

Country Guide for

# CHINA



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Far East.

China National Tourism Administration (CNTA)  
Department of Marketing and Communications, 9A Jianguomennei Avenue, Beijing 100740,  
People's Republic of China  
**Tel:** (10) 65 20 14 11 or 65 12 29 05. Fax: (10) 65 12 28 51.  
**Web site:** <http://www.cnta.com>

China International Travel Service (CITS)  
Head Office, 103 Fuxingmennei Avenue, Beijing 100800, People's Republic of China  
**Tel:** (10) 66 01 11 22 or 66 01 20 55. Fax: (10) 66 03 93 31. Web site: <http://www.cits.net>

Tibet Tourism Administration  
Yuanlin Road, Lhasa, Tibet 850001, People's Republic of China  
**Tel:** (891) 683 4313. Fax: (891) 683 4632.

Tibet Tourism Office  
Room M021 Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimennan jie, Beijing 100027, People's Republic of China  
**Tel:** (10) 65 00 11 88 (ext 3423) or 65 93 65 38. Fax: (10) 65 93 65 38.  
**E-mail:** [info@tibettour.net.cn](mailto:info@tibettour.net.cn)  
**Web site:** <http://www.tibettour.net.cn>

Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
49-51 Portland Place, London W1N 3AH  
**Tel:** (020) 7636 5197 or (09001) 880 808 (recorded visa and general information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7636 0399. E-mail: [press@chineseembassyuk.demon.co.uk](mailto:press@chineseembassyuk.demon.co.uk)  
**Web site:** <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk>  
**Opening hours:** 0900-1230 and 1330-1700 Monday to Friday.  
**Consular and Visa Section:** 31 Portland Place, London W1N 3AG  
**Tel:** (020) 7631 1430 (telephone enquiries: 1400-1600 only). Fax: (020) 7636 9756. Opening hours: 0900-1200 Monday to Friday.

Consulate General of the People's Republic of China  
Denison House, 49 Denison Road, Rusholme, Manchester M14 5RX  
**Tel:** (0161) 224 7443. Fax: (0161) 257 2672.

Consulate General of the People's Republic of China  
43 Station Road, Corstorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7AF  
**Tel:** (0131) 334 8501. Fax: (0131) 334 6954.

China National Tourist Office  
(CNTO)  
4 Glentworth Street, London NW1 5PG  
**Tel:** (020) 7935 9787 or (09001) 600 188 (brochure request and general information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7487 5842.

British Embassy  
11 Guang Hua Lu, Jian Guo Men Wai, Beijing 100600, People's Republic of China

**Tel:** (10) 65 32 19 61. **Fax:** (10) 65 32 19 37. **E-mail:** [commercialmail@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk](mailto:commercialmail@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk) (commercial section). **Web site:** <http://www.britishembassy.org.cn>

**Consular section:** Kerry Centre 21st Floor, Guan Hua Lu, Jian Guo Men Wai, Beijing 100600, People's Republic of China

**Tel:** (10) 85 29 66 00. **Fax:** (10) 85 29 60 81. **E-mail:** [consularmail@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk](mailto:consularmail@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk)

**Consulates General in:** Chongqing (tel: (23) 63 81 03 21), Guangzhou (tel: (20) 83 35 13 54), Hong Kong (tel: +852 29 01 30 00) and Shanghai (tel: (21) 62 79 76 50).

Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

**Tel:** (202) 328 2505. **Fax:** (202) 328 2582 or 625 3380 (commercial section). **Web site:** <http://www.china-embassy.org>

**Visa section:** Room 110, 2201 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20007

**Tel:** (202) 328 2506. **Fax:** (202) 338 6688 (visa section).

**Consulates General in:** Chicago (tel: (312) 803 0098), Houston (tel: (213) 524 7593), Los Angeles (tel: (213) 807 8088), New York (tel: (212) 330 7410) and San Francisco (tel: (415) 674 2925).

China National Tourist Office CNTO  
Suite 6413, 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10118

**Tel:** (212) 760 9700 (information) or 760 8218 (trade enquiries). **Fax:** (212) 760 8809. **E-mail:** [cntony@aol.com](mailto:cntony@aol.com)

**Web site:** <http://www.cnto.org>

**Office also in:** Los Angeles.

Embassy of the United States of America  
3 Xiushui Beijie, Beijing 100600, People's Republic of China

**Tel:** (10) 65 32 34 31. **Fax:** (10) 65 32 31 78 or 69 32 41 53. **Web site:** <http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn>

**Consulates in:** Chengdu (tel: (28 5 58 39 92), Guangzhou (tel: (20) 81 88 89 11), Hong Kong (tel: +852 25 23 90 11), Shanghai (tel: (21) 64 33 68 80) and Shenyang (tel: (24) 23 22 11 98).

Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
515 St Patrick Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5H3, Canada

**Tel:** (613) 789 3434 or 789 9608 (visa section) or 789 0327 (24-hour recorded information) or 789 3512 (commercial section). **Fax:** (613) 789 1911 or 789 1414 (visa section). **E-mail:** [adoffice@buildlink.com](mailto:adoffice@buildlink.com) or [cooffice@buildlink.com](mailto:cooffice@buildlink.com) (visa section). **Web site:** <http://www.chinaembassycanada.org>

**Consulates General in:** Calgary (tel: (403) 264 3322), Toronto (tel: (416) 964 7260) and

Vancouver (tel: (604) 734 7492).

China National Tourist Office (CNTO)  
480 University Avenue, Suite 806, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1V2, Canada

**Tel:** (416) 599 6636. **Fax:** (416) 599 6382. **E-mail:** [cntooyz@sprint.ca](mailto:cntooyz@sprint.ca)

Canadian Embassy

19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie, Chao Yang District, Beijing 100600, People's Republic of China

**Tel:** (10) 65 32 35 36 or 65 32 30 31 (immigration). **Fax:** (10) 65 34 43 11 or 65 32 16 84 (immigration).

**Consulates in:** Chongqing (tel: (23) 63 73 80 07), Guangzhou (tel: (20) 86 66 05 69), Hong Kong (tel: +852 28 10 43 21) and Shanghai (tel: (21) 62 79 84 00).

**Country dialling code:** 86.

## 2 GENERAL

**Area:** 9,571,300 sq km (3,695,500 sq miles).

**Population:** 1,248,100,000 (1998). Roughly a quarter of the world's population lives in China.

**Population Density:** 130.4 per sq km.

**Capital:** Beijing (Peking). Population: 12,460,000 (1998). The largest city in the country, Shanghai, has a population of over 14 million and, as at 1990, 39 other cities have a population of over one million.

**Geography:** China is bounded to the north by Russia and Mongolia; to the east by North Korea, 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 plateaux 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 Tien Shan Mountains and the Kunlun Mountains. On the border with Nepal is the 8848m-high (29,198ft) Mount Qomolangma (Mount Everest). In the west is the Qinghai/Tibet Plateau, with an average elevation of 4000m (13,200ft), known as 'the Roof of the World'. At the base of the Tien 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 Kiang (Chang Jiang). Only 10% of all China is suitable for agriculture.

**Government:** People's Republic. China comprises 23 Provinces, 5 Autonomous Regions, 2 Special Administrative Regions and 3 Municipalities directly under Central Government. Head of State: President Jiang Zemin since 1993. Head of Government: Premier Zhu Rongji since 1998.

**Language:** The official language is Mandarin Chinese. Among the enormous number of local dialects, in the south, large groups speak Cantonese, Fukienese, Xiamenhua and Hakka. Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, which are autonomous regions, have their own languages. Translation and interpreter services are good. English is spoken by many guides.

**Religion:** The principal religions and philosophies are Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. There are 100 million Buddhists and approximately 60 million Muslims, five million Protestants (including large numbers of Evangelicals) and four million Roman Catholics, largely independent of Vatican control.

**Time:** GMT + 8. Despite the vast size of the country, Beijing time is standard throughout China.

**Electricity:** 220/240 volts AC, 50Hz. Two-pin sockets and some three-pin sockets are in use.

### **Communications:**

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 86. Outgoing international code: 00. Antiquated internal service with public telephones in hotels and shops displaying a telephone unit sign. It is often easier to make international phone calls from China than it is to make calls internally.

**Mobile telephone:** GSM 1800 and 900 networks provide coverage in Beijing, Guangzhou (Canton) and Shanghai; GSM 900 networks also exist in most other major urban areas in the southeastern and eastern regions including Chengdu and Chongqing. Networks are operated by China Telecom.

**Fax:** A growing number of hotels offer fax facilities but are often incoming only. Rates are generally high.

**Internet/E-mail:** ISPs include Eastnet China Ltd (web site: <http://www.home.eastnet.co.cn>). There are cybercafés in main towns.

**Post:** Service to Europe takes about a week. Tourist hotels usually have their own post offices. All postal communications to China should be addressed 'People's Republic of China'.

**Press:** The main English-language daily is the China Daily and China Travel. There is also the weekly news magazine Beijing Review, with editions in English, French, Spanish, Japanese and German. National newspapers include The People's Daily and The Guangming Daily, with many provinces having their own local dailies as well.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**  
MHz21.6615.2811.945.99

**Voice of America:**  
MHz17.8215.169.7606.160

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>USA</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Note:** (a) China does not recognise dual nationality (eg US-Chinese, Canadian-Chinese). (b) Travellers are required to complete a health declaration certificate on arrival in China. HIV-positive travellers are not permitted to enter the country.

**PASSPORTS:** Required by all. Passport must be valid for at least 6 months for a single entry within 3 months of the date of visa issue; at least 9 months for double or multiple entries within 6 months.

**VISAS:** Required by all except

(a) Nationals of Mongolia (up to 30 days). (b) Nationals of Laos (for up to one month). (c) Transit passengers continuing their journey to another country who hold valid onward documentation and do not leave the airport.

**Types of visa and cost:** Tourist/Business (UK nationals): £30 (Single-entry); £45 (Double-entry); £60 (Multiple-entry for 6 months); £90 (Multiple-entry for 12 months). Transit (UK nationals): £30 (Single-entry); £45 (Double-entry). Tourist/Business/Transit (other nationals) and Group: cost varies according to nationality; contact the Embassy for further information. Express Services cost £20 (for visas issued the same day) and £15 (for visas issued within 24-48 hours).

**Note:** An additional £20 must be enclosed with all postal applications to cover handling and postal charges.

**Validity:** Tourist and Group visas are normally issued to individuals or groups on package tours, although they are also issued to independent travellers. Visa validity is normally 3 months from date of issue, but depends on the duration of the package tour or individual stay. Multi-entry visas are normally valid for 6 months. The validity of Business visas varies. Transit visas are generally valid for up to 10 days.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section. Visas should be applied for at least 1 month before departure.

**Application requirements:** Tourist: (a) Completed application form. (b) 1 passport-size photograph. (c) Valid passport with blank pages to affix visa. (d) Fee (payable in cash or by postal order only). (e) Sufficient funds for duration of stay. (f) Return airline ticket, travel information about itinerary and confirmation of hotel reservation in China. (g) A stamped, self-addressed envelope for postal applications (registered/recorded delivery is recommended).

**Group:** (a)-(g), and (h) Confirmation letter or fax from an authorised Chinese travel company. A list of all group members should be presented in triplicate.

**Transit:** (a)-(g), and (h) Travellers may be required to show a visa for the next country of destination or an airline ticket.

**Business:** (a)-(g), and (h) Official invitation from a Chinese governmental department or a government-approved company indicating duration of stay.

**Working days required:** Applications should be made 1 month in advance. Postal applications take longer to process than those made in person.

**Temporary residence:** Enquiries should be made to the Chinese Embassy.

**Note:** (a) The majority of visits to China tend to be organised through the official state travel agency CITS (China International Travel Service). This liaison with CITS is generally handled by the tour operator organising the inclusive holiday chosen by the visitor, though it is possible for individuals to organise their own itinerary. Once the tour itinerary details have been confirmed to the visitor or visiting group, finances to cover accommodation and the cost of the tour must be deposited with CITS through a home bank. Once again, for package trips, all the necessary formalities for a visit to China can be handled by the tour operator concerned. (b) Those wishing to visit Tibet are strongly advised to join a travel group. Individual travellers need a special permit and should obtain permission to visit Tibet from the following organisation before applying for a visa: Tibet Tourism Administration or the Tibet Tourist Office (see address section).

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** 1 Renminbi Yuan (RMBY) = 10 chiao/jiao or 100 fen. Notes are in the denominations of RMBY100, 50, 10, 5, 2 and 1, and 5, 2 and 1 chiao/jiao. Coins are in denominations of RMBY1, 1.5 chiao/jiao, and 5, 2 and 1 fen.

**Currency exchange:** RMBY is not traded outside China. Foreign banknotes and travellers cheques 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. Scots and Northern Irish banknotes cannot be exchanged.

**Credit cards:** MasterCard, Visa, Diners Club, Federal Card, East-American Visa, Million Card, JCB Card and American Express are valid in major provincial cities in designated establishments.

**Travellers cheques:** To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

**Currency restrictions:** Import and export of local currency is limited to 6,000 RMBY. Unlimited foreign currency may be imported but must be declared on arrival. Export of foreign currency is limited to the amount imported and declared.

**Banking hours:** 0830-1600 Monday to Friday.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following items may be imported into China by passengers staying less than six months without incurring customs duty:

400 cigarettes (600 cigarettes for stays of over 6 months); 2 litres of alcoholic beverages; a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use.

**Prohibited items:** Arms, ammunition, pornography, radio transmitters/receivers, exposed but undeveloped film, fruit and certain vegetables, political and religious pamphlets (a moderate quantity of religious material for personal use is acceptable). Photographs in mainstream Western magazines may be regarded as pornographic. Customs officials may seize audio and videotapes, books, records and CDs to check for pornographic, political or religious material.

**Note:** Baggage declaration forms must be completed upon arrival noting all valuables (such as cameras, watches and jewellery), a copy of which must be presented to customs upon leaving the country for checking. Receipts for items such as jewellery, jade, handicrafts, paintings, calligraphy or other similar items should be kept in order to obtain an export certificate from the authorities on leaving. Without this documentation such items cannot be taken out of the country.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 24-26 Spring Festival, Chinese New Year. May 1 Labour Day. Oct 1-2 National Days. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Feb 12-14 Spring Festival, Chinese New Year. May 1 Labour Day.

**Note:** In addition to the above, other holidays may be observed locally and certain groups have official public holidays on the following dates:

Mar 8 International Women's Day (women only). May 4 National Youth Day. Jun 1 International Children's Day. Aug 1 Army Day.

## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	Yes	1
<b>Cholera</b>	Yes	-
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	Yes	-
<b>Malaria</b>	2	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	3	-

**1:** A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers if arriving from infected areas.

**2:** Malaria risk exists throughout the country below 1500m except in Heilongjiang, Jilin, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Beijing, Shanxi, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang (except in the Yili River Valley) and Tibet (Xizang, except in the Zangbo River Valley in the extreme southeast). North of 33°N, the risk lasts from July to November, between 33°N and 25°N from May to December, and south of 25°N throughout the year. The disease occurs primarily in the benign vivax form but the malignant falciparum form is also present and has been reported to be multidrug-resistant. The recommended prophylaxis in risk areas is chloroquine, or mefloquine in Hainan and Yunnan.

**3:** Outside main centres all water used for drinking, brushing teeth or freezing should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Rabies is present, although the Government policy which bans dogs and cats from main cities makes this less of a risk in these areas. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is endemic in the central Yangtze river basin. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water. Swimming pools that are well-chlorinated and maintained are safe. There is some risk of plague. Hepatitis E is prevalent in western China and hepatitis A is common across the country. Hepatitis B is highly endemic. Oriental liver fluke (clonorchiasis), oriental lung fluke (paragonimiasis) and giant intestinal fluke (fasciolopsiasis) are reported, and brucellosis also occurs.

Bancroftian and brugian filariasis are still reported in southern China, visceral leishmaniasis is increasingly common throughout, and cutaneous leishmaniasis has been reported from Xinjiang.

Haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome is endemic. Precautions should be taken against Japanese encephalitis. Mite-borne or scrub typhus may be found in scrub areas of southern China.

**Health care:** Medical costs are low. Many medicines common in Western countries are unavailable in China. Medical facilities in international hospitals are excellent. There are many traditional forms of medicine still used in China, the most notable being acupuncture. Medical insurance is strongly advised.

Travel - International

**AIR:** The national airline is Air China (CA). A number of major international airlines operate direct flights to China. Note: Travellers should ensure that they reconfirm their return flight reservations, as overbooking by airlines has led to people being stranded in China.

**Approximate flight time:** From London to Beijing is approximately 10 hours, from New York is 22 hours, from Los Angeles is 12 hours and from Sydney is 12 hours.

**International airports:** Beijing/Peking (BJS/PEK) airport (Capital International Central) is 26km (16 miles) northeast of the city (travel time - 90 minutes by bus, 40 minutes by taxi). Guangzhou/Canton airport (Baiyun) is 7km (4 miles) from the city (travel time - 20 minutes). Shanghai Hongqiao (SHA) airport is 12km (7.5 miles) southwest of the city (travel time - 20 minutes).

Shanghai Pudong (PVG) airport, in the new eastern financial district around an hour from the city centre, began handling international flights in March 2000. After construction is complete in 2001, Pudong will become the city's major international airport.

Facilities at the above airports include taxis, public and shuttle buses, duty-free shops, banks/bureaux de change, post offices, business facilities, bars and restaurants. There are also airports at other major cities.

**Departure tax:** RMBY90. Children under 12 are exempt.

**SEA:** Principal seaports are Qingdao (Tsingtao), Shanghai, Fuzhou (Foochow), Guangzhou (Canton) and Hong Kong/Kowloon. Pearl Cruises operates over 20 cruises a year to China. Other cruise lines are Royal Viking and CTC. There is a regular (once or twice weekly) ferry service linking Tianjin with Kobe in Japan and the west coast of Korea (Dem. Rep. of). Ferry services operate between Weihai, Qingdao, Tianjin and Shanghai in China to Incheon in Korea (Rep. of.).

**RAIL:** International services run twice a week from Beijing to Moscow (Russian Federation) and Pyongyang (Korea, DPR). Owing to demand, it may be necessary to book up to two months in advance. A regular train service runs from Hong Kong to Guangzhou (Canton), and is of a higher standard than internal trains in China. There are several trains daily. Services between Shanghai-Kowloon/Hong Kong (journey time - 29 hours) and Beijing-Kowloon/Hong Kong (journey time - 30 hours) both run on alternate days. There are three types of fare: hard sleeper, soft sleeper and deluxe soft sleeper.

**Note:** Travellers on the Trans-Siberian Railway are strongly advised to search their compartments and lock the doors before departure, owing to an increase in smuggling via this route.

**ROAD:** The principal road routes into China follow the historical trade routes through Myanmar, India, the former Soviet republics and Mongolia.

Travel - Internal

**AIR:** Most long-distance internal travel is by air. The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) operates along routes linking Beijing to over 80 other cities. Tickets will normally be purchased by guides and the price will be included in any tour costs. Independent travellers can also book through the local Chinese International Travel Service (CITS), which charges a small commission, or alternatively buy tickets in booking offices. It is advisable to purchase internal air tickets well in advance if travelling during May, September or October. The tourist price for a ticket is 70% on a train ticket and 100% on an air ticket. There are many connections to Hong Kong from Beijing/Guangzhou (Peking/Canton) as well as other cities. Note: where possible, travellers are advised to fly in UK or North American aircraft which are used by larger airlines.

**Departure tax:** RMBY50.

**SEA/RIVER:** All major rivers are served by river ferries. Coastal ferries operate between Dalian, Tianjin (Tientsin), Qingdao (Tsingtao) and Shanghai. There are regular ferry services between mainland China and Hong Kong.

**RAIL:** Railways provide the principal means of transport for goods and people throughout China. The major routes are from Beijing to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Harbin, Chengdu and Urumqi. There are four types of fare: hard seat, soft seat (only on short-distance trains such as the Hong Kong to Guangzhou (Canton) line), hard sleeper and soft sleeper. Children under 1m (3ft) tall travel free and those under 1.3m (4ft) pay a quarter of the fare.

**ROAD:** 80% of settlements can be reached by road. Roads are not always of the highest quality. Distances should not be underestimated and vehicles should be in prime mechanical condition as China is still very much an agricultural nation without the mechanical expertise or services found in the West. From Beijing to Shanghai is 1461km (908 miles), and from Beijing to Nanjing (Nanking) is 1139km (718 miles). Traffic drives on the right. Bus: Reasonable services are operated between the main cities. Buses are normally crowded. Car hire: Available, but most rental companies' policy of retaining the driver's passport makes self-drive car hire impossible in practice for visitors. Cars with a driver can be hired on a daily or weekly basis.

**URBAN:** There is a metro system in Shanghai and limited metro services in Beijing and Tianjin, and tramways and trolleybuses in a number of other cities. New lines are under construction in Beijing. Most cities have extensive bus services. Guides who accompany every visitor or group will ensure that internal travel within the cities is as trouble-free as possible. Taxi: Taxis are available in large cities but can be hard to find. It is best to check if the taxi is metered. If not, then it is important to agree a fare beforehand, especially at railway stations where it is best to bargain before getting into the taxi. Visitors should write down their destination before starting any journey. Taxis can be hired by the day. Most people travel by bicycle or public transport. In most cities bicycles or other types of rickshaws are available for short rides.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Beijing to other major cities/towns in China.

AirRail
Tianjin0.501.40
Wuhan1.4516.00
Xian1.5522.00
Nanjing1.4015.30
Shanghai1.5020.00
Chengdu2.2560.00
Kunming3.2080.00

Guangzhou3.0037.00  
Urumqi4.0095.00

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** China has 4418 tourist hotels with 386,000 rooms, among which 2349 hotels have been star-graded according to international standards. Most of the hotels have comfortable and convenient facilities including air-conditioning and private bathrooms, Chinese and Western restaurants, coffee shops, bars, banqueting halls, conference rooms, multi-function halls, ballrooms, swimming pools, bowling alleys, beauty parlours, massage rooms, saunas, clinics and ticket booking offices. Some even include shopping and business malls, banks and post offices. For further information, contact the China Tourism Hotel Association, 9A Jianguomennei Avenue, **Beijing 100740** (tel: (10) 65 20 11 14 or 65 12 29 05; fax: (10) 65 12 28 51) or China Hotel and Buyers' Guide (web site: <http://www.hotelschina.com>).

**DORMITORIES:** These are found in most tourist centres and provide cheaper accommodation for budget travellers. Standards range from poor to adequate.

## 9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

China is a vast country, requiring visitors to travel for much of their time in order to see at least a selection of the cultural, historical and natural wonders of the land, 23 of which have already been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Altogether there are 26 provinces, each with their own dialect and regional characteristics. The western provinces of Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan occupy an enormous area of land, and Sichuan alone is about the size of France. China International Travel Services (CITS), the state travel agency, tends to organise a good deal of the tours in China, although more and more specialist operators are running packages so visitors are now presented with a considerable choice of excursions. Independent travel is becoming both easier and more popular. For full details of independent travel in China contact the China National Tourist Office (CNTO) or China International Travel Service (CITS) (see address section). Individual visitors wishing to travel to Tibet should note that they must obtain permits in advance from one of the Tibet Tourist Authority's Tourism Offices (see address and Passport/Visa sections).

### Beijing and the Northeast

The entire area of Beijing within the city limits is in many ways one great historic museum. The city is symmetrical and built as three rectangles, one within another. The innermost rectangle is the Forbidden City, now a museum and public park, but formerly the residence of the Ming and Qing emperors. The second rectangle forms the boundaries of the Imperial City where there are several parks and the homes of senior government officials. The outer rectangle forms the outer city with its markets and old residential districts. The Imperial Palace, lying inside the Forbidden City and surrounded by a high wall and broad moat, is well worth a visit. Dating from the 15th century, the Palace was home to a total of 24 emperors, and today its fabulous halls, palaces and gardens house a huge collection of priceless relics from various dynasties. Other points of interest are the Coal Hill (Mei Shan), a beautiful elevated park with breathtaking views; Beihai Park, the loveliest in Beijing; Tiananmen Square, the largest public square in the world, surrounded by museums, parks, the zoo and Beijing University; the Temple of Heaven, an excellent example of 15th-century Chinese architecture; the Summer Palace, the former court resort for the emperors

of the Qing Dynasty, looking out over the Kunming Lake; the Great Wall (see below), the section at Badaling being easily accessible from Beijing; and the Ming Tombs, where 13 Ming emperors chose to be buried. Two magnificent tombs here have been excavated, one of which is open to the public.

**The Great Wall:** The Great Wall, said to be the only man-made structure visible from the moon, is a spectacular sight which should not be missed. Stretching for a distance of 5400km (3375 miles), it starts at the Shanhaiguan Pass in the east and ends at the Jiayuguan Pass in the west. The section at Badaling, which most tourists visit, is roughly 8m (26ft) high and 6m (20ft) wide. Constructed of large granite blocks and bricks some 2600 years ago, the wall is one of the universally acknowledged wonders of the world.

**Pingyao:** Pingyao or "Turtle" City, in Shanxi Province to the southwest of Beijing, is a historic walled city whose streets, shops and houses have been remarkably preserved. The Cave of Peking Man, Zhoukoudian Village, on Longgu Mountain, 42km (26 miles) southwest of Beijing, has remains from a prehistoric culture which used fire and stone tools around BC690,000.

**Beidaihe:** Beidaihe, a small seacoast resort with beaches, temples and parks, is a popular vacation area 277km (172 miles) from Beijing. Attractions include the Yansai Lake and Shan Hai Guan, a massive gateway at the very start of the Great Wall.

**Chengde:** Chengde is a mountain escape from the summer heat of Beijing and a former retreat of the Qing emperors. There are many temples and parks, including the remains of the Qing Summer Palace with its impressive Imperial Garden. The Eight Outer Temples, lying at the foot of the hills to the northeast of the Palace, incorporate, amongst others, the architectural styles of the Han, Mongolian and Tibetan peoples. At over 22m (72ft) tall, the colossal image of a Bodhisattva in the Temple of General Peace, which has 1000 arms and 1000 eyes, is recognised as the largest wooden statue in the world.

**Dalian:** Dalian is China's third port. Formerly occupied by the Soviets, it is an interesting bi-cultural city. There are guided tours of the port, residential areas, parks and the excellent beaches to the south. Xinghai Park combines a park with beach and restaurant facilities, while the Tiger Beach Park boasts tiger-shaped rock formations. Shell mosaics and glassware are famous products of Dalian.

**Harbin:** Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang Province, is a Russian-style city and is the industrial centre of the northeast. Attractions include the Provincial Museum with its large collection of artefacts, including what are arguably the best-preserved mammoth skeletons in China; Tai Yang Dao, or Sun Island; the Songhau River, offering boat trips through the very centre of the city; and the Arts and Crafts Factory, known for its good selection of jade work. Harbin is host to the annual Harbin Summer Music Festival.

**Hohhot:** Hohhot (meaning 'green city' in Mongolian) is the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and probably the most colourful city in China. Traditional Mongolian rodeos are performed for tourists under oriental domes and there are also tours of the grasslands, further displays of horsemanship, and visits to local communes and villages, where it is possible to stay overnight in a Mongolian yurt. Hohhot is famous for its woollen products. A visit to nearby Kweihua is also recommended: the monastery's Five-Pagoda Temple dates from around 1000BC.

**Shenyang:** Shenyang is now a large industrial centre, but was once an imperial capital. Remains from this period include the Imperial Palace - not unlike the Imperial Palace in Beijing - and two

interesting tombs. The North Imperial Tomb, about 20km (13 miles) from the city, is the burial place of the founding father of the Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty.

#### The Eastern Provinces

**Shanghai:** Shanghai is one of the world's largest cities, and is in some ways more like New York than Beijing. Lying at the estuary of the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, it is the centre of China's trade and industry. Squares and historic avenues, the old town and magnificent gardens, splendid parks and museums, busy harbours, palaces, pagodas and temples all co-exist in this bustling metropolis. Yu Yuan Garden dates back over 400 years: although relatively small, it is impressive thanks to its intricate design, with pavilions, rockeries and ponds recalling an ancient architectural style. The garden is reached via the Town God Temple Bazaar, where a variety of small odds and ends can be bought. One of the best-known Buddhist temples in Shanghai is the Temple of the Jade Buddha, a replica of a palace of the Song Dynasty, and home to the famous 2m (6ft) tall statue of Sakyamuni, carved out of a single piece of white jade. Worth a visit are the Art and History Museum (artefacts from all dynasties); the Carpet Factory, where a range of carpets can be bought and shipment arranged; the Jade Carving Factory, with works of all sizes on show; and the Children's Palace - once belonging to a rich businessman, this large house is now at the disposal of the city's children.

**Fuzhou:** Fuzhou, in Fujian Province on the southeast coast, is a beautiful city on the banks of the Min River. Dating back some 2000 years (to the Tang Dynasty), the city has numerous parks and temples, as well as bustling shipbuilding and repair centres. Fuzhou also has hot springs dotted throughout the city. Local products include lacquerware, Shoushan stone carvings, paper umbrellas, cork carvings and Fukien black tea. Further south, Mount Wuyi is an important archaeological site as the cradle of neo-Confucianism. The gorges of the Nine Bend River which winds around the mountain are adorned with ancient temple ruins, and now host the most diverse wildlife in China.

**Hangzhou:** Hangzhou, about 190km (120 miles) south of Shanghai, is one of China's seven ancient capital cities. Known as 'Paradise on Earth', Hangzhou was also described by Marco Polo as "the most beautiful and magnificent city in the world". Although today's city is a prosperous industrial and agricultural centre, it is nevertheless a beauty spot still visited by Chinese and foreign tourists in great numbers. Attractions include the silk factories and the zoo. By far the most attractive excursion, however, is to the West Lake area, dotted with weeping willows and peach trees, stone bridges, rockeries and painted pavilions. Here can be found the Pagoda of Six Harmonies, various tombs and sacred hills, monasteries and temples, not least the Linyin Temple.

**Nanjing:** Nanjing, meaning 'southern capital', has a beautiful setting on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River at the foot of Zijinshan (Purple Mountain). Another former capital of China, Nanjing is now capital of Jiangsu Province. It abounds with temples, tombs, parks and lakes, museums, hot springs and other places of interest, foremost amongst them being the Tomb of the Ming Emperor, where lies the body of Zhu Yuanzhang, founding father of the Ming Dynasty and the only Ming emperor to be buried outside Beijing. The mausoleum of China's first president, Dr Sun Yat-sen, is also here. Other places of interest are the Yangtze River Bridge with its observation deck, the Purple Mountain Observatory and the Tombs of the Southern Tang Dynasty, known as the 'Underground Palace'.

**Suzhou:** Suzhou is one of China's oldest cities, dating back some 2500 years, and is certainly one of her most beautiful. An old proverb says that 'in Heaven there is Paradise; on earth, Suzhou'. Its riverside streets are reminiscent of Venice, there are many famous water gardens, and its moderate climate and fertile land make it rich in agricultural produce. There are over 400 historical sites and relics under the protection of the Government, such as the Blue-Waves

Pavilion Garden on the outskirts, the Lion-Grove Garden which has rockeries resembling lions, the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Linger-Here Garden. The Grand Canal and Tiger Hill are also worth a visit. There are numerous silk mills producing exquisite fabrics, and the local embroidery is an unparalleled art form.

**Wuxi:** Wuxi is an industrial and resort city on the north bank of Lake Tai, some 125km (75 miles) west of Shanghai. The gardens, parks and sanatoriums around the lake are the main attractions, as is the Hui Shan Clay Figure Factory. Wuxi is virtually encircled by the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, and so there are plenty of boat trips available. Further west, on Huangshan Mountain in the southern Anhui Province, trees cling to breathtaking rocky precipices amongst seas of cloud and clear natural springs and lakes. A UNESCO World Heritage site for its natural beauty and wildlife, the mountain has a cableway linking the summit and base.

**Jinan:** Jinan, the capital of Shandong Province, is known as the 'City of Springs'; these provide the main tourist attraction. The city also has Buddhist relics, parks and lakes. Of particular interest is the Square Four Gate Pagoda, the oldest stone pagoda in China. Outside the city, Mount Taishan's 72 peaks make up a mountain park with ancient pine and cypress trees, spectacular waterfalls, 1800 stone sculptures and a kilometre-long mountain stairway known as the 'Ladder to Heaven'. Qingdao is one of China's most popular coastal resorts and home of the famous brewery making Tsingdao beer. The Qingdao Aquarium has hundreds of rare and protected fish on show.

In Qufu, close to Qingdao, the Mansion of Confucius was home to the sage's descendants, and the enormous Temple of Confucius, with its many pavilions, was a centre for his worshippers. Today the buildings store and display important historical records, art and cultural artefacts. Confucius's tomb is in a cemetery just north of Qufu.

#### The Southern Provinces

**Guangzhou:** Guangzhou (Canton), sometimes known as the 'City of Flowers', is a subtropical metropolis on the south coast and the most important foreign trade centre in China, being only 182km (113 miles) from Hong Kong. Parks, museums, temples, hot springs and trips to nearby mountains (for splendid views) are the main attractions, as are the Chenhai Tower, a 15th-century observation tower overlooking the Pearl River, the Huaisheng Mosque built by Arab merchants in 650AD, and the Ancestral Temple in Hunin, an ancient Taoist temple some 16km (10 miles) southwest of Guangzhou. Cantonese cuisine (the one most familiar to the majority of Westerners) is regarded as being particularly good, although it is often too exotic for Western tastes.

**Shenzen:** Shenzen, adjacent to Hong Kong, is a special economic zone whose population and commercial activity has exploded in recent years. Western influences show in its high-rise office blocks, China's first McDonald's, and a well-resourced local tourist industry which offers holiday resorts with sports and activities. Theme parks include the World of Splendid China, with miniatures of Chinese heritage sites; and the China Folk Culture Villages, with life-sized replicas of traditional buildings, authentic food and folk dancing.

**Changsha:** Changsha, as well as being the capital of Hunan Province, is a cultural and educational centre. It is close to the birthplace of Mao Zedong at Shaoshan. Most attractions revolve around Mao's early life and there are museums and schools dedicated to him. One notable exception is the Han Tomb whose contents - including the 2000-year-old remains of a woman - are now in the Hunan Provincial Museum.

**Lushan Mountain:** Lushan Mountain is a well-known scenic area and summer resort with tranquil scenery and a warm and comfortable climate. It has been a haven for poets and artists,

Confucian thinkers and Buddhist and Taoist worshippers for centuries. At its centre is Guling Town, at an altitude of 1167 metres.

**Guilin:** Guilin, to the northwest of Guangzhou (Canton), is famous for its spectacular landscape, echoed so evocatively in the paintings and wall hangings well-known in the West. Steep monolithic mountains rise dramatically from a flat landscape of meandering rivers and paddy fields. Visitors can climb the hills, take river trips and visit the parks, lakes and caves. Further north is the Wulingyuan basin, centred on the town of Zhangjiajie, which contains dense primeval forest and several thousand steep mountain peaks, the highest of which is called Rabbits Watch the Moon. Tourism is expanding in the area and various guided tours are offered around scenic spots including Yellow Dragon Cave, with gnarled stalactites.

**Kunming:** Kunming is a newer, showcase city with some temples and very pretty lakeside parks. It is known as the 'City of Eternal Spring' because of the pleasant climate throughout the year. Outside of Kunming are the major attractions of Xi Shan, the holy mountain, and the petrified limestone forest called Shilin, 120km (75 miles) southeast of Kunming. The ancient city of Lijiang, further west in Yunnan Province, is made up of the wooden houses of Naxi ethnic people, whose traditional Dongba religion includes witchcraft and traditional medicine.

**Hainan Island:** Hainan Island is a tropical island off the south coast of Guangdong Province with unspoilt beaches, palm groves, fresh seafood and coconuts. In 1989 Hainan Island became a separate province in its own right, and is now one of several Special Economic Zones, a part of China's 'open door' policy.

#### The Central Provinces

**Chengdu:** Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province and a great agricultural centre. The attractions include the Tang Dynasty shrines, ancient parks and bamboo forests, Buddhist temples and an ancient Buddhist monastery. Chengdu is a base for visiting Emei Shan, a famous mountain to which Buddhist pilgrims flock every year, and the holy mountains of Gongga and Siguniang. There is also the spectacular giant Stone Buddha in Leshan, a 70.7m high sculpture carved out of a cliff, so enormous that 100 people can fit on its instep. In the Jiuzhaigou Ravine in northern Sichuan Province, there is a vast nature reserve where giant pandas can be seen in their natural habitat. The six official "scenic spots" among the snowy peaks include Shuzheng, with waterfalls and 40 lakes of different colours where swimming and boating are allowed. Further north, the concentration of mineral salts in the water at Huanglong (Yellow Dragon) nature reserve has created beautifully-coloured natural talpatate ponds and rock formations.

**Xi'an:** Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province, was once amongst the largest cities in the world and was also, from the 11th century BC onwards, the capital of 11 dynasties. It was the starting point of the ancient trade route known as the Silk Road and is now, with the exception of Beijing, the most popular tourist attraction in China. The city is most famous for the Tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi and its terracotta figures, over 6000 lifesize warriors and horses buried along with the Qing Dynasty emperor responsible for the unification of China in BC200. The Bronze Chariot and Horse Figures should not be missed: weighing over 1000 tons and made up of over 3000 parts, the figures are the earliest and largest of their kind ever unearthed. Although much of the city was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, there is still a great number of tombs, pavilions, museums and pagodas, such as the Big Wild Goose Pagoda with its spiral staircase and the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

**Wuhan:** Wuhan spans the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River. As the capital of Hubei Province, it is an industrial centre. There are also Buddhist temples, lakes and parks, as well as the Yellow Crane Tower and the Provincial Museum, home to the famous Chime Bells manufactured over 2400

years ago. Nearby in Danjiangou City, Wudang or Taihe Mountain houses an ancient building complex with temples, nunneries, palaces and pavilions. Close to the industrial city and communications centre of Zhengzhou are the cities of Luoyang and Kaifeng; both were once capitals of dynasties, and both are consequently of historical interest. Near Luoyang are the Longmen (Dragon Gate) Caves, over 1300 in all, which together contain over 2100 grottoes and niches, several pagodas, countless inscriptions, about 100,000 images and statues of the Buddha and a marvellous Buddhist shrine dating from the 5th century. In Dazu County, the Dazu Rock Carvings represent the pinnacle of Chinese rock art.

#### The Northwest Provinces

**Lanzhou:** Lanzhou is an oasis on the Silk Road. The capital of Gansu Province, the town is relatively unspoilt. There is a park and museum, and river trips can be made along the upper reaches of the Yellow River to the site of early Buddhist caves.

**Dunhuang:** Dunhuang is a 2000-year-old town on the edge of the desert, once an important Silk Road caravan stop, famous for the Mogao Caves, the oldest Buddhist shrines in China, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These ancient hand-carved shrines are a national treasure and represent a thousand years of devotion to Buddha between the 4th and 14th centuries. Some 500 exist today, and large areas of frescoes can still be seen. Also worth a visit when in Dunhuang are the Yang Guan Pass and the Mingsha Hill.

**Turpan:** Turpan and Urumqi are situated in the far northwest, cities on the edge of the vast deserts of Xinjiang Province. These Muslim cities, lying on the Silk Road, are well known for the distinctive appearance, dress and lifestyle of the inhabitants. Urumqi is the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The city is inhabited by people of 13 different nationalities, including Mongolian, Kazakh, Russian, Tartar and Uzbek. The majority of the inhabitants are Muslim Uygurs who speak a Turkish language completely unrelated to Chinese. Northwest of Urumqi, a few hours' bus ride away, is the beautiful Lake of Heaven, a clear turquoise-coloured lake set in the midst of the Tien Shan range of mountains. It is possible to go horseriding with the local Kazakhs in this spectacular scenery. Turpan is the hottest place in China, being the second-lowest point on earth next only to the Dead Sea. Nearby are the Flaming Mountains, which have the appearance of fire. Museums in both cities trace their fascinating histories.

#### Tibet (Xizang)

**Note:** Individual visitors wishing to travel to Tibet should note that they must obtain permits in advance from one of the Tibet Tourist Authority's Tourism Offices (see address and Passport/Visa sections). However, local border officials have been known to demand additional fees, sometimes violently. The Chinese authorities react strongly to overseas visitors becoming involved with any political activity for Tibetan independence, including taking photographs or videotaping demonstrations, or taking Tibetan nationals' correspondence or parcels out of the country.

**Tibet:** Tibet, known as 'the Roof of the World', has only been open to tourists since 1980. Although it is possible to go to Tibet as an independent traveller (provided a permit is obtained), it is much more straightforward to go as part of a tour group on an organised itinerary. The scenery is spectacular and Tibetan culture is uniquely fascinating. Despite efforts during the Cultural Revolution to bring Tibet culturally into line with the rest of China, it has preserved its own way of life and religious traditions. Some travellers may experience health problems as a result of the altitude, so it is wise to consult a doctor prior to departure.

**Lhasa:** Lhasa (city of the gods) is at an altitude of 3700m (12,000ft). Its wonderful light and clear skies are peculiar to its high mountainous terrain. Despite the sunshine it receives, for six

months of the year it is bitterly cold. The main highlights for tourists lie in the Potala or Red Palace, home to successive Dalai Lamas, which dominates Lhasa and the valley. This 7th-century edifice, built on a far more ancient site, is now a unique museum whose exhibits include labyrinths of dungeons beneath the Palace, gigantic bejewelled Buddhas and vast treasure hoards, 10,000 chapels with human skull and thigh-bone wall decorations and wonderful Buddhist frescoes, with influences from India and Nepal. The Potala Palace is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Other buildings of interest include the Drepung Monastery and the Jokhang Temple, with its golden Buddhas. Ask permission before taking photographs in Buddhist temples.

## 10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Cycling:** Cycling: An estimated 300 million Chinese people use the bicycle as a means of transport and, not surprisingly, bicycle hire shops can be found everywhere, even in smaller towns. Visitors should note that car traffic has been increasing in China, particularly in Beijing, where traffic and pollution levels are high. Major roads outside cities also tend to be busy.

**Hiking and Trekking:** Hiking and Trekking: China's main natural attractions are its scenic mountains, waterfalls, caverns and great rivers and lakes. No permit is required for hiking, although a trekking permit is compulsory (and fairly expensive) for visiting more remote areas. For details of the necessary practicalities for individual hiking or trekking and for a list of specialised tour operators, contact the China National Tourist Office. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (also known as the 'roof of the world') is one of the world's most famous mountaineering destinations. Some of the world's highest mountains define the southern border of Tibet, including Mount Everest (or Qoomolangma) (8848m/29,021ft), Namcha Barwa (7756m/25,445ft), around which the Brahmaputra River carves a fantastic gorge to enter India, and Gurla Mandhata (7728m/25,355ft). Among the 14 peaks on earth above 8,000 metres, five are located in Tibet. The Tibetan approach to Mount Everest provides far better views than the Nepal side. Some 27,000 sq km around Everest's Tibetan face have been designated as the Qoomolangma Nature Reserve. For foreign travellers, the Everest Base Camp has become the most popular trekking destination in Tibet. The two access points are Shegar and Tingri, along the Friendship Highway to Nepal, but visitors should note that these treks are very demanding and that the altitude requires some acclimatisation. Four-wheel-drive vehicles can also take visitors all the way to base camp along the Shegar track. For practicalities on how to enter Tibet, see Tibet in the Resorts & Excursions section or the Passport/Visa section.

**Wintersports:** Ice skating: Wintersports: Ice skating is possible on Beijing's lakes during winter. Downhill and cross-country skiing can be practised in the North-east provinces.

**Martial Arts:** Martial Arts: The ancient 'shadow art' of Tai Chi, a series of linked movements performed in a slow relaxed manner using the entire body whilst focusing the mind, is traditionally practised in towns throughout China, particularly in the early morning hours, and visitors wishing to learn or participate are welcome.

## 11 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** Chinese cuisine has a very long history and is renowned all over the world. Cantonese (the style the majority of Westerners are most familiar with) is only one regional style of Chinese cooking. There are eight major schools of Chinese cuisine, named after the places where they were conceived: Shandong, Sichuan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Hunan, Fujian

and Anhui. For a brief appreciation of the cuisine, it is possible to break it down into four major regional categories:

**Northern Cuisine:** Beijing, which has developed from the Shandong school, is famous for Peking Duck, which is roasted in a special way, and eaten in a thin pancake with cucumber and a sweet plum sauce. Another speciality of the North of China is Mongolian Hotpot, which is a Chinese version of fondue. It is eaten in a communal style and consists of a central 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. A cheap and delicious local dish is shuijiao, which is 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 are a good filler if you are out all day and do not feel like a large restaurant dinner. It should, however, be noted that in the interests of hygiene, it is best to take one's own chopsticks.

**Southern Cuisine:** Guangdong (Cantonese) food is famous for being 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.

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

**Western Cuisine:** Sichuan and Hunan food is spicy, often sour and peppery, with specialities such as diced chicken stirred with soy sauce and peanuts, and spicy doufu (beancurd).

**Drink:** One of the best-known national drinks is maotai, a fiery spirit distilled from rice wine. Local beers are of good quality, notably Qingdao, which is similar to German lager. There are now some decent wines, which are produced mainly for tourists and export.

**Nightlife:** Virtually all visitors follow itineraries drawn up in advance when sampling the nightlife of the larger cities, though this is in no way a drawback. Guides will be helpful and discreet, and generally their assistance will be more than welcome. Most tours include a selection of prearranged restaurant meals and visits to Chinese opera, ballet and theatre.

**Shopping:** All consumer prices are set by the Government, and there is no price bargaining in shops and department stores, although it is possible to bargain fiercely in small outdoor markets, of which there are many, for items such as jade, antique ceramics and also silk garments. All antiques over 100 years old are marked with a red wax seal by the authorities, and require an export customs certificate. Access to normal shops is available, offering inexpensive souvenirs, work clothes, posters and books; this will prove much easier if accompanied by an interpreter, although it is possible to point or get the help of a nearby English-speaker. Items are sometimes in short supply, but prices will not vary much from place to place. In large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, there are big department stores with four or five floors, selling a wide range of products. The best shopping is in local factories, shops and hotels specialising in the sale of handicrafts. Arts and crafts department stores offer local handicrafts. Special purchases include jade jewellery, embroidery, calligraphy, paintings and carvings in wood, stone and bamboo. It is advisable to keep receipts, as visitors may be asked to produce them at Customs prior to departure. Shopping hours: 0900-1900 Monday to Sunday.

**Special Events:** Jan 24-26 2001 Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) is the most important festival in the year for the Chinese, when families get together and share a sumptuous meal on the eve of the Chinese new year. Homes are festooned with banners and pictures to bring good fortune. Other activities associated with the festival include the lion dance, the dragon-lantern

dance and stilt walking. The majority of people in China's cities take up to three days off work during the Chinese New Year. Feb 7 Lantern Festival. Apr 5 Pure Brightness Festival. Jun 25 Dragon Boat Festival. Oct 1 Full Moon Festival. Jan 12-14 2002 Spring Festival. Feb 26 Lantern Festival. Apr 5 Pure Brightness Festival.

Minority nationalities have retained their own traditional festivals, including the Water Splashing Festival of the Dai nationality, the Third Month Fair of the Bai nationality, the Antiphonal Singing Day of the Zhuang nationality, and the Tibetan New Year and Onghor (Harvest) Festival of the Tibetan nationality.

**Social Conventions:** Cultural differences may create misunderstandings between local people and visitors. The Chinese do not usually volunteer information and the visitor is advised to ask questions. Hotels, train dining cars and restaurants often ask for criticisms and suggestions, which are considered seriously. Do not be offended by being followed by crowds, this is merely an open interest in visitors who are rare in the remoter provinces. The Chinese are generally reserved in manner, courtesy rather than familiarity being preferred. The full title of the country is 'The People's Republic of China', and this should be used in all formal communications. 'China' can be used informally, but there should never be any implication that another China exists. 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. 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, but revealing clothes should be avoided since they may cause offence. Visitors should avoid expressing political or religious opinions. Photography: Not allowed in airports. Places of historic and scenic interest may be photographed, but permission should be sought before photographing military installations, government buildings or other possibly sensitive subjects. Tipping: Not officially encouraged, but accepted in the travel industry.

## 12 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** The vast Chinese economy has developed in fits and starts since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The 1980s and early 1990s have proved to be one of its most successful periods, with an average GDP growth of over 9%. Despite some advanced manufacturing and technological enterprises - including a space programme - China's economy is essentially that of a developing country, with the majority of the population employed on the land. China is the world's largest producer of rice, and a major producer of cereals and grain. Large mineral deposits, particularly coal and iron ore, provide the raw material for an extensive steel industry. Other important minerals include tungsten, molybdenum, tin, lead, bauxite (aluminium), phosphates and manganese. In the last ten years, central government policy has switched the emphasis in development from heavy to light industry, and promoted the evolution of a service sector. Chemicals and high technology industries have grown particularly quickly. China is self-sufficient in oil and is developing a petrochemicals industry. Trade has been hampered somewhat in recent years by a shortage of foreign exchange, but China has benefited from the availability of soft loans from Western banks. This is one of the results of the fundamental changes introduced under what Beijing describes as the 'socialist market economy'

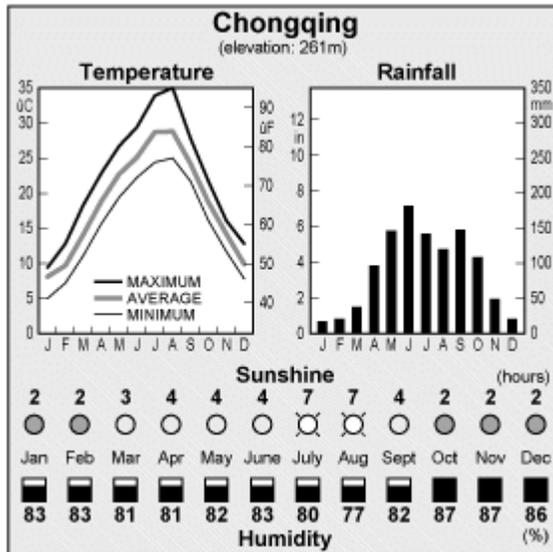
under which market mechanisms were introduced to attract foreign investment and improved trade terms. These developments may be seen as a natural progression from the 'open door policy' of the mid-1980s in which the previous tight restrictions on foreign trade were abandoned, while foreign companies were encouraged both to sell products in China and to establish joint ventures with Chinese commercial organisations. Special Economic Zones were established in China's southern provinces to which foreign investment and modern industrial capacity has been concentrated. While the Chinese economy has benefited greatly from these policies, development has been uneven and has suffered from some inflationary pressure and financial instability. These problems were put into perspective, however, by the east Asian economic crisis which has swept through the region since the autumn of 1997. China, because of its vast domestic market and highly regulated banking system, did not suffer nearly as badly as many of the region's smaller economies. With overall growth of 8%, minimal price inflation and industrial production increasing by 12% annually, the economy is on track to meet the Government's planning targets. Top of the Chinese trade policy agenda is membership of the World Trade Organisation - from which it was initially barred due to excessive protectionism. This is now expected in the near future. China's major imports are energy-related products, telecommunications, electronics and transport. Minerals and manufactured goods are the principal imports. The major trading partners are the USA, Japan, Hong Kong and Germany.

**Business:** Weights and measures are mainly metric, but several old Chinese weights and measures are still used. Liquids and eggs are often sold by weight. The Chinese foot is 1.0936 of an English Foot (0.33m). Suits should be worn for business visits. Appointments should be made in advance and punctuality is expected. Visiting cards should be printed with a Chinese translation on the reverse. Business visitors are usually entertained in restaurants where it is customary to arrive a little early and the host will toast the visitor. It is customary to invite the host or hostess to a return dinner. Business travellers in particular should bear in mind that the Government of the United Kingdom recognises the Government of the People's Republic of China as being the only Government of China, as do the United Nations. Best months for business visits are April to June and September to October. Office hours: 0800-1130 and 1300-1700 Monday to Friday.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT). London office: 40-41 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JQ (tel: (020) 7321 2044; fax: (020) 7321 2055). Beijing office: 1 Fu Xing Men Wai Jie, Beijing 100860 (tel: (10) 68 51 33 44; fax: (10) 68 51 13 70).

**Conferences/Conventions:** The following organisations can offer advice: China International Travel Service (CITS) or Department of Marketing and Promotion, China National Tourism Administration (see address section).

## 13 CLIMATE



China has a great diversity of climates. The northeast experiences hot and dry summers and bitterly cold winters. The north and central region has almost continual rainfall, hot summers and cold winters. The southeast region has substantial rainfall, with semi-tropical summers and cool winters.

**Required clothing:** North - heavyweight clothing with boots for the harsh northern winters. Lightweight clothing for summer. South - mediumweight clothing for winter and lightweight for summer.

## 14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** China has one of the world's oldest continuous civilisations. Shang Dynasty 'oracle bone' inscriptions dating back to the 12th century BC are easily recognisable as early forms of the ideograms, some of which are still used today in Chinese calligraphy. During much of China's history, the collapse of a dynasty or the accession of a weak ruler would often result in the country's fragmentation into smaller kingdoms until reunited once again under a new powerful dynasty. In the period of disunion following the Han Dynasty, Buddhism reached China along the Silk Road from Central Asia. During the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), the Chinese civilisation spread to Korea, Japan and South East Asia. In the 13th century, the Mongols under Genghis Khan overran Asia and in 1271 Genghis' grandson Kublai Khan founded the Yuan Dynasty. It was during this period that Marco Polo visited China. In 1368 Chinese rule was re-established by the Ming Dynasty, which built the Great Wall to prevent further incursions from the North. Despite this, the Manchus invaded China and founded their own Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty in 1644. Modern Chinese history begins in 1840 with the Opium Wars, when Britain and other European powers imposed their will upon the ailing Qing Dynasty, forcing Chinese ports to accept opium consignments produced in India by the British East India Company. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain until 1997 for this purpose. In 1856, Canton, one of the ports forced to accept the trade during the First Opium War, put up concerted resistance. The Chinese suffered another defeat, this time at the hands of an Anglo-French alliance, and further trading concessions were extracted from them at the 1858 treaty of Tientsin. Following the fall of the Qing Dynasty in

1911, Sun Yat-sen founded the Republic of China, but the country was plagued by civil war and warlordism. When the Japanese imperial army invaded China in 1937, during its campaign to establish a Japanese empire throughout eastern Asia, the Chinese armed forces were still too poorly organised to put up much resistance. Eight years of brutal occupation followed, which has continued to sour relations between the two countries to this day. Following the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, civil war ensued between the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists under Mao Zedong. In 1949, the remnants of the defeated Nationalists fled to Taiwan while the victorious communists founded the People's Republic of China. In the early days of the People's Republic, a close alliance was forged with the Soviet Union, but policy disagreements and personal antipathies led to a rupture in relations in 1960. Internally, the China of the 1960s was dominated by the convulsions of the Cultural Revolution - an attempt by the national leadership to re-invigorate the party and the country by launching campaigns to reassert its principles. In 1976, the two towering figures of post-revolutionary China, Premier Zhou Enlai and Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, both died within months of each other. Hua Guofeng first replaced Zhou as Premier, then went on to replace Mao as Party Chairman, and Zhao Ziyang became Premier. Hua left the Politburo after a series of further changes in the leadership in September 1982. The two prominent figures in the Government were now Zhao and the Chairman of the Communist Party Central Military Commission, Deng Xiaoping. Under this pair, China began its major reform programme. It differed from those which have since been adopted by other socialist economies, particularly in Eastern Europe, in allowing a lesser degree of political 'liberalisation' in tandem with the economic measures. This was typical of the east Asian pattern of development since the 1970s, where economic progress has been afforded the greatest priority while political pluralism - specifically, significant organised opposition to the ruling party - has been largely suppressed. However, in China, the reforms of the 1980s raised hopes, especially in the main coastal cities and particularly in the capital, that some political liberalisation would be conceded. In the late 1980s the initial signs were that this would be the case and organised dissent, led by student activists, emerged publicly and became increasingly bold in their demands for political reform and action against the corruption which had become widespread since economic reform had begun. In fact, the Communist Party leadership was itself split on how to react. The situation came to a head in May 1989 when a group of several thousand students and workers occupied Tiananmen Square in central Beijing during the visit to the capital of the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The square was cleared, after Gorbachev's departure, with great loss of life, after which the Government took decisive measures to reassert political control. Zhao Ziyang was replaced as Premier by hard-liner Li Peng who worked with Deng Xiaoping on the Government's resolution of the internal disorder. Jiang Zemin, who was appointed president in 1993, typifies the new generation of leaders who are gradually assuming control from the octo- and nonogenarians who dominated Chinese politics during the 1990s. Having dealt with the major political challenge, the party leadership was now able to concentrate on its main objective of economic reform. Throughout the 1990s, China underwent high growth albeit uneven in its distribution: there are now great disparities between what are sometimes known as the 'blue China' - the coastal cities and Special Economic/Administrative Zones (including, since 1997, Hong Kong) - and the inland 'brown China' of low-grade agriculture, antiquated industrial operations and widespread social and economic deprivation. The east Asian economic crisis which took hold in the autumn of 1997 and has dominated the regional agenda ever since had a limited effect on China. China's principal foreign policy concerns for many years have been relations with the US and the restoration of the 'national territory'. Since the 1971/72 Nixon-Kissinger visit, contact with the US has developed at a glacial pace: the opening-up of the Chinese economy has proved a more effective lever than the deliberations of diplomats. The Beijing leadership's objective is participation in the world trade system - especially acquisition of World Trade Organisation membership - without any compromise of the Communist party's political control. But the influence of the pro-Taiwan lobby in the US remains a significant irritant. With the future of Hong Kong and Macau settled, only Taiwan remains outside. Chinese military exercises during the last years have caused some concern but, although Beijing has declared a

formal territorial claim on Taiwan, there is little prospect of its realisation in the near future (see Taiwan). A more complex territorial issue in the same region, also involving China, is the status of the Spratly Islands, a small uninhabited archipelago in the South China Sea which is claimed by no less than six nations and is suspected to sit above substantial oil fields. The Chinese have occasionally occupied some of the islands for a short period: their future is the subject of complex multilateral negotiation. Elsewhere in the region, Beijing remains concerned by the continuing tension between India and Pakistan (see India and Pakistan sections). China has consistently provided military support to Pakistan and considers India a rival and political foe. One reason for this is the situation in Tibet, which is under Chinese military control and whose traditional leadership, led by the Dalai Lama, operates from exile in north-east India. China's other foreign policy preoccupations are Vietnam and Russia, relations with both of whom have improved steadily during the 1990s despite historic enmities, and Japan, with whom the major problems are economic.

**Government:** Formally, the National People's Congress (NPC) is the most powerful organ of state, and elects all those with the principal executive functions: the president and vice-president of the People's Republic, the premier and vice-premier of the State Council (after nomination by the president), other members of the State Council and the heads of individual ministries. The State Council reports to the NPC or, when the Congress is not sitting, to its Standing Committee. The NPC is held every five years and attended by some 3000 delegates drawn from the provincial administrations, the military and various state organs. The NPC membership and all major appointments are ultimately under the control of the Chinese Communist Party, whose 22-member Politburo is effectively the country's governing body.

China is bounded by many countries including Russia, North Korea, Vietnam, India and Pakistan and the Yellow and South China Seas. Its terrain ranges from high plateaux in the west to flatlands in the east; mountains take up almost one-third of the land, the most famous range being the Himalayas.

## 15 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** China is bounded by many countries including Russia, North Korea, Vietnam, India and Pakistan and the Yellow and South China Seas. Its terrain ranges from high plateaux in the west to flatlands in the east; mountains take up almost one-third of the land, the most famous range being the Himalayas.

The capital, Beijing is built as three rectangles, one within the other. The innermost rectangle is the Forbidden City; a museum and public park, formerly the residence of the Ming and Qing emperors. Tiananmen Square, the largest public square in the world is here.

The Great Wall should not be missed. Stretching for a distance of 5400km (3375 miles), it starts at the Shanhaiguan Pass in the east ending at the Jiayuguan Pass in the west.

Shanghai is China's New York and the centre of trade and industry. It features squares, parks, busy harbours, palaces, pagodas and temples.

Chinese cuisine is renowned for dishes such as Peking Duck and shuijiao, a pasta-like dough wrapped round pork meat, chives and onions.

Visitors can follow itineraries drawn up in advance when sampling the nightlife of the larger cities. Tours usually include a visit to a restaurant and trips to the opera, ballet and theatre.

