



Useful Information when travelling to China

AIRLINES

International: China is extremely well serviced by almost every major airline.

Domestic: Domestic airlines include Air China (CA) member of Star Alliance, China Eastern (MU) and China southern (CZ), both Skyteam members and Hainan airlines (HU), the first 5 star Chinese airline.

AIRPORT TAX

All airport taxes are included in the price of your ticket and do not need to be paid at the airport.

ARRIVAL IN CHINA

Terminal 3 of Beijing airport is the world's largest terminal and very well connected to the rest of the world. Other airports in China serviced by international flights include Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shenyang (direct flights from Germany), Guangzhou, Chengdu (direct flights from Netherlands), Changsha (direct flights from France).

Shanghai is home to two international airports, Pudong and Hongqiao.

ARRIVAL FORMALITIES

Upon arrival in China, all visitors must complete an entry/exit form including a customs declaration. It is important that this form is kept safe with your passport while in China and is presented to the customs and immigration officials on departure. If you have booked a transfer service including guide with EXO Travel, our representative will be waiting in the arrivals hall holding a sign with your name on it.

ATM'S

Foreign credit, debit, and cash cards are useful for obtaining cash. However, few ATM machines are only for cards issued in China and do not accept foreign cards, always bring cash with you. ATM'S where this service is available display the "International ATM Service" symbol (a green clover) and stickers indicating which cards are accepted. Cards from the Cirrus, Plus, Maestro and Visa Electron networks are accepted, as are Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and JCB credit cards. VISA ELECTRON, PLUS, Maestro, Cirrus, China Unionpay, DISCOVER.



BUSINESS HOURS

Department stores and shops are open 7 days a week generally from 10pm to 7:30 or 8pm or even 10pm for malls. Museums attractions are open 7 days a week and close sometimes one day during the week (but very rare).

Offices are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm or 6pm.

Post Offices 7 days a week, banks are sometimes open Saturdays and even Sundays.

Restaurants are open generally from 10:30am to midnight.

CLOTHING

There are no particular rules regarding clothing etiquette in China, except in Muslim holy places.

Lighter clothing in the summer time is best in China and (very) warm clothes in the winter, especially in Beijing, Tibetan world and Mongolia. If you are travelling in the spring then bring some warmer clothes as the temperature does drop at night and in the mornings.

CREDIT CARDS

It is important to note that China is a cash society, and credit cards are not as widely used as in western countries. Credit cards are mainly accepted in urban areas in restaurants, shops, and hotels. However, it is not advisable to rely entirely on credit cards, as inexpensive restaurants and neighborhood shops, especially in rural areas, often do not accept credit cards.

FOOD

China is said to have some of the best cuisine in the world. 8 main types of cuisine are generally found (Shandong, Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan and Sichuan) are listed and offer diversity dishes from delicious roast duck in Beijing to dim sum in Guangzhou. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get practicing as cutlery is not always available in restaurants.

HEALTH

No vaccinations are required except for yellow fever if you are coming from an area where the disease is present.



LANGUAGE

The most widely spoken language is Mandarin, a complicated but fascinating language with 4 tones and 56000 Chinese characters. Beside the numerous local dialects, other languages spoken include Cantonese.

If travelers need to ask directions or make enquiries, they're best off seeking out younger people, especially university-age students, or businessmen, since many Chinese learn English at school (in the larger cities). It goes without saying that you should speak simply, slowly and articulately, and if you're still having trouble communicating, you should write down the question instead of speaking it, since many Chinese haven't had the opportunity to converse in English but may be able to read it better.

INTERNET

Major hotels have Business Centers with PCs connected to the Internet. Almost all hotels have free LAN cable access in rooms and sometimes have wireless internet available if you bring your own laptop. Cybercafés are less popular than before, due to the prevalence of internet access on mobile phones and at home, but can still be easily found in major cities. China now has more than 450 million internet users and around 24 million of these are online gamers.

ELECTRICITY

The voltage is 220 volts. Some hotels are equipped with flat plugs. It is therefore advisable to bring an adapter with international plugs, flat-called "American" type plugs and "British" (3 pronged).

MONEY

The currency in China is the Renminbi (RMB) more commonly known as the Yuan, often abbreviated CNY and Hong-Kong dollar (HKD) in Hong-Kong. ATM's distribute CNY around China.

PHOTOGRAPHY

China counts more and more photography lovers every day. Photo developing labs are common, providing normal print films as well as professional quality films (like slide films). Digital photos can easily be downloaded and loaded onto a CD in case you run out of memory. Memory cards are very good value.

Do not take pictures of people (especially elders) without asking permission



POSTAL MAIL

Post offices are open Monday to Saturday from 9:00 to 17:00. You will usually find a post office at the hotel.

Do not post your letters in small towns and do not send them all to the same place. Have a glue stick to hand as Chinese stamps do not adhere very well.

RELIGION

China is a country of strong religious syncretism. It is still very difficult to find accurate statistics about the number of people participating in religions, even though Buddhism dominates the scene. What we can find is the recurring indication of the people's religious spirit and the quasi-absence of an official religion throughout Chinese history.

Therefore, China has become a fusion of popular and old-fashioned beliefs: Confucian doctrines, Chinese-originated Taoism, the foreign versions of Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

It is not rare to find gods from the Taoist pantheons in the Buddhist temples or to find representations of Guanyin (the Chinese version of the Buddhist deity Avalokitesvara in India) in the Taoist temples (where she is known as Tianhou). With so many versions of one deity, even the Chinese become confused over the details.

SAFETY

China is a very safe country but like in all the big cities in the world, and especially in Beijing or Shanghai bar streets you have to be a little bit more careful. Beware of your belongings in night trains.

SHOPPING

You find lots of jade, porcelain, cloisonné, lacquer, paper cut and especially silks and cashmere at attractive prices. There are regional specialties like embroidery in Southern China. Fixed prices are charged in state stores (but everything is negotiable), while haggling is a national sport in markets. Several regions of China produce freshwater pearls of varying quality. The export of antiques is subject to conditions: objects dating from before 1911 cannot leave China. Always beware of imitations while shopping for goods.



TELEPHONE

To call China, dial 00 + 86 and the number of your correspondent.

As in many countries, hotels may add a large commission on long distance phone calls. The best solution is to use a calling card found in the cabins of post offices, business centers or halls of small hotels.

In most cities, cell phones operate normally. However, we advise you to contact your operator (dependant on reception) to activate international calling and billing.

TIME

GMT + 8

TIPPING

No tipping in restaurants, bars, massage parlors or anywhere except for guides and drivers.

TRANSPORTATION

The road network has significantly improved over recent years, except in the south and Tibetan World where many roads are under renovation or construction.

There are taxi ranks at every airport though may be a long wait during peak hours at Beijing and Shanghai. It is strongly recommended to have your destination address in Chinese.

The train is the meeting place of the Chinese! There are currently many types of train and the most noticeable is the arrival of the ultra modern TGV (around 5 hours to reach Shanghai from Beijing), though the night trains provide a memorable experience. People board the train and eat containers of instant noodles with water from their thermos, gulp down unbelievable quantities of sunflower seeds, play cards, and clink glasses of beer or *baijiu*, the country's rice liquor. There are four classes: 'soft sleepers' (first), 'hard sleepers' (2nd), 'soft seats' and 'hard seats'. Reservations are generally made in first class, barring unforeseen circumstances. The trains are slow and the journeys long but it is a great way to discover the Chinese way of life.

VISAS

Travelers applying for tourist visas must now submit a letter of invitation from a person or company in China, as well as proof of hotel reservations and a copy of their return air ticket.



Though regulations are different for each country and the traveler's passport must be valid for 6 months after their departure date. Alongside Shanghai, which already operates a 72 hour no visa policy for 45 countries, Beijing will now offer the same to travelers at Beijing Capital International Airport.

WEATHER

China is the third largest country in the world covering almost 10 million sq km. As you travel across the country there are great extremes in temperature and weather conditions. April – May and September-October is generally the best time to travel, when the temperature is mild and there are plenty of sunshine hours. December and January are ideal for Hainan Island's beaches and even for Guangdong province and Hong-Kong.

February and March are the perfect time to experience Eastern Yunnan when the rapeseed flowers are in full bloom and the red earth soils of Dongchuan are at their most vivid. Autumn (November especially) is the best time to visit the national parks in Sichuan, when the leaves are turning color against a backdrop of turquoise emerald lakes.

For terrace rice fields, spring (between March and April), is considered by photographers as the best time to visit, the sky is reflected in the paddy fields full with water, resembling a never-ending mosaic of mirrors. In summer they turn an emerald color and from October onwards they look like pools of honey. Other than in December and January when the fields are dry, each season offers something different with equal breath-taking beauty.

WATER

Tap water throughout China isn't safe to drink. Always drink water that has been boiled first or bottled mineral water.