

# China

## PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



China is the fourth largest country in the world, but with over 1.3 billion people it holds the largest population in the world, most of whom are Han Chinese. In all, there are about 56 ethnic groups throughout. Not only is China well known for its great engineering feats such as the Great Wall, it is also one of the oldest civilizations, having a history dating back over 5,000 years.

The official language of China is “Mandarin” also referred to as the “Han language”, the “National language” or simply “Chinese.” Locally, it is referred to as Putonghua, which means “common language”. China has seven other major dialect groups: Cantonese, Shanghaiese, Buzhou, Taiwanese, Xiang, Gan, and Hakka along with many other sub-dialects. Various groups such as the Mongolian, Tibetan, Naxi, Yi and other ethnic groups have their own “native” language, though the use of Mandarin is increasing. The use of English has increased in recent years, and many of the staff at hotels and stores can speak at least Basic English.

# GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

## Passports

- ❖ Are required of U.S. Citizens
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

## Visas

- ❖ Are required of U.S. citizens for entry into China
- ❖ Applications are not accepted by mail; you must apply in person or through a visa service
- ❖ You must apply no sooner than 3 months ahead of your departure date
- ❖ If you are not a U.S. Citizen, please inquire regarding visas

## Health, Immunizations

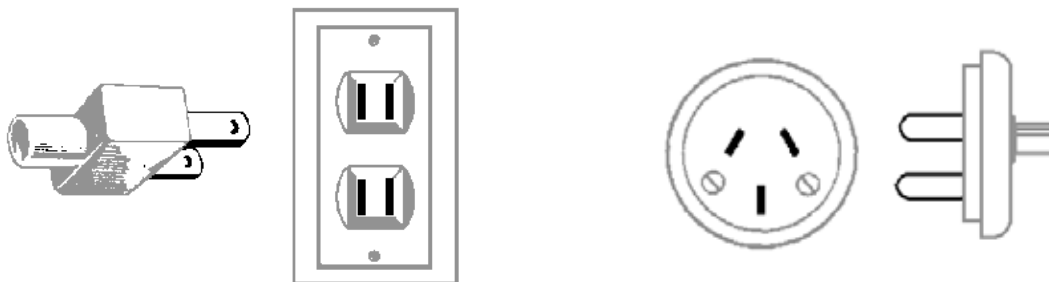
- ❖ Some immunizations are highly recommended, but none are required for entry into China
- ❖ Recommended immunizations include: Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid, MMR, and Hepatitis A & B
- ❖ Malaria prevention may be recommended depending on areas of travel
- ❖ A vaccination certificate for yellow fever may be required for entry into certain areas of China if you are coming from infected countries in South America or sub-Saharan Africa
- ❖ **SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE** from your personal physician or health service
- ❖ Latest recommendations for immunizations: call the International Traveler's Hotline at the Center for Disease Control: 404-639-2572; 404-639-1610 or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

## Time Difference

- ❖ Time used throughout China is Beijing Standard Time, which is eight hours ahead of GMT (GMT +8)
- ❖ It is 15 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time and 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time
- ❖ If it is 9 PM in Beijing, it is 9 AM in New York, and 6 Am in Los Angeles, on the same day

## Electricity

- ❖ 220 V, 50 Hz
- ❖ The most common outlets, pictured here, are the Flat blade plug (the "official" plug type is like that found in the U.S. but slightly shorter and without holes in blades) or Oblique flat blades with ground
- ❖ Most standard adapter/converter kits available in the U.S. will have the necessary plug configuration to fit the standard electric outlet



# ARRIVAL INTO CHINA

## Entry

- ❖ You will be met upon arrival by your tour leader or representative and transferred to your hotel
- ❖ Contact information is sent with your Last Minute Reminders from JOURNEYS

## Customs

- ❖ Anything you are bringing into the country for personal use - camera gear, binoculars, etc. - will be allowed
- ❖ A Customs Declaration Form describing in detail all the luggage and valuables you are bringing into the country must be filled out. Be sure to keep the carbon copy to show upon exit
- ❖ Forbidden to bring in are Renminbi (CHinese currency) in cash; fire arms, ammunition and explosives; pornography; drugs and narcotics such as opium, morphine, heroin, etc.; unsanitary food items
- ❖ It is important not to bring in pictures of the Dalai Lama
- ❖ On departure, you must fill out an Exit Registration Card. Articles registered on the Customs Declaration Form should all be brought out of China
- ❖ Visitors who want to change Renminbi back at the port of departure will be required to show the exchange memo from when you exchanged your foreign currency - Keep your exchange receipts!
- ❖ No more than Y300 is allowed to be taken out
- ❖ It is forbidden to take fresh fruits and herbal medicines out of China

# GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR

## Food, Restaurants

- ❖ Most restaurants are clean and trustworthy
- ❖ Most restaurants can accommodate vegetarians
- ❖ Eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked, and raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled yourself
- ❖ Drink only bottled drinks, and avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes
- ❖ Don't buy or eat food from street vendors or stalls
- ❖ Avoid fresh salads unless the vegetables are washed with purified water, and avoid dairy products that are unpasteurized or may not have been refrigerated properly
- ❖ You can expect to spend between Y30 to Y80 (about \$4-10 USD) for meals not included in the trip cost

## Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ China's currency is known as Yuan Renminbi (CNY or RMB)
- ❖ Check the current exchange rates at: <http://www.xe.net/ucc/>
- ❖ We suggest you change money through banks, hotels and authorized money changers only
- ❖ It is a good idea to bring newer dated currency that has no rips, marks, folds, or holes
- ❖ American Traveler's Checks are accepted at the Bank of China located in the larger cities
- ❖ You may need to show your passport when you exchange money or travelers checks, so keep it handy
- ❖ Credit cards can be used in major tourist cities, but are generally not accepted in rural areas
- ❖ Credit card companies are now charging a 3%+ surcharge on all foreign currency purchases (purchases of goods made outside of the US). Check with your credit card company before you travel as the charges change frequently without notice and vary with card and destination.
- ❖ Cardholders can withdraw cash from the ATM machine at the Bank of China
- ❖ Banking hours are typically 9:00 am to 6:00 pm seven days a week
- ❖ We suggest bringing about \$600 for items not included in the cost of the trip, emergency money, and shopping
- ❖ Airport departure tax is approximately 90Y (\$12 US)

## Tipping

- ❖ Tipping in China is not expected, but it is becoming more customary
- ❖ The following tip suggestions are based on group size, and are guidelines only - tipping is always at your own discretion:
  - ❖ In a group of 2-3 people: \$10 per person/per day to each the guide and driver
  - ❖ In a group of 4-6 people: \$8 per person/per day to each the guide and driver
  - ❖ In a group of 7-10 people: \$6 per person/per day to each the guide and driver
  - ❖ For hotel bell boys, allow for a \$2 tip to each bell boy (check-in and out at each hotel)
- ❖ If you are on on a Peregrine tour, your leader will collect a tipping kitty at the beginning of the tour. We suggest contributing at least \$2 per person/per day (or other amount they may suggest). Your leader will then distribute these tips appropriately along the way. This kitty is not designed to provide a tip for your leader, so if you would like to reward him/her for their services, you can do so individually or make a group presentation at the end of your tour. We recommend \$4-5 per person/per day or about \$25 per week, depending on the total group size and your personal preference
- ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

## Shopping List

- ❖ Popular souvenirs include: Silk, Tea, Antiques, Chinese medicine materials (medicine materials from rare animals cannot be taken out of China), and Local arts & crafts
- ❖ Bartering is the norm at street markets. Ask your guide for tips on local bartering. But don't push too hard - remember that what is only a few dollars to you may mean a great deal to the average seller or artisan. Never barter unless you intend to buy.

## Emergency Services

- ❖ The standards of medical care and availability of medicine vary from region to region
- ❖ Major cities like Beijing and Shanghai have well equipped medical facilities
- ❖ Most hotels have access to a doctor
- ❖ Though health care is available in remote areas, it is very limited
- ❖ Prevention of injury is always the best policy.
- ❖ Your guide will advise you in the case of urgent medical need

# SPECIAL REMARKS ABOUT CHINA

## Photography

- ❖ Do not photograph military establishments, airports, border crossings and government buildings
- ❖ It is best to ask permission before taking portrait photos
- ❖ Photography is forbidden in most museums, palaces, grottoes and temples, though some institutions permit photographing with a small fee
- ❖ If in doubt, ask the guide

## Safety

- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, always lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ Make use of security facilities provided for valuables in your accommodation
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace



## Climate

- ❖ China's weather varies greatly depending on region
- ❖ Best time to travel is Spring (March to May) and fall (September to November)
- ❖ China's climate is similar to that of the United States
- ❖ The rainy season lasts from April to September
- ❖ Typhoons may become present on the southeast coast between July and September

## Important Notes

- ❖ **DON'T:** Insult, embarrass, shame, yell at or demean a Chinese person – they will “lose face”; Discuss politics or religion, especially the Dalai Lama; Behave impatiently; Make unusual facial expressions; or Wear revealing clothes, especially while visiting monasteries
- ❖ **DO:** Negotiate prices; Show interest and respect in Chinese culture as well as the history of China; Bring a small gift for your local guide(s), especially something representing your home town; Learn a few words of Chinese

## Equipment & Packing

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag (for treks) or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations.
- ❖ Try to avoid large, bulky suitcases that are difficult to carry.
- ❖ Pack lightly! There may be occasions when you need to carry your own luggage.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ Keep in mind that synthetic fabrics dry faster than natural fibers like cotton, especially in humid areas, so you can pack less if you are able to wash and dry your clothes easily.
- ❖ Casual clothing is appropriate at all times
- ❖ Laundry service is available at most hotels in cities

# CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

## Pre-Departure Tasks

- ❖ Obtain or renew passport
- ❖ Buy travelers checks in low denominations
- ❖ Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- ❖ Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- ❖ Break-in primary footwear

## Clothing

- Comfortable walking/tennis shoes (washable)
- Extra pair shoes or sandals
- Cotton or cotton blend socks
- Shorts
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Cotton pants or jeans
- Nicer pants or skirt (optional)
- Lightweight, long-sleeve shirt
- T-shirts or short sleeve blouse/shirt
- Lightweight jacket or windbreaker
- Heavy sweatshirt or sweater



- Sturdy rain gear such as poncho or jacket (pants optional)
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Swim suit
- Sleepwear
- Under clothes
- Heavy jacket or coat, hat, gloves or mittens, wool socks & long johns (for winter & high altitudes)

### Items for Trekking trips

- Lightweight, waterproof hiking boots
- Sleeping bag
- Towel & washcloth
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap (suitcases are not acceptable for treks)

### Personal Items

- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)
- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Copies of all important documents
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Underwater camera (disposable kind is very handy)
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Lightweight binoculars
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable suitcase
- Luggage tags
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs
- Small packable umbrella
- Plastic cups & utensils (useful for train rides)

### Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

## Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

## Optional Items

- Binoculars
- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family
- Mask, snorkel, fins, wetsuit (if applicable)
- Map
- Silica bags for moisture (protect camera equipment)
- Video camera
- Phrase book

