
TRAVEL KIT

Do before you go

Before leaving on your China Tour, check with the TSA (Transportation Security Administration) this is a MUST READ for all air travelers (For details, please visit: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>) Follow instructions to reduce your wait time at the security checkpoint.

You MUST visit: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html to get more

Tips for Traveling Abroad before you go.

Make two copies of your passport identification page. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Leave one copy at home with friends or relatives. Carry the other one along with a passport size photo with you in a separate place from your passport. Leave a copy of your China Tour itinerary and contact information with family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

Flights to China

Contact the airline concerned to confirm the flight number and any possible schedule changes prior to leaving for the airport. Connecting passengers should verify, at the time of check-in, that luggage can be checked through to their China destination. For transpacific flights, you must check in at least three hours prior to the scheduled departure time. Please check with Spring Tour for your detailed flight time if Spring Tour helps you book the international flights.

If you choose to arrange your own add-on flights to the designated gateway city, you must take the following facts into consideration before booking any flights. Spring Tour is not responsible for any missed connections and penalties/loss as a result. For a peace of mind, please buy trip interruption insurance.

Note:

For transpacific flight, you must check-in three (3) hours ahead of departure time.

It takes at least one (1) hour to clear customs and claim your checked baggage.

For domestic flight, you must check in at least two (2) hours prior to departure time.

Chinese Customs and Immigration Procedures:

When you arrive in China, you will proceed through Immigration and passport inspection. You will then proceed to the baggage carousel and claim your checked luggage. From there go through Customs and present your "Customs Declaration Form" in which you filled out on your flight. You will be given the carbon copy of this Customs Declaration Form. Be sure not to lose it, as you will have to show it to the Customs Officer upon exiting China. Continue out to the waiting area where you will be met by the bilingual tour guide of Spring Tour who will transfer you to your hotel.

If you have booked a China "Land Only" package tour and have arranged your own transportation to China, the airport-hotel transfers on arrival/departure days are not included. You may go by taxi to your hotel (the cab costs about \$10-15 each way depending on traffic); Please find the hotel address in both English and Chinese from the "Contact Information" page in the final confirmed Travel Kit which we will send to you about two weeks prior to departure of your China trip.

Baggage

Always remember, "He who would travel happily must travel light". We strongly recommend you limit your baggage to one(1) piece of checked luggage and one(1) carry-on bag per person.

Baggage Allowance

Baggage allowance differs for the transpacific and the China domestic sections of your China Tour. Baggage allowance for transpacific flight is two pieces of checked baggage per person. Total dimensions (Length + Width + Height) of the two pieces must not exceed 107 inches (273cm); maximum dimensions of single piece shall not exceed 62 inches (158cm). Maximum weight per piece is 50 lbs. Each passenger may carry one piece of hand luggage, the combined dimensions of which shall not exceed 45 inches (115cm).

China domestic flights have stringent luggage restrictions allowing one piece of checked baggage that must not exceed 44 lbs per person, plus a carry-on bag not to exceed 11 lbs. The carry-on must fit in the overhead bin or under the seat.

Baggage in excess of allowances will incur excess baggage charges payable on site by the passenger.

Your Flight for This Trip to China:

Your flight to China this time is by China Eastern Airline, for more info about China Eastern Airlines and baggage allowance, please visit the China Eastern Airline website: http://us.ceair.com/muovc/main/en_US/Static_pages/Baggage.html#2

Baggage Precautions

Make sure you have luggage tags for each checked suitcase. A copy of your China Tour itinerary and contact information should also go in an outside pocket of your luggage to aid the airline personnel to locate you in case you and your luggage become

separated.

Never check luggage containing prohibited items (i.e. lighters), valuables (i.e. cash, jewelry, and cameras), fragile items (i.e. undeveloped film, bottles, eyeglasses) or critical items (i.e. medicines, travel vouchers). You will get more information about TSA Permitted and Prohibited Items from: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

Lost/damaged Baggage

Spring Tour will not be responsible for loss or damage to your luggage and personal belongings. You must report any loss or damage immediately at the time of the incident and obtain a written report from the local authority for submission to your insurance provider. If your luggage is lost or damaged by the airlines, a baggage claim form must be filled with the carrier before leaving the airport.

Baggage Lock

Your checked baggage must be locked during transportation while in China. This is a Chinese regulation. No specification on type of locks as long as there is one.

Due to increased security measures in U.S. airports, if you wish to lock your baggage, you MUST use a TSA recognized lock, which allows TSA screeners open and re-lock your bags for security screening. Ordinary locks are cut if physical inspection is required. Please visit: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/locks.shtm>

Clothing & Dress code:

We suggest that you dress casually and comfortably throughout your trip. There are no occasions where you will be required to wear formal clothing on your tour. Comfortable and reliable walking shoes are a must to enjoy the sightseeing tours. A collapsible umbrella or raincoat is also advised although you can purchase these items in China as well. However, if you elect to take the Yangtze River cruise, you will be invited to attend the captain's welcome and farewell party. You may consider bringing attire that is 'dressy casual' for this tour add on:

Dress pants with matching jackets (no tie) for men and dresses or pantsuits for women.

Meals

Breakfasts included on your China Tour are familiar American style to give you a good start for the day. Lunches and dinners are usually served in set menu family style and feature a variety of China's regional specialties. A routine lunches and dinners which are included (check your itinerary to see which meals are included) are served in a local restaurant during your day of sightseeing. It is composed of 6-12 dishes shared by 6-10 people sitting at a round table (which symbolizes union and perfection-harmony). A fixed supply of beverages is served with the meals at no charge. Additional beverages, including alcoholic beverages, are available at a modest additional charge. Chinese tea is usually complimentary.

Special Telephone Numbers

No one speaks English at emergency numbers in China, although your best bet will be Tel. **110** or call your local tour guide. Find help nearer at hand and the Chinese people is friendly and they are willing to help you. Your tour guide and the hotel can be your assistance, please see the names of the person of Spring Tours in each city listed in the schedule page.

What to Pack?

- Pack lightly, and bring casual clothes. A sturdy, comfortable pair of walking shoes is a must. A business suit and tie for men and one or two dresses or pant suits for women will suffice for most formal occasions. Bring a couple of shirts, sweaters, and a jacket (depending on the season) that can be worn in layers to accommodate China's range of climates. All hotels offer reliable laundry and dry cleaning services.

- Useful items: contact-lenses solution, sun glasses, hat, shavers, hair dryer, electrical converter and adapter, books, magazines, snacks, music tapes & walkman, CDs & CD player, notebooks, camera, video recorder, extra quantities of films, tapes, and battery. Since you may not have time during the tour to replace something or find the brands you like, it might be worthwhile to bring extra quantities of certain items.

Important items:

- Passport/
- Plane tickets
- Luggage keys
- Contact info
- Money
- Phone cards/ codes
- Comfortable Clothes
- Closed toe walking shoes
- Hats/ visor

Other items:

- glasses/extra pair/ repair kit
- contacts
- sunglasses
- calculator
- travel clock w/ batteries
- umbrella/raincoat
- small flashlight
- calendar
- address book

Shaving/Make-up/Hair items

- Deodorant
- Sunscreen
- Kleenex—small packs
- Hand sanitizers
- Toothbrushes (2)
- Toothpaste
- Vitamins
- Band aids/pins
- Gauze mask (in case)

Packing for a China Tour

Pack light and you'll soon find you are better off with less!

The best packing question a traveler can ask is "do people where I am headed live without this item"? Don't pack the stuff which is readily available in the hotels where you will be staying. Don't cram your suitcase with unnecessary items, and so you'll have room for the "treasures" you collect along the way. Remember that you will have access to:

Convenient, same day laundry service in all your hotels, if you send clothes in the morning you should have them back in the evening. The price is reasonable. For any destination city where you stay two or more nights you can do laundry.

A hair dryer and iron are readily available at most hotels for your use; simply contact Housekeeping.

Bath accessories in your private bathroom include disposable tooth brush and toothpaste, comb, soap, shampoo, body lotion, sewing kit, sanitary bag, shower cap etc.

You can easily purchase a shoulder bag or 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.

Travel in China involves a lot of walking. Comfortable walking shoes are essential. Make sure to check current weather before you decide what clothes to pack.

Health & Medical Issues:

Our trips are exciting and active vacations. While there is time to relax, there will also be much to see and do, and your excursions may require an extensive amount of walking. Please check with your personal physician to verify your particular needs.

You are strongly recommended to purchase a travel insurance to protect you for the unexpected. Spring Tour is not responsible for any costs incurred as a result of medical services or for the quality of medical care received.

For information on health issues while traveling overseas, please contact the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by visiting www.cdc.gov/travel.

Note: Don't forget to ask the hotel whether the tap water is drinkable or not. Tourists are recommended to drink bottled water when they travel in China.



Medication

If you take prescription medication, be sure to bring enough to last the entire trip. Always carry medications in the original prescription container when traveling. Keep these medications with you and do not pack them in checked baggage.

Long-term travel overseas might cause tourists to develop stomach upset; a change in water, food, sleep habits and/or climate may all cause discomfort. Bring anti-diarrhea medications such as Imodium and Lomotil just in case.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations are not mandatory for travel to China. However, we remind you that traveling in China does require certain precautions. It is therefore highly recommended that you check with your personal physician to verify your particular needs. Most travelers get immunized for Hepatitis A&B and Tetanus. Some shots need to be taken well in advance. For the latest overseas travel health information, please contact the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by visiting www.cdc.gov/travel or by calling toll-free 1-888-232-3228.

Drinking Water

Although "tap water" in China is theoretically safe by World Health Organization standards, we do not recommend you drink it. In most modern hotels in the larger cities they operate their own "in-house" water treatment systems providing safe drinking water throughout the hotel. Other hotels provide thermos bottles of safe drinking water. Bottled mineral water is also available in your hotel mini-bar at an additional charge.

Weather

China is approximately at the same latitude as the United States and enjoys the same seasons during the same time of the year. However, weather can vary quite a bit depending on the region and elevation. Please see our Weather Chart or give us a call for further information.

All Year Round Temperatures in China (Some month temperatures might not be accurate)

City	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Beijing	28	32	40	46	69	76	79	79	67	55	39	36
Chongqing	45	50	58	57	73	80	85	85	80	70	60	51
Guangzhou	58	60	64	71	78	81	83	83	81	75	67	57
Guilin	47	48	56	65	74	79	83	83	78	69	59	50
Hangzhou	39	41	48	60	69	75	83	83	75	64	54	43

Lhasa	29	34	41	46	54	60	61	61	57	48	39	32
Shanghai	40	42	47	57	66	74	82	82	75	64	55	42
Suzhou	38	40	48	58	67	74	83	83	74	64	54	43
Wuhan	37	41	50	61	70	78	84	84	74	64	52	42
Xian	32	38	50	56	72	80	78	76	60	52	40	30

Itinerary Changes

The world of travel is ever changing. The Spring Tour pledges to make every effort to follow the verified final tour itinerary precisely, however unforeseen situations do occasionally occur. If a hotel or flight in the itinerary becomes unavailable, Spring Tour reserves the right to make substitution with hotel/flight of equal standard and quality. There will be no refunds for any difference in the cost of those accommodations.

Laundry

Laundry and dry-cleaning services are available at each of the hotels. It's fast and of high quality. Items collected in the morning are returned the same evening. Charges are included in your personal room bill for payment upon checking out.

Money Matters

It is wise to carry your currency in different forms of cash, traveler's check, and credit cards. Use a credit card whenever you shop in tourist stores especially when making big purchases. Use local currency wherever credit cards are not accepted. Tip with U.S. dollars. Pay in single dollar bills for bargains from street vendors.

Chinese Currency

The Chinese currency is known as Renminbi (RMB), literally "People's Money". The basic unit of RMB is Yuan (dollar), which is divided into 10 Jiao (dime), which is divided again into 10 Fen (cent). Bank of China issues RMB bills in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Yuan and 1, 2, 5 Jiao. Bronze and nickel coin equivalents exist for the smaller units.

As of Sept 2016, USD\$1=RMB 6.67 Exchange rate fluctuates daily.

Chinese RMB is not internationally convertible; you must wait until you arrive in China to change your money and spend it all or exchange back to U.S. dollars before you leave the country. Hong Kong's currency is the Hong Kong Dollar. It is internationally convertible and worth about the same as RMB.





Changing money

You can change money at hotels, China arrival and departure airports, and at Bank of China branches. The official exchange rate is used in most places so it's unnecessary to shop around for a better deal. For the sake of convenience and safety we suggest that you change money in your hotel. Almost all hotels in your China trip offer foreign currency exchange service supervised by Bank of China. Retain the exchange receipts because you will need the receipt to convert RMB to your home currency at the end of the trip. Those traveling to Hong Kong can change RMB to Hong Kong Dollar there, but make sure convert all Hong Kong dollars to RMB or U.S. dollars before departing Hong Kong. You must empty all Chinese RMB before the last day of your tour because you won't have time to convert it back to U.S. dollars at the airport.

Traveler's Checks

The advantage of Travelers Checks is obvious: you can always void them if they are lost. However some Chinese hotels don't cash travelers checks. Keep your exchange slip; you will need it when buying back your home currency. While Traveler's Checks from most of the world's leading banks and issuing agencies are now acceptable throughout China, we recommend you secure major company checks such as American Express and Visa. Throughout China, U.S. cash is easier to use than travelers checks.

U.S. Currency

Cash advance service is not commonly available in China; you need to bring some cash with you. Bring a supply of single dollar bills. You will find it very convenient to use particularly when shopping with street vendors. Please note: foreign coins are not acceptable in China. All paper bills should be complete, not badly worn and free from graffiti. Partial, badly worn or defaced bills will not be accepted.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are only acceptable at hotels, tourist stores and upscale shops. We recommend you use credit card for any big purchases at tourist stores and to purchase insurance for the shipped items. Please call your credit card company to let them know you are traveling in China so they won't decline your transactions made during your trip.

Personal Checks

Personal checks are generally not acceptable outside North America.

ATMs (Automated Teller Machine)

Do not count on ATMs in mainland China, although they are commonly used in Hong Kong. ATMs can be found in a growing, but still limited number of large banks in mainland China. You can use Visa, Master card, American Express, Cirrus and Plus to withdraw cash. The network is only available in sizeable cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Most ATMs in China can only be used for withdrawing RMB. The exchange rate on ATM withdrawals is similar to credit cards but there is a maximum daily withdrawal amount. For credit-card cash advance, service fees apply.

Carrying Money

You may feel more comfortable using a money belt for a large sum of cash and credit cards. Care and good judgment is a must in all travel.

Mail:

Your China Tour hotels have postal service allowing you to send postcard and letter to overseas. It usually takes more than 10 days for a postcard to reach North-America. The postage is charged in Chinese RMB equivalent to about 50 cents U.S. for a postcard, and 80 cents U.S. for a letter up to 20 grams.

Media:

China publishes various newspapers and magazines in English. Among them, China Daily is a popular English newspaper, complimentary at most hotels. Imported publications like Time, Newsweek, and The Economist can be found at certain hotels. BBC, CNN or even HBO are becoming commonly available in most tourist hotels.

Shopping

Shopping is always a part of the travel experience and a personal matter. Always keep in mind that a purchase is between the buyer and the seller, Spring Tour is not involved in and is not responsible for any purchases you make during your trip, whether that merchant is part of the scheduled itinerary or not. China is known as bargain shoppers' paradise, offering a marvelous selection of arts and crafts such as jade, silk, rugs, cloisonné, ceramics, antique, painting, furniture and more. You will be visiting several souvenir stores and factories, but don't feel obligated to buy. Many of these stores are able to ship purchases home for you. If you purchase from a street vendor, be prepared to bargain; do not pay the initial asking price. Always pay with the exact amount. Do not expect these vendors to make change or exchange Chinese money for US dollars. Be aware of the counterfeit money and please do not exchange the US dollar in the street with someone you do not know. Any assistance you may

need for money exchange, please ask the local tour guide. Your tour guide might not be an expert on gemstones, porcelain, jade, paintings, etc., so if you intend to purchase items of this nature, please do some research before departing and have an idea of what you are looking for as well as the price you are prepared to pay. In addition, please carefully check the quality of the products, and always ask for a receipt with product descriptions.

When shopping it wise to use credit card for large purchases. Retain all receipts for customs purposes. It is strongly advised that you purchase insurance for items that are being shipped home. A supply of one dollar bills is very handy when shopping with street vendors.

Always keep in mind that a purchase is between the buyer and the seller. Spring Tour is not involved in and is not responsible for any purchases you make during your China Tour, whether that merchant is part of the scheduled itinerary or not.

Gratuities

Tips for tour guides and drivers are not included in the tour price. We suggest \$10 USD per person per day. The people expecting tips include: the national guide if applicable (you may tip him at the end) local guides and drivers (you may tip them before you leave each city), bellboys and luggage person (you may tip them when they move your luggage). Tips to restaurant and hotel waiters are not expected. Chambermaids and porters should also be tipped when appropriate and are not included and is the same as going on any trip worldwide. If you are in a hotel bar, tipping is customary.

Local Transportation / Getting Around

Most major sites are included in your sightseeing program and transportation is provided in an air-conditioned vehicle. If you wish to do some sightseeing or travel to some place on your own, you will find taxis are readily available. Fares are generally quite inexpensive and most taxis are metered. Taxi rates can be different depending upon the "grade" of the taxi. Taxi drivers don't necessarily speak English so be sure to get directions written out in advance in Chinese. Hotel staff and local guides will be happy to help.

The Plane/flight:

For your tour this time, Spring Tour will use Air China. Seats are assigned at check-in at Air China counter in Los Angeles Airport. You will check in as individuals, not at as a group. You should arrive early enough to get good seat assignments. It is an approximately 12-hour flight. You will be served 2 meals and there will be 3 movies. Your airline tickets will be the electronic tickets.

For more info about the seat map of plane, please visit: <http://www.airchina.us/en/managemytrip/seatmaps/b737.html>

Baggage:

Baggage is carried at passenger's risk and baggage insurance is recommended. Although every effort is made to handle clients' baggage carefully, Spring Tour cannot be responsible, assume liability, or accept claims for loss or damage to baggage and personal effects due to breakage, theft, or wear and tear throughout the trip. Baggage allowance differs for the transpacific and the internal domestic sections of your trip. Baggage allowance for transpacific flight is two pieces of checked baggage per person.

For more about Air China baggage information, please visit the website:

<http://www.airchina.us/en/managemytrip/baggageinformation/index.html>

Frequent Flyer miles:

An overview of the Air China Air Miles program showing you the diverse ways of earning mileage which results in free trips and upgrades.

For more information about mileage, please visit: <http://ffp.airchina.com.cn/en/gyzy/lxfs.jsp>

Jet Lag Precautions

Jet lag happens when your body's inner clock falls out of sync with daily cycles of light, rest and meals as you cross time zones to reach your destination. Its symptoms are fatigue, irritability and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag, but you can minimize its effects. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Get several good nights of sleep before your trip departure.
- 2) Set your watch to your destination time when you board the plane, and adjust sleep and meals accordingly.
- 3) Try to sleep on the plane.
- 4) Walk around the plane occasionally, do isometric exercises at your seat.
- 5) Drink plenty of water and fruit juice while flying.
- 6) Avoid alcoholic and caffeinated drinks during and after the flight.
- 7) On arrival, throw yourself into your new schedule, avoid naps, and try to stay awake until your normal sleeping time at home.

U.S. Duty-free Exemption

When shopping in China, keep receipts of all purchases. Upon reentering U.S, be ready to show customs officials what you've bought. 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 accompany you.

Duty on items you mail 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 who live in the same household and are 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.

Read more information on Duty-free exemptions available on the U. S. Customs Service Web site.

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/duty_free.xml

Additional Travel:

If you want to leave the group during the tour, please notify your bus tour guide. If you want to do additional traveling after the tour, check with your own travel agent. It is possible, but you will be responsible for all additional costs and arrangements.

Suggested Websites:

Weather: www.weather.com

What you can and cannot bring on the airplane:

(US Transportation Security Administration): www.tsa.gov/travelers

International Travel (US State Department): www.travel.state.gov

Questions about bringing items back from your trip: (US Customs & Border Protection): www.cbp.gov

Questions about health concerns, shots, etc. (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention): <http://www.cdc.gov>

US Embassy in Beijing: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

US Consulate in Shanghai: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

International SOS Beijing: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

Optional Tours:

Optional tours will be available for an additional charge. The tour guides will describe them to you and if interested, you will pay the guides in cash (US dollars).

Longitude, Latitude, Elevation, Time:

Beijing is located at 37° 55' N, 116° 35' E; Shanghai is located at 37° 10' N, 121° 28'E; Elevation: Beijing is about 142 feet, Shanghai is about 13 feet. When it is 12 noon in Los Angeles, it is 3:00 am the next day in China. There is only one time zone in China.

Other useful website for Packing:

First Aid Kit Packing List: <http://gochina.about.com/od/tripplanning/a/FirstAidKit.htm>

What You Need To Bring With You To China: http://gochina.about.com/od/tripplanning/a/Packing_Musts.htm

Three Things To Take To China: <http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g294211-c171124/China:Three.Things.To.Take.To.China.html>

Health Information for Travelers to China: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/china.htm>

Staying Connected: Using Your Cell Phone in China, Internet Access, Wi-Fi Coverage and SIM cards

Staying connected with family and friends while traveling through China is now easier than it ever was and getting more accessible and convenient as technology and internet use spreads throughout the country.

The reach however is unevenly spread, so while in the major cities of Beijing or Shanghai, finding a wireless hotspot or cell phone coverage (even in the Metro) is not a problem, if you travel away from the major urban areas, in some remote regions access is a bit more hit or miss.

But in general while staying connected is relatively easy, there are some golden rules so you don't end up with a megasize bill at the end of your trip, specially if you are using your own cell phone plan from home.

Just as important as the connection or device is what you will use in terms of applications or services, some of the most popular social media sites are blocked, so using Facebook or Twitter won't work, some Google apps may or may not be blocked, Google Drive seems to be blocked while Gmail seems to work most of the time.

Here are some tips to keep you connected on the go. Although we strive to keep this information current, please keep in mind that when it comes to technology and connectivity things change rapidly, what applies today might not be true tomorrow! We apologize in advance if something is no longer the case and would appreciate your input so we can keep this page up to date.

Internet and WiFi in China

Wireless Internet coverage in China has virtually exploded in the last years with infrastructure that rivals and surpasses what is available in many cities in the West. Some cities in China offer free city-wide Wi-Fi, such as Hangzhou, others offer free Wi-Fi in many public places. Shanghai for example, offers free Wi-Fi in the Bund and the YuYuan Gardens.

Using the free wireless coverage will be your best bet to stay in touch, check e-mails or the weather. You can use your smartphone, laptop, iPad or tablet to access the internet and communicate via e-mail or Skype anywhere there is a Wi-Fi connection or hotspot available.

- First check if free wireless service is available at your hotel. In urban areas, even the smallest of hostels will have wireless internet, whether it is free to guests varies from property to property. Sometimes there is free wifi at the lobby only, if so, you will need to get a code to access the wireless connection.
- Use one of the many free hotspots throughout the cities, at the airports, train stations and shopping malls.
- Wireless internet is also available in many buses and trains. Beijing has the broadest WiFi coverage on buses in the country with about 10,000 internet-enabled buses through China Mobile's network. The Shanghai-Beijing highspeed train also has wireless internet access as are all Hong Kong metro trains.
- And of course, there is also free WiFi at Starbucks and McDonalds. You will need to get the access code from the attendants.
- Also note that many of the social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter are not accesible in China. Viber, WeChat and WhatsApp (so far) do work. Snapchat? Nope.
- If you use the Cloud, check that your app is not blocked in China to make sure you will be able to get to your documents. Dropbox and Google Drive are blocked in China but not in Hong Kong or Macau, as are many other Google-related sites, YouTube, Picasa, Google+. Gmail however seems to work most of the time. iCloud works fine in China. Best thing is to have a backup plan just in case.

Using your Cell Phone in China

Will my mobile phone work in China? It depends. There are two issues:

- Can your phone communicate in Chinese frequencies: Without getting too technical, the newer and higher-end the phone the higher the likelihood it will work. If you have a GSM tri-band or quad-band phone, you should be ok. The North American dual-band will not work in China.

All iPhones are quad-band and most of the latest Samsung Galaxy phones are either tri- or quad-band and will also work.

How do you know if you have a tri-band or quad-band phone? Check your user's manual or look up your model number on the internet.

- Your service provider plan: Many service providers, in the United States in particular, require that international service be activated. If you do not activate it before leaving home, your phone will not work in China or any other international destination.

Some tips when using your home cell phone in China:

- Check the rates you will be charged per phone call and text message. International rates are extremely expensive, even if you are using your phone to call local numbers, because your foreign phone is roaming in the Chinese cellular network and is charging you international roaming rates. Consider signing up for a special international plan that could save you money. Most providers offer plans for two weeks or a month with lower charges per minute, text message and data.
- Roaming charges may rack up without you even knowing and even if you are not making any calls or sending any text messages. If your phone receives a call for example, even if you don't answer it and goes straight to voice-mail, you will be charged.
- Be aware of data roaming charges if using apps and services like e-mail through your smartphone. Sometimes data refreshes might occur periodically without you noticing, check the settings in your device to allow for manual refresh or make sure it is either on airplane mode or totally off to avoid any unwanted roaming charges.
- If you are planning on using your mobile phone or 3G-enabled iPad or tablet a lot, getting a local Chinese SIM card might make more sense.

Getting a China SIM Card

You can buy a prepaid SIM card in China at any of the local wireless and telecom outlets throughout the city and easily install it into your cell phone or tablet, this is a great way to save money if you will be using wireless networks a lot. You must have an unlocked phone for this to work.

What's an unlocked phone? It is a phone that can be used on any network. Many U.S. carriers in particular "lock" the phones you buy through their plans so they can only be used on their networks. Most phones sold in Europe and Asia are unlocked. As far as I know, a "locked" phone can be "unlocked" but that is beyond our discussion here.

In China, the three players are:

- China Unicom (WCDMA or GSM)
- China Mobile (WCDMA or GSM)
- China Telecom (CDMA)

They use different frequencies so make sure you choose the one that fits your device.

All three have branches, kiosks and outlets throughout the cities, at the airports and train stations and getting a SIM card at any of them or any of the mobile shops in town is easy enough. They all have prepaid and pay-as-you-go plans which are convenient for short-term travelers.



Make sure you get the right size SIM card for your phone or tablet. Iphone 4 uses the Micro-Sim, Iphone 5 and 6 the smaller Nano-Sim Card. iPads 2 through 4 use the Micro-Sim, the iPad mini and Air use the Nano-Sim. The latest Samsung Smartphones use the Micro-Sim, the oldest models use the traditional SIM card.

How much are SIM cards in China? Just as an example to give you an idea, a Unicom SIM Card with a prepaid plan and no contract for the iPad was Rmb 80 (about US\$13) for 1 GB of data for one month. This was data only, no voice and the monthly plan is exactly that, a calendar month, not 30 days from start date.

There are so many different plans, voice and data, data only, monthly plans, prepaid plans... best thing is to get to one of the mobile shops, the ones at the airport speak English well and they can advise as to the best options for your needs.

You might need to provide an address in China and sometimes they ask for your passport but for the most part, the process is quite straightforward.

Also, you can look on E-Bay and have it shipped home before your trip.

Charging your Devices in China

Electricity in China is 220 Volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. This is twice the standard voltage than in North America and some Latin American countries which run on 110V 60Hz.

The standard wall plug in most households in China has a grounding pin and two power conducting pins in a V-shape.

Please see the following introduction to the electricity in China, you will find out what you will need to charge all of your devices in China including cameras, phones, tablets, laptops, etc.

Electricity in China

Do I need an adapter, a converter or both? How to charge my iPad and cameras in China?

Electricity in China is 220 Volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. This is twice the standard voltage than in North America and some Latin American countries which run on 110V 60Hz.



The standard wall plug in most households in China has a grounding pin and two power conducting pins in a V-shape:

The British type socket is also found throughout China and is the prevalent type in Hong Kong.

So when bringing electrical appliances to China, or devices that require recharging, such as your photo and video cameras, rechargeable batteries, iPods, Nintendo DS, Sony PSP, and the like, you need to determine what kind of voltage your devices function under, and whether you will be needing a converter.

If your device's electrical plug has a different shape than the one on the left, you may need an electrical adapter.

Electricity in China: Electrical Converters



Most European countries use a voltage of 220V-230V, so if you are traveling from Europe, your appliances will function fine without a need for a converter.

North American appliances however, run on 110V and so, you will need a converter so that your 110V item does not fry (literally) when you plug it into the 220V source.

You can get a converter easily and inexpensively at any electronics shop like Best Buy or at the airport shops which normally carry them. You can also check the Amazon.com selection at the bottom of this page. But before you rush to get a converter also consider the following:

- Most of the hotels in China have both 110V and 220V electrical outlets in the bathrooms for

low wattage items, your 110V electric shaver for example can be plugged in without problems. The electrical outlets are clearly marked either 110V or 220V.

- Some of your appliances might be "Dual-Voltage", that is, they will work fine at either 110V or 220V. In fact, the chargers that come with most modern video cameras, battery chargers, hair dryers, shavers, laptop computers, etc. are designed to sense the voltage automatically and adjust to the respective source. How to tell if you have a dual-voltage appliance? Look in the back of the charger or item where the power input/output is described.

Look for the "Input" specification which should read something like this:

Input: 100-240 V AC; 50/60 Hz

That tells you the voltage the device will take. If it says 110V but there is no mention of 240V, your device is not dual voltage and you will need an electricity converter in China.



Electricity in China: Electric Adapters

Now that you determined whether you have the right voltage to use your devices in China, in order to plug them into the Chinese electrical outlets (sockets) you will need an electric adapter, which is simply a connector that matches the shape of your plug with the Chinese electrical socket.

An adapter does not change the voltage of the device, the converter does that.

Some of the newer Western hotel chains do provide adapters in the rooms for the different styles of plugs in America and Europe, but do not expect that to be the case at smaller hotels and guest houses.



In any case, I would definitely bring a Travel Adapter Set with me just in case, they are inexpensive and that will keep from having everyone in the family fighting for the one outlet in the room to charge their devices!

When buying an Electric Adapter for China pay attention that you are getting the one with the V-shape that will fit the Chinese socket as pictured above. Most of the Universal sets will include it but double check, sometimes the sets are only US to Europe or US to UK adapters.

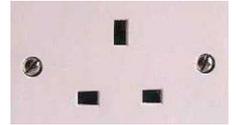
Some sets also include the converter, some only the adapters, so make sure you buy what you need.

Australians should have no problem with electricity in China since the Australian plug works well with the Chinese socket, it is the same shape only upside-down and Australian voltage is also the same.

If you are traveling to Hong Kong, you will see the British style socket in use:

Adapters for this kind of outlet are also included in the Travel Adapter Sets.

Some of the adapters and sets also include a USB charger, which is what you will need for charging certain devices like iPods, iPhones, etc., you can also get the Apple Travel Kit, see below.



Electricity in China: Converters and Adapter Sets



Spring Tour

Any questions you may have about your China tour, please contact with Spring Tour @ 626-226-8183 or send us E-mail with your questions and the date of your tour to china@spring-tour.com