



ALLURING ASIA

DESTINATION
CHINA

TRAVELER'S GUIDE





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Thank you.

POPULATION

China, with over 1.34 billion people (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), is without doubt the most populous country in the world. The ratio of the sexes is about 51.5% male and 48.5% female. Some 41.76% of the population lives in the urban cities and towns while the rest is in rural areas.

TIME

EST + 13 hours. Despite the vast size of the country, Beijing time is standard throughout China.

VISAS

United States Citizens require a visa. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of arrival into China.

INSURANCE

You should not assume your U.S. or other existing health insurance will cover you while traveling abroad. Since the standard of emergency treatment is not always as high as in the West, it is advisable for travelers to take out an additional travel policy that includes evacuation in addition to their normal medical insurance.

HISTORY

Dynastic Period

China is the oldest continuous major world civilization with records dating back about 3,500 years. Successive dynasties developed a system of bureaucratic control which gave the agrarian-based Chinese an advantage over neighboring nomadic and hill cultures. Chinese civilization was further strengthened by the development of a Confucian (Kongzi) state ideology and a common written language that bridged the gaps among the country's many local languages and dialects.

The last dynasty was established in 1644 when the nomadic Manchus overthrew the native Ming dynasty and established the Qing dynasty with Beijing as its capital.

During the 19th century Qing control weakened and prosperity diminished. China suffered massive social strife economic stagnation explosive population growth and Western penetration and influence. The Taiping and Nian rebellions along with a Russian-supported Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang drained Chinese resources and almost toppled the dynasty. Britain's desire to continue its illegal opium trade with China collided with imperial edicts prohibiting the addictive drug and the First Opium War erupted in 1840. China lost the war; subsequently Britain and other Western powers including the United States forcibly occupied "concessions" and gained special commercial privileges.

Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanjing and in 1898 when the Opium Wars finally ended Britain executed a 99-year lease of the New Territories significantly expanding the size of the Hong Kong colony.

Early 20th Century China

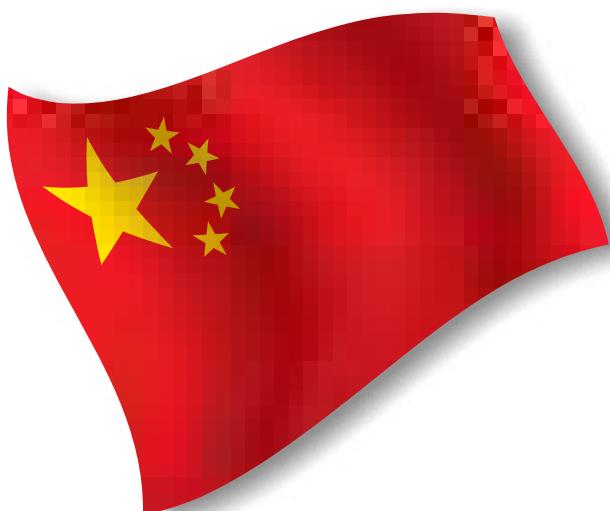
Frustrated by the Qing court's resistance to reform young officials military officers and students--inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen--began to advocate the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and creation of a republic. A revolutionary military uprising on October 10 1911 led to the abdication of the last Qing monarch. As part of a compromise to overthrow the dynasty without a civil war the revolutionaries and reformers allowed high Qing officials to retain prominent positions in the new republic. One of these figures General Yuan Shikai was chosen as the republic's first president. Before his death in 1916 Yuan unsuccessfully attempted to name himself emperor. His death left the republican government all but shattered ushering in the era of the "warlords" during which China was ruled and ravaged by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders.



In the 1920s Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary base in south China and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With Soviet assistance he organized the Kuomintang (KMT or "Chinese Nationalist People's Party") and entered into an alliance with the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After Sun's death in 1925 one of his protégés Chiang Kai-shek seized control of the KMT and succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule. In 1927 Chiang turned on the CCP and executed many of its leaders. The remnants fled into the mountains of eastern China. In 1934 driven out of their mountain bases the CCP's forces embarked on a "Long March" across China's most desolate terrain to the Northwest where they established a guerrilla base at Yan'an in Shaanxi Province.

During the "Long March" the Communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong. The bitter struggle between the KMT and the CCP continued openly or clandestinely through the 14-year long Japanese invasion (1931-45), even though the two parties nominally formed a united front to oppose the Japanese invaders in 1937. The war between the two parties resumed after the Japanese defeat in 1945. By 1949, the CCP occupied most of the country.

Chiang Kai-shek fled with the remnants of his KMT government and military forces to Taiwan, where he proclaimed Taipei to be China's provisional capital" and vowed to re-conquer the Chinese mainland. The KMT authorities on Taiwan still call themselves the "Republic of China."



The People's Republic of China

In Beijing on October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China. The new government assumed control of a people exhausted by two generations of war and social conflict and an economy ravaged by high inflation and disrupted transportation links. A new political and economic order modeled on the Soviet example was quickly installed.

In the early 1950's China undertook a massive economic and social reconstruction. The new leaders gained popular support by curbing inflation restoring the economy and rebuilding many war-damaged industrial plants. The CCP's authority reached into almost every phase of Chinese life. Party control was assured by large politically loyal security and military forces; a government apparatus responsive to party direction; and ranks of party members in labor women's and other mass organizations.

The "Great Leap Forward" and the Sino-Soviet Split
In 1958 Mao broke with the Soviet model and announced a new economic program the "Great Leap Forward" aimed at rapidly raising industrial and agricultural production. Giant cooperatives (communes) were formed, and backyard factories" dotted the Chinese landscape. The results were disastrous. Normal market mechanisms were disrupted agricultural production fell behind and China's people exhausted themselves producing what turned out to be shoddy unsalable goods. Within a year starvation appeared even in fertile agricultural areas. From 1960 to 1961 the combination of poor planning during the Great Leap Forward and bad weather resulted in famine.

The Cultural Revolution

In the early 1960's State President Liu Shaoqi and his protege Party General Secretary Deng Xiaoping took over direction of the party and adopted pragmatic economic policies at odds with Mao's revolutionary vision. Dissatisfied with China's new direction and his own reduced authority Party Chairman Mao launched a massive political attack on Liu Deng and other pragmatists in the spring of 1966. The new movement the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" was unprecedented in Communist history. For the first

Family Planning Policy

China has almost 20% of the world's total population. To control rapid growth in the population growth and to ensure quality of life, 'Family Planning', is 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 more strenuous lives in countryside and where there is a greater need for manual labor, they are allowed to have their second baby several years later after the birth of the first one. A more liberal policy is also followed in ethnic minority areas. Generally, two children are allowed for one family, sometimes three. For extremely underpopulated minorities, there is no limitation on childbirth.



time, a section of the Chinese Communist leadership sought to rally popular opposition against another leadership group.

China was set on a course of political and social anarchy which lasted the better part of a decade. In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his closest comrade in arms National Defense Minister Lin Biao, charged Liu, Deng, and other top party leaders with dragging China back toward capitalism.

The ideological struggle between more pragmatic, veteran party officials and the radicals re emerged with a vengeance in late 1975. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and three close Cultural Revolution associates (later dubbed the "Gang of Four") launched a media campaign against Deng. In January of 1976 Premier Zhou Enlai a popular political figure died of cancer. On April 5 Beijing citizens staged a spontaneous demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Zhou's memory with strong political overtones in support of Deng. The authorities forcibly suppressed the demonstration. Deng was blamed for the disorder and stripped of all official positions although he retained his party membership.

The Post-Mao Era

Mao's death in September 1976 removed a towering figure from Chinese politics and set off a scramble for succession. Former Minister of Public Security Hua Guofeng was quickly confirmed as Party Chairman and Premier. A month after Mao's death Hua backed by the PLA arrested Jiang Qing and other members of the "Gang of Four." After extensive deliberations the Chinese Communist Party leadership reinstated Deng Xiaoping to all of his previous posts at the 11th Party Congress in August 1977. Deng then led the effort to place government control in the hands of veteran party officials opposed to the radical excesses of the previous two decades.

The new pragmatic leadership emphasized economic development and renounced mass political movements. At the pivotal December 1978 Third Plenum (of the 11th Party Congress Central Committee) the leadership adopted economic reform policies aimed at expanding rural income and incentives encouraging experiments in enterprise autonomy reducing central planning and establishing direct foreign investment in China.

After 1979 the Chinese leadership moved toward more pragmatic positions in almost all fields. The party encouraged artists writers and journalists to adopt more critical approaches although open attacks on party authority were not permitted. In late 1980 Mao's Cultural Revolution was officially

proclaimed a catastrophe. Hua Guofeng a protégé of Mao was replaced as Premier in 1980 by reformist Sichuan party Chief Zhao Ziyang and as party General Secretary in 1981 by the even more reformist Communist Youth League chairman Hu Yaobang.

Reform policies brought great improvements in the standard of living especially for urban workers and for farmers who took advantage of opportunities to diversify crops and establish village industries. At the same time however political dissent as well as social problems such as inflation urban migration and prostitution emerged. Although students and intellectuals urged greater reforms some party elders increasingly questioned the pace and the ultimate goals of the reform program. In December of 1986 student demonstrators taking advantage of the loosening political atmosphere staged protests against the slow pace of reform confirming party elders' fear that the current reform program was leading to social instability. Hu Yaobang a protégé of Deng and a leading advocate of reform was blamed for the protests and forced to resign as CCP General Secretary in January 1987.

1989 Student Movement and Tiananmen Square
After Zhao became the party General Secretary the economic and political reforms he had championed came under increasing attack. His proposal in May 1988 to accelerate price reform led to widespread popular complaints about rampant inflation and gave opponents of rapid reform the opening to call for greater centralization of economic controls and stricter prohibitions against Western influence. This precipitated a political debate which grew more heated through the winter of 1988-9.

The death of Hu Yaobang on April 15,1989 coupled with growing economic hardship caused by high inflation provided the backdrop for a large scale protest movement by student intellectuals and other parts of a disaffected urban population. University students and other citizens in Beijing camped out at



Tiananmen Square to mourn Hu's death and to protest against those who would slow reform. Their protests which grew despite government efforts to contain them called for an end to official corruption and for defense of freedoms guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution. Protests also spread through many other cities including Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Martial law was declared on May 20,1989. Late on June 3rd and early on the morning of June 4th military units were brought into Beijing. They used armed force to clear demonstrators from the streets. There are no official estimates of deaths in Beijing but most observers believe that casualties numbered in the hundreds.

After June 4th while foreign governments expressed horror at the brutal suppression of the demonstrators the central government eliminated remaining sources of organized opposition and detained large numbers of protesters. They also required political reeducation not only for students, but also for large numbers of party cadre and government officials.

Third Generation of Leaders

Deng's health deteriorated in the years prior to his death in 1997. During that time President Jiang Zemin and other members of his generation gradually assumed control of the day-to-day functions of government. This "third generation" leadership governs collectively with President Jiang at the center.

China is firmly committed to economic reform and opening to the outside world. The Chinese leadership has identified reform of state industries as a government priority. Government strategies for achieving that goal include large-scale privatization of unprofitable state-owned enterprises.

GOVERNMENT

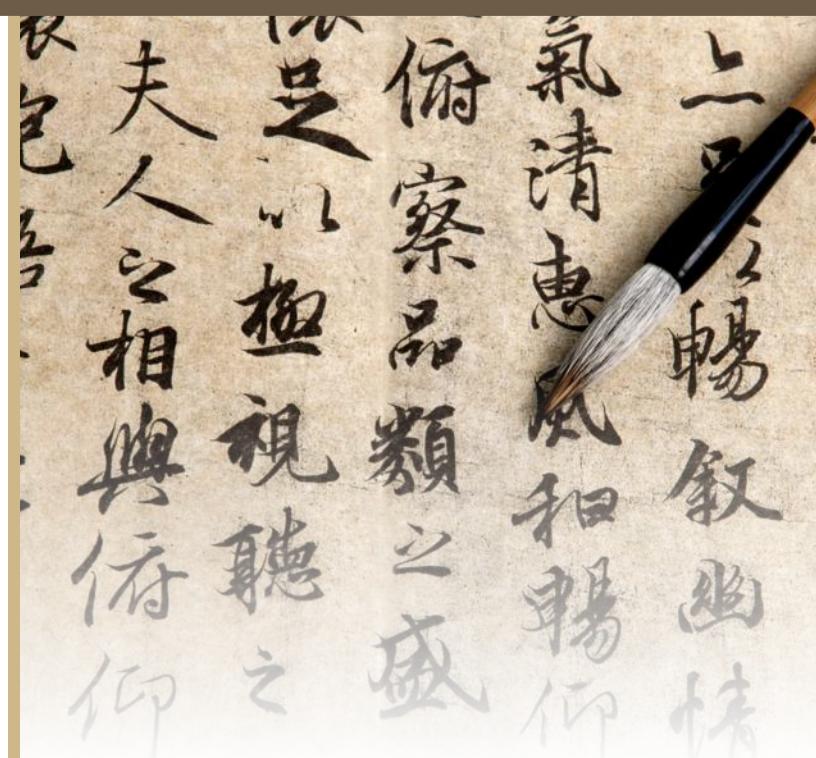
The primary organs of state power are the National People's Congress (NPC), the President, and the State Council. Members of the State Council include Premier, a variable number of vice premiers, state councilors (protocol equal of vice premiers but with narrower portfolios), and ministers and heads of State Council commissions.

Under the Chinese Constitution, the NPC is the highest organ of state power in China. It meets annually for about 2 weeks to review and approve major new policy directions, laws, the budget, and major personnel changes. These initiatives are presented to the NPC for consideration by the State Council after previous endorsement by the Communist Party's Central Committee.

Although the NPC generally approves State Council policy and personnel recommendations, various NPC committees hold active debate in closed sessions, and changes may be made to accommodate alternate views. When the NPC is not in session, its permanent organ, the Standing Committee, exercises state power.

The president, as the head of the state, promulgates laws, appoints the premier, vice premiers, state councilors, ministers of various ministries and state commissions, the auditor-general, and the secretary-general of the State Council, according to decisions of the National People's Congress and its standing committee.

The state administrative organs of China include the central and local administrative organs. The central administrative organ is the Central People's Government, better known as the State Council. Local administrative organs are local people's governments at four levels: the provinces (autonomous regions and centrally administered municipalities), cities and prefectures, counties and township



LANGUAGE

The official language is Mandarin Chinese. Among the enormous number of local dialects, large groups speak Cantonese, Shanghaiese (also known as Shanghainese), Fuzhou, Hokkien-Taiwanese, Xiang, Gan and Hakka dialects in the south. Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, have their own languages. English is spoken by many guides and in hotels but taxi drivers do not speak English, even in big cities.

COMMON PHRASES in Mandarin

Hello	Ni hao
How are you?	Ni hao ma?
Thank you	Xiekie
You're welcome	Bu keqi
Goodbye	Zaijian
Please	Quing
I'm sorry	Duibuqi
What is your name?	Ni jiao shenme mingzi?
My name is _____	Wo Jiao
Yes	No word in Chinese language for yes
No	No word in Chinese language for no
Where is the toilet?	Cesuo zai nail?
How do I get to _____?	Zenme qu
Water	Naam plao
How Much?	Cudie a?

Mandarin does not have specific words for saying "yes" and "no." Instead, the verb which is used in the Mandarin question is used to make a positive or negative reply.

CLIMATE

China covers extensive territory and has a complex topography; therefore the weather differs from region to region. The South East, below the Nanling Mountains, tends to be very wet with high temperatures all year round. In the central Yangtze and Huaihe River valleys there are four distinct seasons with very hot summers and extremely cold winters, and rain all year round. The dry North experiences a short but sunny summer, with long bitterly cold winters. The coast is humid and experiences monsoons during summer.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE & RAINFALL

Beijing	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.3	3.1	8.8	6.7	2.3	0.7	0.4	0.1
Min Temp (F)	15	19	31	44	56	65	71	69	58	44	31	19
Max Temp (F)	34	40	52	68	80	87	88	86	79	67	50	38
Shanghai	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	1.5	2.3	3.2	4.0	4.5	6.8	5.1	5.2	6.1	2.4	2.0	1.4
Min Temp (F)	32	34	41	51	60	68	76	76	68	58	47	36
Max Temp (F)	45	47	54	65	74	81	90	90	81	72	62	51
Xian	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	7.0	10	29	43	60	54	99	71	92	60	24	6.0
Min Temp (F)	25	30	39	50	57	66	72	70	61	50	37	27
Max Temp (F)	41	46	57	70	79	88	90	88	77	68	54	43
Hong Kong	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	1.2	1.9	3.3	6.3	11.8	15.5	14.4	14.4	10.7	4.3	1.4	1.0
Min Temp (F)	57	57	63	68	75	81	81	79	79	73	66	59
Max Temp (F)	66	66	70	77	84	86	90	88	86	82	75	70
Guilin	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	2.0	3.4	5.0	10.3	14	14	8.9	7.1	3.0	3.4	2.7	1.9
Min Temp (F)	41	43	51	60	68	74	77	71	63	53	44	60
Max Temp (F)	52	56	62	74	81	87	91	87	78	69	59	74



THE LAND

China is bordered to the North by Russia and Mongolia; to the East by Korea (Dem Rep), the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea; to the South by Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, India, Bhutan and Nepal; and to the West by India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. China has a varied terrain ranging from high plateau in the West to flatlands in the East; mountains take up almost one-third of the land. The most notable high mountain ranges are the Himalayas, the Altai Mountains, the Tian Shan Mountains and the Kunlun Mountains. On the border with Nepal is the 8,848m (29,198ft) Mount Qomolangma (Mount Everest). In the west is the Qinghai/Tibet Plateau, with an average elevation of 4,000m (13,200ft), known as 'the Roof of the World'. At the base of the Tian Shan Mountains is the Turpan Depression or Basin, China's lowest area, 154m (508ft) below sea level at the lowest point. China has many great river systems, notably the Yellow (Huang He) and Yangtze River (Chang Jiang, also Yangtze Kiang). Only 10% of all China is suitable for agriculture.

THE PEOPLE

The demographics of China are identified by a large population with a relatively small youth division, which is partially a result of the People's Republic of China's one-child policy. The population policies implemented in China since 1979 have helped to prevent several million births. The largest city in China is Shanghai with a population of over 20 million, with Beijing coming in second with a population of over 15 million.



RELIGION

China is officially Atheistic, but the stated religions and philosophies are Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. There are 100 million Buddhists and approximately 60 million Muslims, 5 million Protestants (including large numbers of Evangelicals) and 4 million Roman Catholics, largely independent of Vatican control.



CURRENCY

The renminbi (literally "people's currency") is the legal tender in the mainland of the People's Republic of China. It is issued by the People's Bank of China (PBOC, central bank). The official abbreviation is CNY, although also commonly abbreviated as "RMB".

Chinese paper money usually comes in 1 fen (rare), 2 fen (rare), 5 fen (very rare), 1 jiao, 2 jiao, 5 jiao, 1 yuan, 2 yuan, 5 yuan, 10 yuan, 20 yuan, 50 yuan and 100 yuan.

One yuan is divided into 10 jiao. One jiao is divided into 10 fen, pennies in English. The largest denomination of the renminbi is the 100 yuan note. The smallest is the 1 fen coin or note. RMB is issued both in notes and coins. The paper denominations include 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 yuan; 5, 2 and 1 jiao; and 5, 2 and 1 fen. The denominations of coins are 1 yuan; 5, 2 and 1 jiao; and 5, 2 and 1 fen.

In spoken Chinese, "yuan" is often called as "kuai" and the "jiao" as "mao". Fen-denomination RMB is rarely used, except at supermarkets.

CHANGING MONEY

CNY is not traded outside China. Foreign banknotes and traveler's checks can be exchanged at branches of The Bank of China. In hotels and Friendship Stores for tourists, imported luxury items such as spirits may be bought with Western currency.

Traveler's Checks

To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler's checks in US Dollars.

Banking Hours

Mon-Fri 9:00am - 5:00pm. Some banks close for lunch from 12:00pm - 1:00pm

CREDIT CARDS

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in major provincial cities in designated establishments. However, the availability of ATMs is often limited to airports, large tourist hotels and major shopping centers, and credit cards are often unlikely to be accepted away from the major cities.



TIPPING

For other personnel who attend to you on your trip, gratuities are left to your discretion. We are pleased to provide you with the following guidelines.

Tour Guides (includes Land or Ship Naturalist Guides): \$8 for a half-day tour, \$15 for full-day tour. If the guide is accompanying you for several days, tip when his/her services have ended.

Drivers (non guiding): A \$5-\$7 tip per day of service is satisfactory.

Porters/Hotel Bellman: \$1 per bag is standard; more if your luggage is heavy.

Hotel Maid: \$1 per night is standard, left in the hotel room in a marked envelope.

Waiters: 10%-15% of your check is considered standard. The same applies to room service waiters. Some establishments may automatically add a gratuity to your bill look for it before tipping. If a gratuity is added, you need only tip up to another 5% for superlative service.

HEALTH

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travelers coming from infected areas. There is a risk of malaria throughout the low-lying areas of the country, and it is recommended that travelers to China seek medical advice before departure. A total of 18 human cases of avian influenza ('bird flu') have been reported from China since November 2005. Twelve of the cases were fatal. Travelers are unlikely to be affected by bird flu, but live animal markets and places where contact with live poultry is possible should be avoided. All poultry and egg dishes should also be thoroughly cooked.

Japanese encephalitis has been responsible for the deaths of a number of people in the Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces in northern China, and rabies infects people every year, occasionally causing death. Outbreaks of dengue fever occur. Altitude sickness can occur in the mountainous regions of Tibet, Qinghai, parts of Xinjiang, and western Sichuan. Outside city centers, visitors should only drink bottled water. Western-style medical centers with international staff are available in the major cities and usually accept credit cards. For all health requirements and recommendations travelers should check with a local Department of Health clinic or U.S Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Further information may be obtained from the CDC Web Site for this Region: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm>

ETIQUETTE

The full title of the country is 'The People's Republic of China', and this should be used in all formal communications. Although handshaking may be sufficient, a visitor will frequently be greeted by applause as a sign of welcome. The customary response is to applaud back. Anger, if felt, is expected to be concealed and arguments in public may attract hostile attention.

In China, the family name is always mentioned first. It is customary to arrive a little early if invited out socially. When dining, guests should wait until their seat is allocated and not begin eating until indicated to do so. If using chopsticks, do not position them upright in your rice bowl as the gesture symbolizes death. Toasting at a meal is very common, as is the custom of taking a treat when visiting someone's home, such as fruit, confectionery or a souvenir from a home country. If it is the home of friends or relatives, money may be left for the children.

If visiting a school or a factory, a gift from the visitor's home country, particularly something which would be unavailable in China (a text book if visiting a school, for example), would be much appreciated. Stamps are also very popular as gifts, as stamp-collecting is a popular hobby in China. A good gift for an official guide is a Western reference book on China.

Conservative casual wear is generally acceptable everywhere and revealing clothes should be avoided since they may cause offense. Visitors should avoid expressing political or religious opinions.

PHOTOGRAPHS

It is polite to ask permission before taking photographs, Some people may take offense.



COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone

Country code: 86. Public telephones are available in post offices, hotels and shops displaying a telephone unit sign and at roadside kiosks.



Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with most major international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good in towns and cities throughout the country, with sporadic coverage in rural areas.

Internet

Internet is available in many areas of China; there are Internet cafes in Beijing and many other main towns and cities.

Post

Service to USA takes approximately 4-7 days. Most hotels have a 'mail' drop. All postal communications to China should be addressed 'People's Republic of China'.

Post office hours: Mon-Fri 8:00am - 7:00pm

Media

China's media are tightly controlled by the country's leadership. The industry has been opened up in the areas of distribution and advertising but not in editorial content and access to foreign news providers is limited. In general, the press report on corruption and inefficiency among officials, but they avoid criticism of the Communist Party.

ELECTRICITY

Before traveling you need to know not only the type of electric plug and socket in your destination but also the voltage of the electric power, the frequency (Hertz) and any special requirements like fuses or earth connections that may interfere with the use of your equipment. Please remember that simple adapters do not convert voltage or frequency, and incorrect use may not only keep you from using your equipment but also damage it or even cause personal injuries. Using a plug adapter just changes the shape of the prongs. Countries with different voltages and frequencies may use similar plugs, so check to see if you need a power converter and not simply a plug adapter.

Voltage/Frequency: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Flat prongs, inverted "V" positioned, with earth connector.

WHAT TO PACK

Comfortable dress is most appropriate when traveling in China. Casual slacks/skirts, shirts/blouses, and longer-length shorts are acceptable. Since you are likely to come across a variety of weather during your visit, we suggest that you maximize the versatility of your travel wardrobe by packing lightweight clothing that can be worn in layers. (Heavy clothing is necessary only if you are traveling in the winter months or along the Silk Road.) Clothing made of "breathable" fabric (such as cotton or wool) is generally the most comfortable. A warm sweater or jacket can be useful at any time of the year. Other items include Lip balm, Sun Block, hat, sunglasses, warm jacket, rain poncho, a good pair of walking shoes, mosquito repellent, camera and batteries.

DRUGS

Prescription drugs - It is recommended to travel with prescriptions for any drugs you are required to travel with for your personal health.

CUSTOMS

Travelers to China do not need to pay customs duty on 400 cigarettes (600 cigarettes if stay exceeds six months); two bottles of alcoholic beverages (not more than 0.75 liters per bottle), or four bottles if staying longer than six months. Perfume for personal use is allowed. Prohibited goods include arms and ammunition or printed material that conflicts with the public order or moral standards of the country. Also prohibited are radio transmitters and receivers, exposed but undeveloped film and fresh produce. Strict regulations apply to the import or export of antiquities, banned publications, and religious literature. All valuables must be declared on the forms provided.

SHOPPING

Prices in Friendship Stores, set up by the government, are fixed and there is generally no bargaining in most shops and department stores. However, haggling is all part of the buying process in outdoor markets for items such as jade, antique ceramics, local hand-crafted items and silk garments. All antiques over 100 years old are marked with a red wax seal by the authorities, and require an export customs certificate. Beijing's fascinating Panjiayuan antiques and bric-a-brac market was once only open at weekends. It now opens every day, although it is still best at weekends. Shopping is easier if accompanied by an interpreter, although in big cities and tourist towns English is often spoken by shop assistants. You can usually make yourself understood by pointing, otherwise someone nearby will generally speak a little English.

In Beijing, Shanghai and many other large cities, there are big department stores selling a wide range of products. The best shopping is on major shopping streets like Shanghai's Nanjing Road or Beijing's Wanfujing, in shopping centers and in markets. You can also get handicrafts direct from shops at local factories, or from shops specializing in the sale of handicrafts. Shop personnel often pack and arrange shipping for bulky items. Keep receipts, as visitors may be asked to produce them at customs prior to departure. Hotel shops are more expensive than local shops.

Words of Wisdom-Buyer Beware

Bring your purchases home with you. Unless you are prepared to wait up to a year to receive your merchandise, do not have it shipped -- not even by air freight.

Do not purchase expensive goods of supposed high quality unless you are absolutely sure of what you are buying .

Unless you are an expert in gems, antiques, artifacts, etc., you should not assume that it is of the highest quality or value.

Always take the time to read the charge slips for credit card purchases before you sign them. This may seem obvious; but in the excitement of making a foreign purchase, travelers sometimes overlook this and are unpleasantly surprised when they return home and are billed by the credit card company. Taking a few moments to review the charge slip before signing it (and computing the exchange rate to be sure you are charged the right amount) can save you headaches later.

Please note that the purchase of antiques or "national treasures" is strictly controlled in China and that the onus for illegal purchases rests entirely on the buyer. For exportation from the People's Republic, an antique must carry a red seal that declares its availability for export. (The red seal also indicates that the item is less than 120 years old). Please be advised that the red seal does NOT guarantee authenticity.



FOOD

Chinese cuisine has a very long history and is renowned all over the world. Cantonese (the style most Westerners are most familiar with) is just one regional style of Chinese cooking. There are eight major schools of Chinese cuisine, named after the places where they were conceived: Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Sichuan and Zhejiang. China's cuisine breaks down into four major regional categories:

Northern Cuisine:

Beijing food has developed from the Shandong school of cuisine.

Specialties:

Peking duck (roasted and eaten in a thin pancake with cucumber and a sweet plum sauce)

Mongolian Hotpot (a Chinese version of fondue; it is eaten in a communal style and consists of simmering soup in a special large round pot into which is dipped a variety of uncooked meats and vegetables, which are cooked on the spot).

Shuijiao (pasta-like dough wrapped round pork meat, chives and onions, similar in idea to Italian ravioli; these can be bought by the jin (pound) in street markets and small eating houses, and make a good snack)



ALLURING ASIA

COFFEE

Tea is the drink of choice, coffee has become a growing commodity in China. In the 90's they began developing coffee growing regions, since then they now produce tons of coffee for domestic consumption and have begun exporting product.

TEA

Chinese people are believed to have enjoyed tea drinking for more than 4,000 years. Legend has it that Yan Di, one of three rulers in ancient times, tasted all kinds of herbs to find medical cures. One day, as he was being poisoned by some herb he had ingested; a drop of water from a tea tree dripped into his mouth and he was saved. For a long time, tea was used as an herbal medicine.

During the Western Zhou Dynasty, tea was a religious offering. During the Spring and Autumn Period, people ate fresh tea leaves as vegetables. With the popularization of Buddhism from the Three Kingdoms to the Northern and Southern Dynasties, tea's refreshing effect made it a favorite among monks in Za-Zen meditation. The tea history of China is a great thing to explore and experience while on your journey.

WATER

Drink only bottled water or boiled water.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Chinese liquor, which is one of the six world-famous varieties of spirits (the other five being brandy, whisky, rum, vodka, and gin), has a more complicated production method and can be made from various staples - broomcorn, corn, rice, and wheat.

The Chinese are known for a wide variety of wines, yellow and fruit have there place with meals and social events. Beers are also popular.

National Drinks:

One of the best-known national drinks is Maotai, a fiery spirit distilled from rice wine.

Local beers are of good quality, notably Tsingdao, which is similar to German lager.

There are now some decent wines, which are produced mainly for tourists and export, such as Great Wall and Dynasty red wines and Qingdao white wine.

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Southern Cuisine

Guangdong (Cantonese) food is the most exotic in China. The food markets in Guangzhou are a testimony to this, and the Western visitor is often shocked by the enormous variety of rare and exotic animals that are used in the cuisine, including snake, dog, turtle and wildcat.

Specialties:

Dim sum served at lunch

Shrimp wonton noodle soup

Eastern Cuisine

Shanghai and Zhejiang cooking is rich and sweet, often pickled. Noted for seafood, hot and sour soup, noodles and vegetables.

Specialities:

La Mian (pulled noodles) served with curry beef soup

Xiao Long Bao (pan fried pork buns eaten dipped in vinegar)

Western Cuisine

Sichuan and Hunan food is spicy, often sour and peppery, with specialties such as diced chicken stirred with soy sauce and peanuts, and spicy dough (bean curd)

Specialties:

Sweet and sour chicken

Orange beef

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CULTURE & THE ARTS

Chinese art is visual art that, whether ancient or modern, originated in or is practiced in China or by Chinese artists or performers. Early so-called "stone age art" dates back to 10,000 BC, mostly consisting of simple pottery and sculptures. This early period was followed by a series of art dynasties, most of which lasted several hundred years.

Neolithic Pottery

Early forms of art in China are found in the Neolithic Yangshao culture which dates back to the 6th millennium BC. Archeological findings such as those at the Banpo have revealed that the Yangshao made pottery; early ceramics were unpainted and most often cord-marked. The first decorations were fish and human faces, but these eventually evolved into symmetrical-geometric abstract designs, some painted.

The most distinctive feature of Yangshao culture was the extensive use of painted pottery, especially human facial, animal, and geometric designs. Unlike the later Longshan culture, the Yangshao culture did not use pottery wheels in pottery making. Excavations have found that children were buried in painted pottery jars.

Bronze Casting

The Bronze Age in China began with the Xia Dynasty. Examples from this period have been recovered from ruins of the Erlitou culture, in Shanxi, and include complex but unadorned utilitarian objects. In the following Shang Dynasty more elaborate objects, including many ritual vessels, were crafted. The Shang are remembered for their bronze casting, noted for its clarity of detail. Shang bronze-smiths usually worked in foundries outside the cities to make ritual vessels, and sometimes weapons and chariot fittings as well.

Qin Sculpture

The Terra cotta Army, inside the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, consists of more than 7,000 life-size tomb terra-cotta figures of warriors and horses buried with the self-proclaimed first Emperor of Qin (Qin Shi Huang) in 210-209 BC. The figures were painted before being placed into the vault. The original colors were visible when the pieces were first unearthed. However, exposure to air caused the pigments to fade, so today the unearthed figures appear terra cotta in color.

Pottery

The most noticeable difference between porcelain and the other pottery clays is that it "wets" very quickly (that is, added water has a noticeably greater effect on the plasticity for porcelain than other clays), and that it tends to continue to "move" longer than other clays, requiring experience in handling to attain optimum results. During medieval times in Europe, porcelain was very expensive and in high demand for its beauty. TLV mirrors also date from the Han dynasty.

Calligraphy

In ancient China, painting and calligraphy were the most highly appreciated arts in court circles and were produced almost exclusively by amateurs, aristocrats and scholar-officials who alone had the leisure to perfect the technique and sensibility necessary for great brushwork. Calligraphy was thought to be the highest and purest form of painting. The implements were the brush pen, made of animal hair, and black inks, made from pine soot and animal glue. Writing as well as painting was done on silk. But after the invention of paper in the 1st century, silk was gradually replaced by the new and cheaper material.

Painting

Gu Kaizhi is a celebrated painter of ancient China born in Wuxi. He wrote three books about painting theory: On Painting, Introduction of Famous Paintings of Wei and Jin Dynasties and Painting Yuntai Mountain. He wrote, "In figure paintings the clothes and the appearances were not very important. The eyes were the spirit and the decisive factor." Three of Gu's paintings still survive today. They are "Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies", "Nymph of the Luo River", and "Wise and Benevolent Women".



Music:

Chinese music started at the dawn of Chinese civilization with documents and artifacts providing evidence of a well-developed musical cultures early as the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC - 256 BC). Today, the music continues a rich traditional heritage in one aspect, while emerging into a more contemporary form at the same time.

Mainland China has a high piracy rate along with issues of intellectual properties.[3] As a result, most albums are released in Taiwan or Hong Kong first. It is often one of the business decisions made by record companies. Normally there is some delay before the products are released into mainland China, with occasional exceptions, such as the work of Cui Jian who was released in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China simultaneously. Consequently, a delay in release time is also the biggest driver of piracy, since individuals would rather pirate from the outside. The modern market is not only hindered by rights issues, as there are many other factors such as profit margin, income and other economical questions.

Dance:

Traditional Chinese dance can be divided into two broad categories: Court Dance and Folk Dance. Court dances date back to the Qin Dynasty (220 B.C.) and were performed in the palace of the emperor. The court dance reached its height of sophistication in the Tang dynasty and was depicted in the poetry, paintings and sculpture of that period. There are two kinds of court dances: those based on the Chinese warrior exercises such as martial art fighting forms and those based on the Confucian etiquette and ritual codes. Today, aspects of these ancient court dances can still be seen in traditional Peking Opera and ancestral ritual ceremonies in Confucian temples.

Folk dances in China vary from region to region and include dances from over 50 distinct indigenous ethnic groups within China.

A Chinese dancer today is expected to study the classical court dances embedded within the Peking Opera movement style as well as numerous forms of folk dance. The Chinese dancer must begin training at a very young age and is required to study martial arts, acrobatics and stylized theatrical movements on a daily basis. Dance technique typically includes work with such props as handkerchiefs, ribbons, ritual weapons and fans.



