
- Virtually anything you require can be secured along the way. It is part of the adventure. Traveling in China involves a lot of walking so comfortable walking shoes are essential. Be sure to check the local weather forecast before deciding what clothes to pack.

Smart packers are always the wisest travelers, and are advocates of the motto “He who travels happily must travel lightly.”

Materials/Documents

Never forget your valid visa, passport, identity card, any certificate photos or other important documents or materials required for your travel. Store such documents in a sturdy and waterproof bag and have them readily available. It is also strongly recommended that you make a photocopy of your important documents such as your passport, Chinese visa and electronic flight ticket. If applicable, do not forget any tickets that you have bought or booked in advance for planes, trains or ships, or admission tickets. Paper, pens, notebooks and memo books could come in handy during your trip. Remember to bring a phone/address list of your family members, relatives or friends in case of an emergency. Prepare a contact card that has your personal information, including your full name, nationality, home phone and address on it, in case you are ever in trouble. Bring your printed tour itinerary as well. A guidebook is also helpful for educating yourself more about the destinations and will save time when traveling.

Clothing

Try to bring clothes appropriate for the weather at your destination. China is known for having four distinct seasons. Please consider China's climate when deciding the best time to come. Take leisurewear that will keep you relaxed and comfortable when you travel, like casual jackets, sportswear, jogging shoes or playsuits. For summers, bring several T-shirts, preferably with moisture wicking abilities, and lightweight pants. Coordinate your outfits for various activities and multi-tasking. Because China's weather can be quite temperate at times, dressing in layers will allow you to better accommodate any weather or temperature changes. Do not forget to bring sunglasses, suntan oil, and a summer hat. If you come across winter in China, be sure to keep warm. Hats, scarves, masks, gloves and down-filled clothes are indispensable, but remember to keep them light and portable. Finally, rain jackets and umbrellas are good forms of protection against rainy and snowy days. Include some clothes for any formal events you may want to attend, such as operas, banquets or cruises. For most of the evening entertainment shows, formal attire is not required.

First-aid Kit

Since many medications common in western countries are unavailable in China, prepare some drugs for routine and emergency use, including antibiotics, anti-bacterial ointments, antidepressants, antihistamine, Aspirin, vitamins, acetaminophen, essential balms, anti-allergic preparations, remedies for dysentery and diarrhea and antacids for indigestion. Bring along your case history (medical record) and put it into your first-aid kit. This may be helpful if you require medical attention during your trip.

Toiletries

Although we stress that there is no need to over-pack daily necessities as they are easily purchasable in China, there are certain personal effects which we do encourage you to always prepare and have readily available for your travels in China.

Essentials such as a facecloths, handkerchief and Kleenex are necessary for your trip to China. It is also wise to bring hand wipes or travel-sized hand sanitizers to use before dinner and after going to the washroom. Bringing a handkerchief or Kleenex can substitute for hand towels since most washroom facilities in China do not have hand towels. Always bring your own toilet paper as well as it is not usually available in public toilets. Public toilets in China can be dirty and under stocked when it comes to basic toiletries, so please be physically and mentally prepared for this. We understand your sanitation concerns and you will be advised on where to find “cleaner” restrooms.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is strongly recommended to protect the interests of both you and your loved ones. Being insured during your travels is also a wise way to protect yourself against any unexpected mishaps that may occur along the way. For several travel insurance options, please read the information offered by the AIG Travel Insurance Company.

For Passengers Taking International Flights to / from China

Carry-on baggage allowance

Each of your carry on items should be less than 20x40x55 centimeters (9x14x22 inches) in dimension, and the sum of its length, width and height must not exceed 115 centimeters (45 inches). The total weight should be no more than 7 kilograms (11 pounds). However, some airlines may have different rules regarding the weight restrictions of carry-on baggage.

In addition to this, each passenger is allowed to have the following things carried on free of charge:

1. One gripsack
2. One overcoat or raincoat
3. Travel blanket
4. One umbrella or walking stick
5. Pocket-sized camera
6. One miniature telescope
7. Reading material for the flight
8. Food for an infant during the flight
9. One bassinet
10. Folding wheelchair, a pair of crutches, or artificial limbs
11. One notebook PC



Other additional items, such as an extra backpack, attaché case, typewriter, portable radio, powder box, hatbox, good sized camera and books (not for reading on the plane), cannot be taken as carry-on luggage above your free allowance, and will be treated as checked baggage.

Checked baggage allowance

Except for infant ticket holders, adult or half-price (for children) ticket holders are allowed a certain amount of checked baggage at no cost. The limitation for most Trans-Pacific flights is as follows:

Reckoned by piece: (applied to flights for US and Canada)

Class	Maximum number of items	Maximum size of each item	Maximum weight of each item
Cabin Class	2 pieces	62 inches (158 centimeters)	32 kilograms (70 pounds)
Economy Class (Y)		Sum of two can not exceed 273 centimeters (107 inches)	

The above stipulation is applicable to passengers holding adult tickets or half-price tickets. For infant tickets holders, only one piece of baggage can be checked for free, the sum of its length, width and height should be less than 115 centimeters (45 inches). In addition, a pushchair or bassinet can be checked for free.

The following items can be treated as free checked baggage regardless of their size:

- a haversack
- a pair of skis with ski poles and ski boots, or skis with ski boots
- a caddie bag with a golf club and shoes
- a duffel bag or B-4 type bag
- a standard water ski or an obstacle water ski well packed
- fishing gear
- any portable musical instruments less than 100 centimeters (39 inches) in length.

Note: Air Canada is revising its checked baggage policy for travel as of October 11, 2011 for clients holding an Economy Class ticket. The revised policy is as follows:

- **For travels between Canada and the United States, a first checked baggage fee of \$25 CAD/USD applies. There is no longer a free baggage allowance.**
- **For travels between Canada/USA, Asia and Australia/South America, the first checked baggage is free of charge and a second checked baggage fee of \$70 CAD/USD applies.**
- **Each piece of checked baggage must not exceed 23 kilograms (50lbs) in weight.**

Extra / Overweight Baggage

Do not make your baggage overweight or check in more than the allowed number of items, especially on flights to US and Canada, as the additional charges could be quite high. The above rule is for passengers holding adult or half-price tickets. For infant ticket holders, no baggage can be checked for free.

International overweight baggage in excess of allowances will incur excess baggage fees payable on site by the passenger. Generally, 1 kilogram (2.2 lbs) costs 1.5% of a full economy-class airfare (one-way, adult ticket). For most airlines, there is usually a limit of 2 pieces of baggage per passenger (excluding Air Canada).

See the "Checked Baggage Allowance" section above for Air Canada's revised baggage policies.

If for some reason you do end up travelling with overweight baggage, you may also be requested by the Chinese domestic airlines to pay additional fees of approximately CAD100 per excess of the weight limit with baggage over 23-32 kilograms at the local Chinese airports.

Baggage Precautions

Each piece of your checked baggage should be portable and stout. Make sure that you have attached baggage tags with your contact information clearly written on them to all your baggage. A photocopy of your itinerary and contact information should be placed in the outside pockets of your baggage to aid the airline personnel to locate or contact you in case you and your baggage become separated. Never put important documents, cash, valuables (jewelry, cameras) or extremely fragile items into your baggage. You should place these items in your carry-on baggage.

If you choose to take SNA Tours Canada East Coast departure via New York (JFK), you are advised to leave your checked baggage unlocked in line with U.S. airport security rule. Alternatively, if you wish to lock your baggage, you must use a TSA recognized lock, which allows TSA screeners to open and re-lock your bags for security screening. Ordinary locks are cut if physical inspection is required.

If you are flying out of Vancouver you can either lock your checked baggage or leave it open to your discretion.

Lithium batteries for electronic devices cannot be consigned and are only allowed to be detached from the devices and stored in carry-on baggage. Furthermore, each passenger can only take at most two spare batteries in their carry-on baggage and should pack the batteries separately to avoid short-circuit. For compact electric appliances such as electric tools or toys, their lithium batteries also cannot be consigned. They should also be properly stowed in the carry-on baggage.

Prohibited Imports into China

Any arms and ammunition, imitation arms, pornography (photographs in mainstream Western magazines are considered as pornographic material), radio transmitters/receivers, exposed but undeveloped film, loaded recording tapes and video, storage media for computers, fruit and certain vegetables (tomatoes, aubergines and red peppers), political and religious pamphlets (a moderate quantity of religious material for personal use is acceptable) and any printed matter directed against the public order and the morality of China are strictly forbidden from entering China. If your baggage is suspected of containing any of the aforementioned articles, Chinese customs officials reserve the right to seize any audio and videotapes, books, records and CDs passing to check for pornographic, political or religious material.

Damaged or Lost Baggage

SNA Tours will not be responsible for loss or damage to your baggage and/or personal belongings. You must report any loss or damage to your baggage immediately at the time of the incident and obtain a written report from the local authority for submission to your travel insurance provider (if applicable).

Travel Insurance covering lost and damaged baggage is strongly recommended. If your baggage is lost or damaged by the airlines, a baggage claim form must be filled out with the carrier before leaving the airport.

Liquid Articles on Board

Passengers are allowed to carry liquid articles onboard, but there are some regulations that must be adhered to. As of May 1, 2007, a new regulation that limits liquids has been enforced. In order to ensure the flight safety of the aircraft and its passengers, each passenger is allowed to take on board no more than one liter of liquids (excluding alcohol). Each container should contain no more than 100 ml of liquid. The liquid containers should be carried in a transparent plastic bag for the convenience of security checking. Duty-free liquids brought from other countries should also be packaged and checked in this manner. Alcohol can only be taken as checked baggage.

Liquid articles that must be carried on board by passengers due to specific personal reasons, such as liquid medication and infant milk, are allowed within a certain limit. These liquids must have their bottles opened and are subject to inspection.

Passengers may also take small quantities of cosmetics (liquid foundation, lip-gloss, facial lotions), with a limit of one item of each type; each container must contain a volume no greater than 100ml. All cosmetics should be placed in a transparent plastic bag and are subject to inspection as well. Any passenger who violates the above regulations shall be solely responsible for any losses, such as a missed flight, that may occur due to the violation(s).

Frequent Flyer Miles

As a rule, airlines do not give air mileage for discounted group fares that are lower than the published fares. It is possible that you will not earn any air mileage when traveling with certain airlines on your SNA Tours. Frequent traveler programs are administered by the airlines, and are beyond the control of SNA Tours. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your frequent traveler mileage points, you must contact the AIRLINE about this when you receive your air tickets from SNA Tours.

In order to claim your frequent traveler mileage, you may be required to provide the original ticket receipt and boarding pass, so be sure to keep these papers.

SNA Tours trans-pacific flights are mainly conducted with our allied partners Air Canada (AC) and Air China (CA), with both airlines being code-sharing flights and members of the prestigious airline alliance, Star Alliance.

Per rules of Air China, Air China group airfare only applies to flights operated by Air China (CA992/991, CA998/997) which refers to flight from Vancouver (YVR) to Beijing. Air China currently does not operate any flight from Toronto (YYZ) to China and therefore SNA Tours Canada East Coast departures are via New York (JFK).

Air Canada operates flights from Toronto to Beijing (AC31/32) and the same flight has Air China sharing code flight number CA8354/CA8353, note this flight is not operated by Air China and therefore SNA Tours cannot book you on this flight. The same applies to Toronto to Shanghai flight (AC87/88, CA8358/CA8357). If you prefer to fly directly from Toronto to China, you will have to book your transpacific flight on your own with Air Canada and join our China "Land only" tour package.

There is also the possibility that Air China & Air Canada may not allow upgrade to business class using their mileage, nor can you redeem a free airline ticket with your existing mileage points through the airline.

Due to their code-sharing affiliation, Air Canada mileage points can be used to redeem Air China flights. This must be done directly with Air Canada. It is your sole responsibility to verify the flight information with Air Canada and Air China, since flights and schedules are subject to change.

Seat Assignment and Dietary Requests

Seat assignments for your flight are not guaranteed, but such requests can be relayed to the airlines. It is best to contact the airline personally about your seating preferences or any dietary requests 2 weeks prior to your departure date after you have received our airline confirmation.

For Passengers Taking Internal Transit in China

Baggage Precautions for Railway Transit in China:

For those of you whose tours include the unique experience of venturing between cities via train travel (e.g. traveling from Beijing to Xi'an via an overnight train), there are additional baggage precautions which must be taken for any checked baggage accompanying you.

The first precaution is regarding locked baggage. When it comes to railway transit, China aviation and transportation regulations stipulate that all passengers' checked baggage must be locked during transit in China. The Chinese regulation also stipulates that you only need to lock the major compartments of your baggage. If the main compartments of your baggage are found unlocked during transit, the train station personnel will lock it for you and you will be billed for the locks. So prepare a lock for the main compartment of each bag; any type of lock will do.

Secondly, please note that the following items are prohibited and cannot be carried in checked baggage during your train travels: Flammable, pressurized (aerosols like hairspray, spray-on sun block, etc...), explosive, corrosive, poisonous, radioactive, and magnetized materials. Passengers are also forbidden to carry arms, sharp or lethal weapons during air or railway transit in China.

Applying for the China Visa

All foreign nationals traveling to Vietnam must travel on a valid passport and a tourist visa must be obtained prior to entering. Before you apply for a visa, check your passport and make sure it is still valid for at least 6 months after the departure date. Your passport must also have at least one entirely blank page for the affixed China visa. Your passport should be signed and must be physically submitted to the China Consulate either via SNA Tours or by yourself if you decide to handle your own visa application. Since the China tourist visa (Type L) is only valid for three months (or six months for approved circumstances) after the date of issuance, we suggest that you do not apply for the visa too early.

For US passport holders, if you plan to handle the China visa application on your own, The China Consulates will charge a flat fee of \$140 for single/double entry visa for regular service.*

For Canadian passport holders, The China Consulates will charge a flat fee of \$50 for single/double entry visa for regular service.*

**Prices are subject to change*

Please be advised that the Chinese Consulate-General in Vancouver does not accept cash, credit card or personal cheques as of March 01, 2007. Please make payments for the visa application fees by debit card or money order.

For special cases, rush service is offered, and the applicant is subject to pay an extra express fee for it.

For inquiries regarding the rush service fees, please contact SNA Tours or the appropriate Chinese Consulate for the updated information regarding this matter.

If you prefer to have SNA Tours obtain a visa on your behalf, a nominal \$50 visa-processing fee (postage inclusive) will be added in addition to the flat fee charged by the China Consulate (total \$100). Please be advised that China visa fee is not part of the tour fare and is subject to change.

For our Tibet Group, Please note that the Chinese Consulate does not issue individual visas for tourists to Tibet. Since we will apply for the Permits to get into Tibet for our tour participants, it is not necessary for you to apply for a Chinese visa at the Chinese Consulate until you have received our notice. Participants of the tour will be informed after we have obtained the Permits from the Tourist Bureau of Tibet for all the tour participants.

If you were born in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan but hold a U.S. or Canadian passport, you must contact SNA Tours for more information about your China visa application. Be aware that the China Consulate will require additional documents.

The People's Republic of China has an embassy in Washington DC and 5 consulates in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, and New York, and an embassy in Ottawa and 3 consulates in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto.

Please find their detailed addresses and contact information below. You may submit your visa application at any of these consulates. Please be advised that Chinese Consulate does not accept mail-in visa applications due to increased security measures.

Chinese Consulate General in Canada

British Columbia, Vancouver

Add: 288 - 1338 West Broadway; Vancouver, BC

Tel: (604)734-0704; Fax: (604)734 - 0311

Office Hours: 9:00 to 13:00 from Monday to Friday, except holidays

Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories

If you are the residents of Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories, Please go to the Chinese Consulate General in Calgary.

Add: 1011 6th Ave. S.W. Suite 100, Calgary, AB T2P 0W1

Tel: (403)2643322 Visa Section: (403)5371247 Fax: (403)2646656

Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba

If you are the residents of Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, Please go to the Chinese Consulate General in Toronto.

Add: 240 St. George Street, Toronto Ontario, M5R 2P4

Tel: (416)9647260 Fax: (416)3246468

Chinese Consulate General in USA

The Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco covers Northern California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. If you do not live in this area, please contact the Chinese Consulate General in your area. A complete list of the Chinese Consulate Generals in USA is available on the web site of the Embassy in Washington D.C. <http://www.china-embassy.org>.

San Francisco

Add: 1450 Laguna Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

Passport and Visa Office Tel: (415)852-5941 (Live answer from 15:30 to 16:30)

Passport and Visa Office Hours: 9:00 to 12:00 and 13:00 to 15:00 from Monday-Friday, except holidays

Los Angeles

Add: 443 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, CA 90020

Passport and Visa Office Add: 3rd Floor 500 Shatto Place Los Angeles, CA 90020

Tel: (213)807-8088 Fax: (213)807-8091 Passport & Visa Office: (213) 807-8006

General Office Hours: 9:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 17:00 from Monday-Friday, except holidays

Passport and Visa Office Hours: 9:00 to 14:00 from Monday- Friday, except holidays

New York

Add: 520 12th Ave, New York, NY 10036

Tel: (212)244-9456 Fax: (212)465 1708

Passport and Visa Office Tel: (212)868 2078 (ext. 8 for representative)

Passport and Visa Office Hours: 9:00 to 12:00 and 13:00 to 14:30 from Monday- Friday, except holidays

Washington DC

Add: 3505 International Place, N.W. Washington D.C. 20008

Passport and Visa Office Add: Suite 110, 2201 Wisconsin Ave, N.W. Washington D.C. 20007

Tel: (202)495-2266 Fax: (202)495-2138 Passport and Visa Office: (202)337-1956

General Office Hours: 9:00-6:00 from Monday-Friday, except holidays

Passport and Visa Office Hours: 9:30 to 12:30 and 13:30 to 15:00 from Monday-Friday, except holidays

Instructions for Visa Application

If you choose to handle the visa application by yourself, you must physically present your application and documents to the China Consulate, or, entrust someone to handle the application on your behalf.

The following documents should be submitted when applying for the Chinese visa:

- Passport with at least 6 months remaining validity and available blank pages for visa
- One properly completed visa application form
- A recent passport-size photo stapled or glued on the visa application form;

Chinese visas generally have single entry, dual entries and multiple entries. A single entry visa is only valid for three months; dual entry visas are valid for six months and multiple entries valid for twelve or twenty four months. It takes 4 to 5 business days to process the visa application.

If you wish to have SNA Tours to handle your visa application, you must mail your actual passport, the completed and signed China Visa Application Form with one 2x2 passport photo glued to the form along with your balance payment check (where applicable) to our company by the balance payment due date at least 90 days prior to the departure date specified on the invoice.

Please do not mail out your passport too early in case you need it to travel abroad. As mentioned, the China visa is only valid for 3 months; therefore, we will not process the visa application until about 90 days prior to your departure date. If for any reason you are unable to send us the passport in a timely manner due to other travel arrangements, please contact us for further instructions/details.

Your passport and China visa will be returned to you via Registered Mail. Please mail your documents to the address below via courier services such as FedEx, UPS or USPS Registered Mail, Canada Post Registered Mail or Purolator, so that you are able to track the delivery of your important documents.

SNA TOURS LTD.

240-8877 ODLIN CRESCENT, RICHMOND , BC CANADA V6X 3Z7

We do not recommend that you post your documents via regular mail.

If any of you need help in applying for the visa, please contact us by e-mail or telephone. Or if you would like more information about the visa application process, you may also refer to the Chinese Consulate website: www.vancouver.china-consulate.org.

Learn Simple Chinese

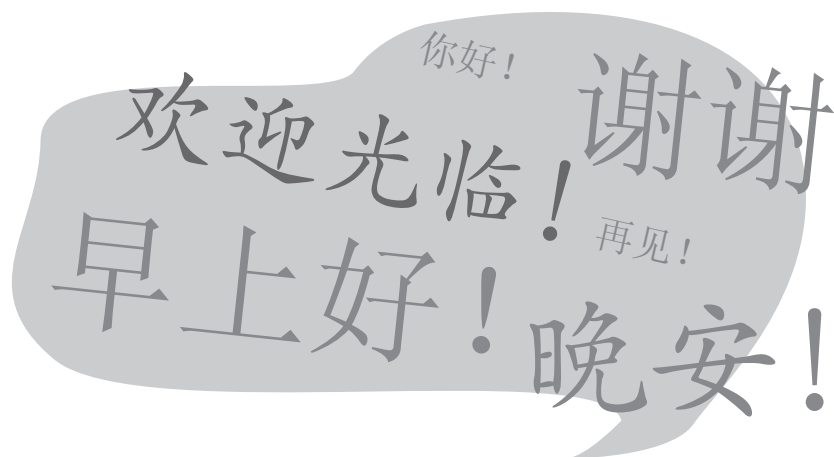
When you are traveling in China, try to speak simple Chinese when communicating with local Chinese people. This will undoubtedly bring forth a much more genuine grass-roots cultural experience for your travels in China.

English Expressions	Chinese Pinyin or Pronunciation	Chinese Characters
Greeting	Wen hou, da zhao hu	問候, 打招呼
Hello!	Ni Hao!	你好!
Good morning!	Zao Shang Hao!	早上好!
Good afternoon!	Xia Wu Hao!	下午好!
Good evening!	Wan Shang Hao!	上好!
Good night!	Wan An!	晚安!
Welcome!	Huan ying guang lin!	歡迎光臨
Nice to meet you!	Xing hui	幸會!
Nice knowing you!	Hen gao xing ren shi ni!	很高興認識你!
Glad to see you again!	Hen gao xing you jian mian le!	很高興又見面了!
How are you doing?	Hai hao ma?	還好嗎?
How have you been?	Zui jin zen yang le?	最近怎樣啦?
Thank you!	Xie Xie!	謝謝!
Very Good!	Hen Hao!	好!
Good-Bye!	Zai Jian!	再見!

More Ways to Communicate with Chinese People

Chinese Body Language and Gestures - How to count from ONE to TEN with only one hand?

The Chinese can use five fingers on one hand to indicate the numbers from one to ten. Body language and gestures may be more effective in situations where you cannot speak Chinese language or when you are at a very noisy place.



Frequently Asked Questions

Chinese Customs

Q: What is special about Chinese Folklore?

A: Because of the vast territory and the diverse composition of the Chinese nation, folklore varies from region to region. As early as the Han Dynasty over 2,000 years ago, it was recorded that “customs varied within a distance of 50 kilometres”. Over a long course of history, the 56 ethnic groups living in China have each developed their own customs regarding residence, food, clothing and decorations, marriage, family, festivals, religions, morals, rites and ceremonies and taboos.

Q: What mascots do the Chinese believe in?

A: According to traditional Chinese folk legends, dragons, phoenixes, tortoises and kylins (Chinese unicorns) are the “four mascots” of Chinese culture. The pattern of the flying dragon and dancing phoenix, in particular, is believed to be a symbol of good luck.

Destinations

Q: What are the most popular destinations in China?

A: Besides the popular cities (Beijing, Xian, Guilin and Shanghai), some routes, provinces and old towns are also popular destinations. These include the Yangtze River cruise, Silk Road adventures, Mystical Tibet, Old Town Lijiang, water town Zhouzhuang, and splendid Jiuzhaigou.

Q: What sites in China are listed in UNESCO'S World Heritage Program?

Time	Region	World Heritage Site
1987	Beijing & Shenyang	The Great Wall Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Beijing and Shenyang Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian
	Xi'an	Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor
	Shandong	Mount Taishan
	Dunhuang	Mogao Caves
1990	Anhui	Mount Huangshan
1992	Sichuan	Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area
	Zhangjiajie	Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area
1994	Chengde	Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples, Chengde
	Shandong	Temple and Cemetery of Confucius, and the Kong Family Mansion in Qufu
	Hubei	Ancient Building Complex in the Wudang Mountains
1996	Lhasa	Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa
	Sichuan	Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area
	Jiangxi	Lushan National Park
1997	Yunnan	Old Town of Lijiang
	Shanxi	Ancient City of Ping Yao
	Jiangsu	Classical Gardens of Suzhou

1998	Beijing	Summer Palace: an Imperial Garden in Beijing Temple of Heaven: an Imperial Sacrificial Altar in Beijing
1999	Fujian	Mount Wuyi
	Chongqing	Dazu Rock Carvings
2000	Chengdu	Mount Qingcheng and the Dujiangyan Irrigation System
	Huangshan	Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui - Xidi and Hongcun
	Luoyang	Longmen Grottoes
	Beijing	Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties
2001	Datong	Yungang Grottoes
2003	Yunnan	Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas
2004	Liaoning & Jilin	Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom
2005	Macao	Historic Centre of Macao
2006	Sichuan	Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries
	Henan	Yin Xu
2007	South China	South China Karst
	Guangdong	Kaiping Diaolou and Villages

Cases of Emergency

Q: How do I handle a loss of property?

A: First of all make sure that the missing item was not simply misplaced. In the unlikely event of property loss, ask your guide for help. In serious cases of loss, report your loss immediately to the police.

Q: What should I do if I lose my passport while traveling in China?

A: If your passport is lost in China, you need to ask your guide for help and report the loss to the city Public Security Bureau (PSB) immediately. The PSB will then issue a certificate of a lost passport. With the certificate, you will need to apply for a new passport in person at the nearest embassy or consulate of your own country, where you usually will be required to provide some other materials like passport photos, lost passport application forms, etc. With the newly issued passport in hand, you will then need to go to the PSB to get a new visa, so that you can go on your trip or exit China. Please be advised that the relevant departments are usually closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Chinese Holidays.

Legal Matters & Safety

Q: How do foreigners go about protecting their rights and interests?

A: The People's Republic of China protects the lawful rights and interests of foreigners within Chinese territory. If your legal rights and interests are infringed upon or something unpleasant happens to you, you may file complaints to the related organizations. In addition, all large tourist cities have hot lines for tourists to voice their complaints. Most of the complainants have been satisfied with the verdicts, which were determined after thorough investigations and verification of facts.

Q: What lawful rights, interests and obligations are foreigners entitled to in China?

A: There are two important things you should know when traveling in China as a foreign visitor:

1) Within Chinese territory, the People's Republic of China protects the legitimate rights and interests of foreign visitors. Just as that of Chinese nationals, the freedom of foreign visitors is inviolable. Likewise, as long as they reside within Chinese borders, all foreign visitors must abide by the laws of the People's Republic of China. Those who engage in any activities that disrupt public order and infringe upon the interests of the state and society will be punished according to the laws of China.

2) Within the period of validity of their visas, foreign visitors can freely travel the areas open to foreigners. However, they should respect the folkways and customs of local areas. For those who wish to visit areas that are not opened to foreigners, they should apply for a Foreigners Travel Permit from the local public security organization. Only after approval is granted, can they enter the area legally.

Q: Are there any health requirements for traveling to China? Do I need immunizations to enter China?

A: Travelers are advised to check with their doctors before visiting China. A Health Declaration form must be completed upon arrival. No immunizations are required for short-term travelers, unless you are coming from or traveling through a yellow fever infected area. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, USA, recommends those who have traveled from an infected area should have vaccination records available. Anyone not having the above-mentioned certificate traveling through an infected area will be detained for observation for as long as six days. You should also bring any special health remedies or medications you require, as well any over-the-counter pharmaceutical items. For traveling in the countryside, immune globulin is also recommended to combat hepatitis A, as is typhoid immunization. Travels to high-altitude areas such as Tibet are not recommended for those with pulmonary or cardiovascular conditions. The health quarantine service has the right to prevent any foreigner suffering from AIDS, venereal disease, leprosy, mental illness, or active tuberculosis from entering China.

Q: How can I ensure my safety during my journey?

A: Compared with many other countries, China is considered one of the safest countries in the world in terms of personal security. With that being said, petty crime exists and has increased in recent years, especially in and around the major cities. However, serious and malicious crimes against foreigners are relatively rare. Foreigners are natural targets for pickpockets and thieves, but as long as you keep your wits intact, it should be difficult for thieves to get at your belongings. High-risk areas in China are local flea markets, train and bus stations, city and long-distance buses (especially sleeper buses) and hard-seat train carriages. So it is wise to keep a close surveillance on your personal possessions in such public places.

Q: What should I do to ensure the safety of my personal belongings like passports, credit cards, jewelry, money and other important documents?

A: You should take several precautions:

1. Make several hard and soft copies of your passport, traveler's checks, credit cards, itinerary, airline tickets and other important travel documents. Leave one copy with a relative or friend back home and carry one copy with you.
2. Take most of your money in the form of traveler's checks and record the serial numbers, denominations, date, and location of the issuing agency. Remove all unnecessary credit cards from your wallet. Be sure to carry your credit card company's telephone number in case your card is lost or stolen. You should immediately report any loss of credit or bankcards.
3. Put your passport and other valuable documents in the safety box inside your room or in the safety boxes at the front desks of the hotels. Never take them with you when you go out for sightseeing. Also, do not leave any valuables lying on the beds or in unlocked drawers in the hotel rooms. The hotel will not be liable to compensate you if items are stolen from your room. Remember to take your belongings with you when you check out of the hotel.
4. Do not flaunt your money in public.
5. Keep enough cash in your pockets for your immediate needs, and keep the rest in a bag with secured pockets or a money belt, or leave your backup supply of money in the safety deposit box at your hotel.
6. Remove any fancy jewelry that may draw a thief's attention before you go out for a stroll.
7. Whenever you use your credit card, keep an eye on it until it is returned to you. Always verify that it is your credit card before placing it back in your wallet.
8. To avoid becoming a victim of "snatch-and-run" thievery, never carry a side bag or purse when you are walking on the street.
9. Never carry your passport / visa, credit cards, travelers' cheques or other travel documents in your shoulder bag or waist bag.
10. Ensure that you are aware of the values of different local bank notes to avoid being deceived.

Q: What should I do to avoid getting lost?

A: China is a populous nation with over 1.3 billion people, so all places are crowded with people, especially in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. So when you go sightseeing, please follow the local guide closely at all times, and do not wander too far away from the group. If you want to buy something or go to the washroom, please notify the guide in advance and he or she can show you the way and wait for you. If you do not follow this advice and get lost, it will be nearly impossible to find you in such a big and crowded place. In case you get lost, the best strategy is to stay exactly where you are and wait for the guide to come back and find you. If this does not happen, you may have to take a taxi back to the hotel. As most people in China cannot speak English, we advise you to bring along the room card (or the hotel voucher) of the hotel when you go out. The card should contain the name of the hotel in both Chinese and English, the hotel address and the telephone number. After hailing a taxi show the driver the room card and the driver will drive you back to the hotel.

Luggage

Q: How much luggage can I take on China domestic flights?

A: See "Baggage Allowance" under the "For passengers on international flights to / from China" section of the brochure.

Q: What should be done if there is any loss, theft or damage of my baggage?

A: If you cannot find your baggage, first of all make sure that the missing luggage was not misplaced. In case your luggage is really lost or stolen, notify your guide and if serious, report it immediately to the police. We are not responsible for any loss, theft or damage that occurs to your baggage, so please keep a close surveillance on your belongings at all times. Travel insurance is strongly recommended.

Meals

Q: Do we share large tables with other people?

A: If you are on a private tour, you will have your own table, but if you join a group tour, you will have to share a large table with other members of your group.

Q: Are the meals shown in the itinerary pre-arranged or can we make our own orders when we sit down to eat?

A: To guarantee the hygiene and quality of your food, most of the meals are pre-arranged in the government-approved restaurants, which are all set-menu meals. You cannot make your own orders at this point. If you have special requirements for meals (i.e. food allergies, vegetarian, kosher), please inform us before the tour starts so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Q: What kind of restaurants we will be eating at during our tour?

A: All of the restaurants we use for our tours are all approved by the national tourism administration, therefore they are dependable in terms of hygiene and quality.

Q: When I have lunch or dinner, do I need to pay for the drinks?

A: Normally for lunch or dinner, only one glass of soft drinks like Coca Cola, Sprite, mineral water or beer is included. Tea is also free of charge. However, if you want more soft drinks, wine or coffee, you have to pay by yourself. Wine is not sold by glass in China, so you have to buy an entire bottle.

Q: Where can I sample local dishes and snacks of a city?

A: In China, each city will have its own local delicacies. Normally it is not included in the program unless you have made a specific request for it. If you are interested, you can ask the local guide to help make such arrangements for you. You are responsible for the meal costs and related transportation costs. If you choose to go by yourself be sure to consult with your local guide and he or she will give you sug-

gestions on what and where to eat. Recommendations provided by travel guidebooks are also good culinary adventures to embark on. In any case, you must remember to always choose a restaurant that is dependable in terms of hygiene and quality. Never eat at small restaurants or open restaurants in the night markets to lower your risks of having an upset stomach from the food there.

Credit card is only accepted at large restaurants. For most of the restaurants in China, cash in the local Chinese currency is accepted. So bring some cash in Chinese yuan to enjoy any local dishes you plan to sample.

Money Matters

Q: May I take Chinese currency in and out China?

A: Any passenger entering or leaving China is allowed to carry no more than RMB 6,000 yuan.

You are required to declare your import of Chinese currency exceeding an amount of 6000 RMB. Since it is very easy to exchange USD and some other currencies into Chinese RMB, it is not necessary to bring pre-exchanged Chinese currency with you into China.

Before leaving China, RMB should be converted back into foreign currency with the personal valid "foreign exchange certificate". Unused foreign exchange and RMB traveler's cheques can be taken out of the country. Each tourist is permitted to take with them less than 6000 RMB.

Q: What currency should I bring?

A: We suggest that you bring your major credit cards, traveler's check and a small amount of cash. Most hotels and shops in major cities accept most international credit cards.

Chinese currency is called Renminbi (people's money), often abbreviated as RMB. The Bank of China issues RMB and is the sole legal tender within the People's Republic of China. There is no limit on the amount of foreign currency and foreign exchange bills that can be brought into China by tourists, but it must be declared to the customs.

Q: Where can I convert money for Chinese Yuan in China?

A: You can exchange your currency and travelers cheques at major banks or at the currency exchange facilities in major airports and hotels in China.

Q: Can I withdraw money at any time by using an ATM?

A: You can withdraw money (Chinese Yuan) from ATM machines of Bank of China at any time, and 24-hours self-help service is available. The ATM machine of Bank of China accepts most foreign credit cards, such as VISA, American Express, and MasterCard etc. You can also convert your money through a bank clerk. Most banks operate daily from 9:00 to 17:30 Monday through Fridays. On weekends, banks only operate from 9:00 to 15:00. Due to shorter weekend hours, you are encouraged to make your exchange transactions during weekdays.

Q: Can credit cards be used in China?

A: Currently only the following credit cards are accepted in China: MasterCard, VISA, American Express, JCB and Diners Card. However, these credit cards are only accepted at large hotels and shopping centres where the Bank of China has branches. However, this applies only in major cities and they are not always accepted in remote areas. Credit cards are not always accepted for the purchase of railway and airline tickets in China.

Q: When I finish my tour in China, what can I do with my leftover cash?

A: Upon leaving China, if you still have some residual local cash, you can change it back to your home currency with your passport and the exchange memos/receipts given by the banks or money exchange counters. It is important to retain the exchange memos/receipts whenever you change money.

Q: Can I keep some local money as a souvenir?

A: Yes. If you are taking less than 6000 RMB out of China, you do not need to declare it at customs. If the "souvenir" amount exceeds 6000 RMB, then you need to declare it at customs.

Shopping

Q: Will the tour guide allow us to decide whether we want to see any factories or stores?

A: It is you who decides whether shopping should be included in your program, not the tour guide. If you do not want to do any shopping, just inform the guide of your preference. No shopping excursions will be added without your permission.

Q: Will we have time to buy some souvenirs? Can you give us some tips for shopping in China?

A: As our itinerary is not very busy, normally there is some allotted free time for you after the sightseeing portion of the tour. With your agreement, the guide will take you to the designated tourist shops to buy souvenirs. Nevertheless, if you have no desire to do so please do not hesitate to let our guide know directly. Shopping in China is an interesting experience, but it can also be time-consuming, effortful and confusing. The following tips may help make your shopping experience in China much more pleasant:

1. It is always better to choose the shops run by the state when buying expensive items.
2. Do not spend large sums of money on things with which you are not familiar.
3. If the price offered is reasonable and acceptable, you could buy it directly at the offered price. If not, then you can bargain for a lower price (except at stores with fixed prices).
4. Do not shop for everything in one city; each place has its own unique local products that are worth buying.
5. Do not feel obliged to shop only because the shop attendants are very kind to you.
6. Leave plenty of time for transactions. From the time you decide to purchase an item until the transaction is completed, it will take longer than you expect.
7. When you see something you like - buy it. There is a possibility that you may not be able to find it elsewhere or you may not have enough time to go back.
8. Keep in mind that you should always ask for the receipts for any payments.
9. Art / antiques older than 120 years are not allowed to be purchased without prior permission from the Ministry of Culture. If you are unsure about the product's antiquity, inquire with your tour guide PRIOR to purchasing any items of great value.

For more shopping tips see to the "Tips for Shopping in China" section of the brochure.

Q: What cautions should foreigners take when buying Chinese antiques?

A: When buying expensive articles, please choose shops run by the state. Make sure that the antiques you buy carry a wax seal indicating that it is authentic and is allowed to be exported from China. Be aware that antiques dating before 1795 cannot be legally exported. Keep the purchase receipts of any antique purchases. Customs will ask you to produce them when leaving China.

Q: What should I be careful of if I want to shop in flea markets?

A: Foreigners always find it very interesting to explore the flea market in China. Flea markets are places where they can see different kinds of people selling a variety of products. Maybe everything in the market is a novelty to you. If you are interested, you can also buy some of the products. But keep in your mind that the quality of the merchandise sold at these markets is usually poorer than the merchandise in larger stores, so it is not advisable to buy food there. Extensive bargaining is also expected there, so try to learn from your tour guide about how to bargain before you set off. If you want to buy something, prepare some small bills in Chinese currency (RMB), because the peddlers here are reluctant to take USD or any other foreign currency. As flea markets are very crowded, please keep a close eye on your valuables and personal belongings.

Tipping

Q: What is the tipping practice for visitors to China?

A: It is a common practice for visitors to tip the tour guide and driver in recognition of their good service. SNA Tours will pre-collect the tour tipping so that you will not have to tip again in China. Tips, whether they are considered as gratuities or service fees, are the major motivator for the tour guides. Your China Tour national guide, local guides, drivers and porters are professional, conscientious, and most thankful for your acknowledgment. We realize that tipping can be confusing on a group tour to China; the following gratuity guideline is introduced solely for the convenience of SNA Tours group travelers:

\$10 per traveler per day, shared between all guides, porters and drivers.

Hotel porters also expect tips as well and there is no pre-determined amount as to how much you should tip. For other hospitality services, it is not customary to leave tips at the hotel or at local restaurants.

Transportation

Q: Do flights in China issue electronic tickets (E-tickets)?

A: Most major airlines in China are now able to issue E-tickets but not all of them. E-tickets are more prevalent among flights between larger cities than those on shorter routes. All foreign travelers holding an E-ticket only need to show their passports to board the plane but they do need to ensure that the name printed on the E-ticket is identical to the name printed on their passport. A confirmation code will be issued for each E-ticket.

Q: What should I do if my flight is cancelled or delayed? Whom can I call for help?

A: If your international flight is cancelled, delayed or changed resulting in an inability to arrive on time as scheduled, you need to contact us as soon as possible so that we can make the necessary modifications to your tour to minimize the occurrence of any inconveniences. If your internal flight is cancelled, the airline company usually will arrange for you to stay overnight at an airport hotel and let you board another flight the next day. No matter what happens to your flights (cancelled, delayed or changed), you need to contact us immediately so that we know what is happening. We will contact the airline company for the best solution possible to the issue at hand and then arrange pick-up, hotel accommodation, and tours accordingly.

Q: What is train travel like in China?

A: Train travel is an interesting, inexpensive and safe way of getting around China. It offers you more opportunities to get to know Chinese people. In China, the accommodations on the train are divided into four categories: soft-sleeper, hard-sleeper, soft-seats and hard-seats.

1. Soft-sleeper - private compartments in the soft sleeper carriages that are fitted out to a higher standard. Each compartment has four bunks, two upper and two lower.
2. Hard-sleeper - less comfortable than the soft-sleeper. The open compartment is comprised of six bunks, fixed as an upper, middle and lower bunk on either side.
3. Soft-seat - a nice, comfortable cushioned seat, but not all trains have the soft-seat carriages.
4. Hard-seat - the seating is not upholstered and the carriage tends to be dirty. It is always noisy and crowded with people on the most popular railway routes especially during peak times or peak travel seasons.

Q: How about the service on the train?

A: Train travel in China has to be undertaken with the full knowledge that the system is designed for the local population who is familiar with the standard conditions, so you cannot have too high of expectations for the train service. Most of the train staff cannot speak English. Nevertheless, English signage is available in the railway stations. Separate waiting lounges in the railway stations are also available to passengers with soft-seat or soft-sleeper tickets. Preferential boarding is available for these passengers as well.

Q: Are there any subways in China?

A: Nowadays, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have subway systems servicing the downtown areas. A subway ticket costs between 3 and 5 yuan. It is a fast, convenient and a helpful way to get around the city.

Q: How about taxis in China?

A: Taxis are a convenient means of transportation in various cities in China, with fares ranging from 1 to 2 yuan per km. To hail a taxi, simply raise your hand and a taxi will appear in no time. Remember to choose a taxi with a business permit, and before you disembark from a taxi ride, ask the driver for a receipt. Most taxi drivers do not understand much English, although those in tourist cities are encouraged to learn and speak some simple English. Non-Chinese speaking visitors are advised to have their destinations written down in Chinese to show to the taxi drivers.

Traveling in Tibet

Q: When is the best time to visit Tibet?

A: It is recommended that one should visit Tibet around May to July, and September to October. Lhasa, Tsetang and Shigatse are suitable for sightseeing tours all-year round. The harsh climate makes it unsuitable to visit the Everest Base Camp area from October to April. During winter, heavy snow in east Tibet and Ngari might block roads. While in August, heavy rainfall makes travel in those areas very difficult.

Q: What types of medication should I bring for the trip in Tibet?

A: Medicine is a must for travelers to Tibet. We suggest that you take some pain-relievers with you and enough medicine to treat colds, diarrhea, nausea and fever. Some nasal ointments and throat-moistening pills will be of great help for those who are sensitive to chilly or freezing weather conditions. Please consult your doctor prior to your travel to Tibet.

Q: What kind of documents do I need to apply for if I want to travel to Tibet?

A: There are two documents required for foreign tourists who want to travel to Tibet.

The first is the Chinese visa, which you can apply for at the Chinese Embassy or Consulate in your place of residence. The second is the Alien's Travel Permit issued by Tibet Tourism Bureau. Non-Chinese passport holders (including those of Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and other countries) must have an Alien's Travel Permit. Journalists and people who are involved in political matters will be revoked. When applying for the permit, you are required to provide copies of your visa and passports (the page with the photo) and other information such as your occupation. The permit costs around 200 RMB. The Tibet entrance permit can be issued two weeks prior to your entry into Tibet.

Q: What currencies can be used in Tibet? Can I use credit cards and bankcards?

A: Besides Chinese yuan, only US dollars can be accepted. However, few shops accept American currency and you might not be able to get a good deal for an exchange rate at these places. Credit cards can only be used at some hotels. The Bank of China also accepts credit cards. ATMs are not widely available. Converting your money to Chinese currency will be the best option for your stay in Tibet, which can be done at The Bank of China.

Q: What can you tell us about the folk customs and taboos of the Tibetan people? What should we keep in mind when traveling in Tibet?

A: Tibetan people are very kind and friendly. However, it is still better to educate yourself about their local customs before touring in Tibet. Your guide in Tibet will give you more information when you arrive. For the meantime, the following can be used as social etiquette guidelines when traveling in Tibet:

1. Do not photograph Tibetans without permission.
2. Always circumambulate gompas and other religious objects clockwise to keep shrines and chortens to your right.
3. Prayer wheels cannot be rotated contrarily.

4. Do not touch or remove anything on an altar.

5. Do not take photos during a prayer meeting. Always ask permission before taking photos, especially with flash. The larger monasteries often charge photography fees.

6. Do not step on the threshold of any tent, house, temple or monastery.

7. Do not wear shorts or short skirts in a monastery.

8. Take your hat off when you enter a chapel.

9. Smoking is not allowed in a monastery.

10. Do not touch the head of anyone.

11. Do not eat dog, donkey or horse meat in Tibet.

12. Be aware that Tibetans often gesture with their lips to show a direction. Therefore, if a member of the opposite sex pouts at you, they are just showing you where to go, not flirting with you.

Q: What is accommodation like in Tibet?

A: To cater to the increasing influx of tourists from all over the world, Tibet has already opened 12 star-rated hotels in Lhasa, Xigaze, Gyangtse, Zhangmu, Tingri, Tsetang, NyinChi and Nakchu. Lhasa houses two 4-star hotels (Lhasa hotel and Tibet Hotel) and several 3-star hotels, but no 5-star hotels.

These hotels have rooms with a cozy design and are furnished with all the necessary facilities, like restaurants, recreational centres, credit handling and foreign exchange conversion centres and so on. They also provide services such as hot water 24 hours a day, laundry services, IDD telephone services, room service, etc. Therefore, the stay in Tibet especially in Lhasa will be as comfortable as in any other parts of China, but please keep in mind that Tibet is still a work in progress in terms of development, so facilities and services of most hotels are not perfect and may require improvement.

Q: Will it be easy to communicate with my family while I am in Tibet?

A: Yes, with the economic development of Tibet, communication has greatly improved.

Like other cities in China, 4 star-rated hotels in Lhasa provide IDD call, fax, internet access and photocopying services. Phone calls can also be made at public telephone booths with international calling cards or at Telecommunication Centres. There are two Telecommunication Centres in Lhasa, one located opposite the Yin Qiao Hotel and the other on the west end of Beijing Dong Lu. International mail service is available at the post offices next to Telecommunication Centres. Mobile phone services cover a vast area, which provide tourists a convenient means of communication.

Yangtze River Cruise

Q: What is the usual weather like if I plan to go on the Yangtze River cruise?

A: Generally, it is windy, humid and with few peeks of sunshine. The average temperature reaches 30 C (86 F) in July and 10 C (50 F) in January. Either spring or autumn is the best season for a river cruise. During summer, thunderstorms are frequent, which causes the water levels of the river to rise. This usually occurs between July and September. The winters are always short and cold.

Q: When are the high, shoulder and winter (low) seasons for cruise prices?

A: Cruise prices vary according to different seasons. The high season refers to April, May, September and October during which the weather is at its most temperate and most suitable state to take the cruise. During the high season, the prices are at their highest. The winter season refers to December, January and February during which only few ships set sail and the prices are the lowest. The rest of the months belong to the remaining shoulder season. Although ships have their own classifications of the seasons, the season change dates are usually just 7-15 days earlier or later than the proposed dates.

Q: What clothes should I bring for the cruise?

A: We suggest that you bring a light jacket, jeans, T-shirts and a lightweight windbreaker if you are planning to commence your cruise during spring or autumn. A light sweater is handy for the cooler days. Bring some cotton T-shirts, shorts, a hat/cap, sunglasses and suntan lotion if your cruise is during the summer. Sweaters are a must during winter. Do not forget to bring proper footwear such as comfortable walking shoes, sandals or sneakers.

Q: Do the staff onboard speak English?

A: Yes, each cruise has a knowledgeable foreign national cruise director. Most of the service staff aboard the cruise speaks English as well.

Q: What shall I prepare for the shore excursions? What precautions should I take?

A: According to the program of the cruise, you will disembark the boat for a shore excursion during which you will be able to visit some famous scenic spots along the Yangtze River. Before you go, prepare mosquito repellent, skin lotion, flashlight, umbrella, hat, sunglasses and some drinks, and place them in a small bag to bring with you. Please wear casual clothes and comfortable shoes because sometimes you will need to walk a lot for the whole day. Bring some Chinese currency in small bills in case you want to buy something or need to offer tips to the local guide. Please follow the local guide closely at all times and do not wander too far away from the group. If you get lost, it will be very difficult for you to find your way back to the ship. It is possible that you will meet local people who will entice or invite you to visit some other places. Do not follow them, or you may find yourself in trouble. Never purchase any food or drinks at the local markets because the quality is not reliable. You can however buy small items as souvenirs.

Q: Are there any recreational activities on the ship?

A: There are all kinds of entertainment activities available during the cruise, including the Captain's Welcome Cocktail Party and Dinner, the Captain's Farewell Dinner, and Dancing and Singing Performance by the Crew Members. These events are often formal ones so appropriate attire is encouraged. We recommend formal jackets and ties for men and dresses or pantsuits for women.

There are also professionals aboard the ship who can teach you how to practice "Tai Chi". Lectures on topics as Chinese culture, Chinese history, Chinese painting and silk will also be given on the boat every day. The recreational activities available are dependent on the ship you choose for your cruise.

Q: Are there medical services available onboard?

A: There is a clinic and a professional doctor on the ship. If you feel unwell, you can go to the clinic to seek medical attention.

Miscellaneous

Q: Is it convenient to make phone calls in China? What kind of phone card is available to foreign travelers?

A: IDD service is available at all hotels and post offices. It is very convenient to make phone calls in China now. Telephone booths can be seen everywhere- in hotels, restaurants airports and as well as on the streets. Various phone cards are sold in China, which are available in post offices, inside hotels or at most street newspaper stands. International calling cards are recommended for convenience and can be obtained for a fair price.

See "Telephone Access" under the "General Information about China" section of the brochure for further details and instructions on how to make telephone calls in China.

Q: When is the best time to visit China?

A: China is a country with wide-ranging climatic conditions, so decisions regarding the best time to visit should be based on the regions you plan to tour and the kind of weather you enjoy.

Normally, the most comfortable season of the year to travel is during early autumn (September to early October). During this period, temperatures are tolerable throughout China (about 50 -72F) with a limited amount of rain. September for example is the only month during the year when the ancient and valuable paintings of the Beijing Palace Museum are displayed due to the proper climate conditions (low humidity and proper temperature) present during this time.

Spring can also be a delightful time to conduct your travels with the average temperatures being roughly the same as in autumn (about 50 -72F). The best way to deal with weather unpredictability is to wear layered clothing that will allow you to adjust to both colder and warmer temperatures.

Summer (from June to the end of August) can be extremely hot with soaring temperatures above 72F, especially in the famous 'four furnaces' of China: Wuhan, Tianjing, Chongqing and Nanchang. Summer is also the rainy season, so travelers should not forget umbrellas, light raincoats and waterproof shoes.

Winter can be incredibly cold especially in the north. Off-season traveling can also have its many rewards. For example, the Harbin Winter Ice Lantern Festival is quite charming. Before deciding when to take a tour, it is worth checking carefully the weather conditions of each city on the itinerary. Needless to say, the most attractive seasons to visit are also the most crowded. Regardless of which season you decide to visit China in, you will always be rewarded with charming scenery throughout China.

