

# China & Tibet

PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION



 Wendy Wu Tours

# Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

China continues to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to more and more areas of this wonderful country with us, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own. A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in China requires patience with crowds and potential delays. In some areas there is a low level of English spoken throughout China so your National Escort/Local Guide will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that those passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure and who accept that things can and do go wrong, are those who find their experience the most rewarding.

Although China is booming and developing at an unforeseen rate it still lacks some international standards of civil infrastructure and therefore tourist facilities. For example you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. Concepts of personal responsibility are different to those you may be used to. Consequently tourist and public facilities will not uphold the same safety and hygiene standards as at home.

Both Asian and Western-style toilets can be very basic, so we recommend you don't turn down the opportunity to go to a nice toilet when they are available; also be prepared that not all public toilets offer Western facilities.

**This pre departure booklet is aimed to provide you with practical advice and cultural information to help you prepare for your holiday.** We are aware that this may seem like a lot of reading material but ask that you take the time to familiarise yourself with this information prior to departure.

## TOUR GRADING Is this the tour for you?

**Please give us honest and complete information about your health and ability to complete your itinerary.**

- Read the tour grading description in our brochure.
- Read your [Tour Dossier](#) to find out what the harder aspects and challenges of your tour will be.
- Refer to the YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES section to see if you are required to complete a [Medical Information Form](#). If yes, this must be submitted to us before we can issue your final documents.

**Consider that your ability to complete all group activities independently and without assistance will affect not only your holiday, but also the experience of your fellow passengers.**

Depending on the tour you choose, you must be able to:

- Walk, sometimes for long distances, over uneven and unsealed surfaces without assistance.
- Endure a sometimes hectic daily pace of touring, with minimal breaks
- Climb uneven stairs, sometimes without handrails.
- Step on and off coaches, sometimes onto uneven ground, without assistance.
- Dis/embark between moving pontoons, docks and boats, sometimes without either handrails or assistance.

The [Tour Dossier](#) provides a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in each day's sightseeing for your itinerary.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation for our more adventurous tours; they will be explained here. We expect all group passengers to read the [Tour Dossier](#) to confirm their itinerary is suitable for interests and that you are physically able to undertake the demands of the tour.

Some of the important monuments and temples were built on top of hills because, according to ancient Chinese philosophies such as feng shui; this is the most auspicious position for such buildings. The enormous scale of modern Chinese cities also means that blocks are longer and streets much wider and often require crossing by a pedestrian subway tunnel. Occasionally traffic, parking restrictions and construction will mean you will have to walk extra distances from the coach to sites/train stations/airports. In unusual circumstances this could involve carrying your own luggage.

These factors mean that sightseeing in China sometimes involves extended periods of sightseeing on foot and that this may be over uneven ground or uphill/stairs. All passengers must be able to walk unaided. Of course our National Escorts/Local Guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for passengers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

**It is your responsibility to provide Wendy Wu Tours with correct information.** This applies to all details that you have given to us by phone, or written on the [Booking Form](#), [Visa Application Form](#) and [Medical Information Form](#).

Wendy Wu Tours depends on the details you have written on your [Booking Form](#) for flight and ground arrangements. In a country with as much red tape as China, it is crucial that these details are correct 'to the letter'.

**Please make sure your Booking Form is correct:**

Each passenger must fill in their relevant section of the [Booking Form](#), and each provide Next of Kin details.

Your name must be written LEGIBLY and EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS IN YOUR PASSPORT. E.g. if your flight tickets need to be reissued because your writing is unclear, or you have entered a different (commonly used) name then you, the 'passenger', will incur any cost of reissuing tickets.

One passenger per form may sign on behalf of their spouse/companion to legally state that they both agree with all booking conditions therein.

**Do you need to submit a Medical Information Form?**

We send every single passenger a link to download the [Medical Information Form](#) on their deposit letter, regardless of their age, to ensure everyone considers any fitness issues well in advance of booking their holiday. However, you are only required to complete and submit this form if you:

- Have a pre-existing medical condition that affects your fitness to travel, or
- Have a medical dietary condition (e.g. food or MSG allergies, coeliac disease), or

- Will be carrying medications which require refrigeration (eg. insulin), or
- Have a history of DVT, or
- Have sleep apnoea and require the use of a CPAP or BiPAP machine, or
- Have a clinical mental illness, or
- Have dementia, hearing loss, vision impairment or muteness.

Please take care to complete all sections. Certain conditions require an additional waiver to be signed. Should any ailments either exist at the time of booking, or arise before your departure, you must inform Wendy Wu Tours of these by completing a [Medical Information Form](#).

**Please make sure your visa application form is correct:**

Your name must be written LEGIBLY and EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS IN YOUR PASSPORT. E.g. if the Chinese Consulate returns your application to our office then you, the ‘passenger’, will incur any urgent visa processing fees. You must also ensure that the photograph supplied is **recent (taken within the last 6 months)** and meets the size criteria of a standard passport photo.

Passports must have a minimum of 6 months validity left, from the date of your arrival back into Australia. If you notice any discrepancies or have any queries please phone our office (Visa Dept) and we will be happy to assist.

## ELECTRICITY

China has an electricity supply of 220 Volts. There is no universal power point in China – the below images are the two most common sockets found across the country;

**Most common in all hotels**



**Found in some hotels**



You will find that some hotels will have the same sockets as those available in Australia and New Zealand but this cannot be relied upon as it varies from property to property. Adaptors, also known as conversion plugs, should be bought in hardware, department and Duty Free stores in most capital cities or upon arrival in China. South African passengers will need to purchase adaptors at the places mentioned above.

**IN REMOTE AREAS**

In some areas of China the electricity supply is uncertain. Many buildings will only have a few hours each day of electricity from either the town’s supply or a diesel generator. Whenever there is limited electricity supply this will also mean limited hot water supply and therefore limited showers. **If you are travelling on Southern Odyssey, Tibetan Wonders, Silk Road Explorer, Sichuan Explorer, Dreams of Nature or Himalayan Adventure - Tibet to Nepal**, refer to your [Tour Dossier](#).

## MONEY

The local currency in China is known as the Renminbi which roughly translates as ‘people’s money’. It is divided into the units yuan, jiao and fen, where 1yuan = 10jiao = 100fen. It is very similar to systems around the world where where \$1 = 100 cents. One hundred yuan can be written as 100RMB or ¥100.

*We recommend that you have access to more than one source of money while travelling – bringing some cash, a credit card and an ATM debit card will give you the most security and flexibility.*

**Keep some of your exchange receipts.** It is not widely possible to exchange any unused yuan back once you have returned home; therefore we recommend that you exchange yuan into US dollars when you are exiting China at your hotel or international airport exchange desks. To do this you will need to present your passport, airline ticket and at least one receipt of money withdrawn or exchanged in China.

**Plan ahead.** Exchange desks can close and ATMs can run out of cash – and your group could be scheduled to leave your hotel at 7 o’clock tomorrow morning! Once you’re in China you will quickly get a sense of how often and how much you need to exchange. Try not to leave this to the last minute.

### EXCHANGING CASH

We advise all tour members take their own currency in cash to exchange in China. (*Travellers’ Cheques can still be used, however we find that our passengers find other sources of money more convenient due to ATMs being so widespread and currency conversion being available at most hotels.*) The exchange rates in Australian Dollars (AUD), New Zealand Dollars (NZD) and South African Rand (ZAR) as at June 2014 are approximately;

**AUD \$1 = ¥5.8    NZD \$1 = ¥5.4    ZAR R1 = ¥0.58**

**Please note:** NZD and ZAR are not as widely exchangeable. We suggest passengers from New Zealand and South Africa take USD instead.

Exchange facilities will be available at most hotels. If you have U.S. dollars from previous journeys, you will also be able to use them in China, where US\$1 equals approximately ¥6.2.

### CREDIT CARDS

Taking a credit card is recommended in case of emergency and may be used for large purchases in most of your hotels, department stores and souvenir stores. The most widely accepted credit cards include Visa, MasterCard and Amex. It is also highly recommended that each passenger takes photocopies of their credit cards and that the copies are kept in various sections of your luggage – i.e. not where the original documents are kept!

If you do choose to bring any card overseas it is highly recommended to advise your bank of your travel dates and destination.

### ATMs

Automatic Teller Machines have sprung up all over China in recent years and have become both more common and reliable. However, as with most things in China, ATMs can have their quirks so you should not rely on this as your only source of money.

ATMs in China do not always display banking system (e.g. Cirrus or Plus) signs, they often have different minimum and maximum withdrawal amounts, may not display English and occasionally run out of cash. If in doubt, simply ask your National Escort, Local Guide or hotel Reception staff for a recommended machine.

## COUNTERFEIT MONEY

This is becoming more common in China and has made shop owners and clerks at banks or exchange desks very cautious about the condition of money. Foreign currencies, especially those of large denominations and Chinese yuan notes are tested by suspicious clerks and they are unlikely to accept those in bad condition.

When purchasing cash prior to your departure OR when exchanging these in China – it is a good idea to stand at the desk to count and check the condition of each note. Don't accept any notes which are torn, very faded, a different shade, have ink stamps or any writing on them. If you accept the notes and sign the exchange receipt, then notice a problem later, you will not be able to exchange them.

## IN REMOTE AREAS

Outside of major towns banking becomes less reliable and requires you to plan ahead with more care. If you are travelling in these areas you should take both US Dollars and Chinese Yuan because other currencies are not recognised. **If you are travelling on the Southern Odyssey, Tibetan Wonders, Silk Road Explorer, Sichuan Explorer, Dreams of Nature or Himalayan Adventure - Tibet to Nepal**, refer to your [Tour Dossier](#).

## OPTIONAL EXTRAS / TOURING

A number of optional extra programmes may be offered by your National Escort/Local Guide while on tour, time permitting. These can range anywhere from 100 yuan (AUD17) to 400 yuan (AUD69) yuan in price, per activity and involve experiences such as a rickshaw ride through the Hutong district in Beijing, or a ride on the Maglev train in Shanghai. If you do not wish to participate in an optional extra, please make arrangements with your guides to return to the hotel or enjoy some free time.

Please feel free to ask your National Escort/Local Guide about the optional touring they may be planning over the next few days and how much they expect these to cost. On most tours, the National Escort/Local Guide will offer an optional tour in each major city. As a rule, payment for such activities is expected in local cash so please ensure that you allocate sufficient additional funds. Participation in optional touring will affect the amount of spending money you will need to withdraw or exchange. See 'Tipping' section for further important information about optional extras.

## SAFETY & SECURITY

You are recommended to maintain a high level of personal security. Although China is considered to be safe for travellers, ensure you keep belongings on you at all times and that your suitcase has a lock on it, especially in crowded areas like marketplaces and train stations.

**Do not leave any valuables unattended in your hotel room.** We advise you to lock away any cash, credit cards, airline tickets, passports, etc. Not all hotels will have in-room safes so, if this is not possible, you must either carry these things with you, or put them in the hotel safe. Wearing a money-belt under your clothing is strongly recommended. We suggest each passenger makes two photocopies of valuable documents, such as; passports, tickets and visas. We recommend you keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave another copy with family or friends at home.

**Likewise while travelling each day, do not leave any valuables unattended on the coach.** It is your own responsibility to ensure that you carry your money and valuables on you at all times.

## SWAPPING SCAM

In places like Beijing, Xian and Shanghai, where tourists have usually just arrived in China and are unfamiliar with the local currency, there is a common scam to look out for. Typically what will happen is someone hands over a ¥100 note to pay for a cheap souvenir (e.g. postcards) and be given back a note that says '50'. However this might turn out to be 50 sum from Kazakhstan, worth a fraction of what you were owed. To prevent this happening, familiarise yourself with the Renminbi Chinese yuan notes and try to use notes in smaller denominations for less expensive purchases.

## LUGGAGE

All passengers are limited to two (2) items of luggage each:

**One (1)** suitcase or backpack, with a maximum weight of 20kg. Your main luggage must have a lock on it.

**One (1)** piece of hand luggage, with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is advisable that your hand luggage consist of a 'daypack' – a small bag which you can access during the day and carry items like your camera, drinking water, toilet paper, hat, etc. Please refer to your [Suggested Packing List](#), which can be downloaded from our website, for more information.

## IN REMOTE AREAS

While travelling in remote areas, it is recommended to bring more practical and durable luggage for your tour.

## INSURANCE

It is a condition of travel that all customers have adequate travel insurance for the duration of their travel arrangements.

If you wish to take out an insurance policy through Wendy Wu Tours, please contact our office for a quote. Please also ensure you have the appropriate cover for your holiday; overseas medical costs are expensive and Medicare or private health insurance will not cover you outside of your home country. Please inform our office of the name of your travel insurance company, your policy number and the insurance company's international emergency assistance phone number.

If you are **taking out travel insurance with your credit card company**, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a full copy of conditions.

**You are obliged to inform your insurance company of all pre-existing medical conditions.**

All travel insurance providers require **you** to contact them ASAP in the unlikely event that you need medical treatment, hospitalisation or change travel plans (evacuate) to inform them of your situation. They will then decide the best course of action in regards to further treatment and/or repatriation and make appropriate booking arrangements. Our staff in China will be able to assist you in contacting your travel insurance company ASAP. **You must check your policy** for exact inclusions and procedures.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

### MOBILE PHONES

Mobile phones are quite popular in China and you will find high quality coverage. China has active roaming agreements with most of the service providers. Please check with your mobile supplier for all associated costs and to activate global roaming services. Sim cards are also available to purchase.

## INTERNET

Wifi is usually available within the hotels lobby. There may be a fee charged for you to be able to access the internet in your hotel room. Some social media websites are blocked for use within China.

## IN REMOTE AREAS

In remote areas you will rarely be able to access phone or internet facilities. Mobile phones are also unlikely to have reception nor able to be charged because of the limited electricity supply. We advise that you let friends and family at home know that you will be out of phone contact during these sections of your itinerary. If you are travelling on a tour that visits remote areas, please always refer to your [Tour Dossier](#) for more information.

## TRANSPORT

### OVERNIGHT TRAINS

All travel will be on first class 'soft sleeper' trains, the best available in China. Each compartment is shared by four people, is air-conditioned, with lockable doors and 4 cushioned beds which are fixed in place. There is room for passengers to sit on the lower berths and a folding table. A small pillow, clean sheets and a quilt are provided. Your main luggage will be stored in a luggage compartment (usually in a different carriage) so you won't have access to it during the journey, so we advise packing an overnight bag – see Pack for the train. There is also limited space underneath the berths for storage – it is common practice for train staff to use this space for their own goods – particularly in remote areas.

Your National Escort/Local Guide will try to organise the whole group to be sleeping in the same carriage. During busy periods of travel this may not be possible. Each group will receive tickets with sequential berth numbers but, depending on the number of people in your group, you may be sharing with people from another tour group/company, or with some of the locals.

Hot drinking water is available from a boiler at end of the carriage. There is usually a Western-style toilet at one end and a squat toilet at the other end.

**Keeping valuables safe on the train:** Carry all valuables with you at all times. A money-belt is recommended. One passenger should remain in the compartment at all times to watch over belongings. Your main luggage must have a lock on it, or attendants may refuse to store it in the luggage carriage.

**Pack for the train:** We recommend you bring a small overnight bag to carry whatever you need overnight and the next morning. Consider including a face towel, all toiletries, medication you require until midday next day, a tracksuit or similar outfit to sleep in and toilet paper, as the train supply tends to run out. Please refer to your [Tour Dossier](#) for more information.

### YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE

If your holiday includes a Yangtze River Cruise, please note that this section of your itinerary is especially subject to change. The movement of each vessel along the Yangtze is regulated by the government's Yangtze River Authority (YRA). The river's rapid flow, the narrowness of her gorges plus a recent increase in passenger numbers means that timetables are pressured. The YRA allocates times for access to mooring points, dis/embarkation docks and passage through the gorges. This

means that the captain of each cruise ship is unable to confirm a final itinerary until shortly before departure (usually 24 hours prior). This can affect both the time and location where you embark and disembark your cruise ship.

Your National Escort/Local Guide will explain any such changes to you as soon as they are informed by the cruise operator.

The cruise ships themselves have comfortable, Western facilities; however steep riverbanks, which make this scenery spectacular, also require a level of physical involvement. Passengers will need to negotiate narrow stairs which may not have handrails, cross between ships and moving pontoons which may be moored together. One of the results of the Three Gorges Dam Project and fluctuating water levels is that the docks and pontoons tend to be temporary and consist of walkways with guard rails attached to moored pontoons. Although the cruise ships are far superior these days, disembarkation procedures and equipment are not always of the same standard.

If you choose not to participate in a shore excursion then you are welcome to stay on board the cruise ship and enjoy some free time, however a refund of the shore excursion fee(s) is not possible, as these costs are included in the cruise package. There are chairlift rides available at some places which are included in your tour cost. The chairlift at Fengdu is not included. There are also usually local vendors with sedan chairs, who will offer to carry people up and down the steeper sections at their own cost. All shore excursions are alongside other passengers of the ship and are subject to weather conditions. Alternative activities may be provided.

Most airports do not allow cigarette lighters, wheelchair batteries, bottles of liquid, alcohol spirits/wine, juice, water, perfume, etc. (regardless if they have been opened) to be carried onto the aircraft on any domestic flight. Items of this nature will be confiscated if you attempt to carry them on board.

## TRAVEL HEALTH

*The staff of Wendy Wu Tours across the world are not medically qualified. Therefore they are neither able, nor allowed to give any medical advice, recommendations or administer medications under any circumstances.*

*This section is for Australian passengers only. All other passengers should check with their country's specific travel health advice.*

A health certificate is not required for entry into China.

### Do you need to visit a Doctor before travelling?

Yes, anyone travelling to a developing country in Asia should see a Doctor beforehand. The government's Smartraveller scheme advises people to visit either their Doctor or a travel vaccination centre, such as The Travel Doctor (T.M.V.C) to receive a health check and vaccination advice. For most people, this should be 6-8 weeks prior to your holiday to allow time for any necessary vaccinations, etc. Remember to take your [Tour Dossier](#) with you to the appointment!

As stated in our booking conditions, Wendy Wu Tours requires all clients to familiarise themselves with any health requirements specific to the countries being visited. All clients should visit their Doctor for these aforementioned purposes, and/or to confirm that they are physically able to undertake the day-to-day requirements of the tour.

**Medical Information Form** - Please refer to the YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES section.

## DRINKING WATER

It is not safe to drink the tap water, nor take ice in your drinks. There will usually be a kettle or flasks of boiled water upon request. Boiled water is suitable for drinking and cleaning teeth. Safe, bottled drinking water is readily available for sale everywhere in China – from small shops, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. It is not customary for hotels or coaches in China to provide complimentary bottled drinking water, however bottled water can be purchased on board coaches. Always ensure that the seal is unbroken.

## ALTITUDE

Some of our tours, such as those that visit Sichuan Province or Tibet, reach areas of high altitude. Your **Tour Dossier** will list if there are any areas of high altitudes reached each day and describe activities undertaken there. **Please refer to this information to confirm that you are physically able to undertake your chosen itinerary.**

AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) occurs in some people when they travel to altitudes over 2,500m (8000ft). Mild symptoms of AMS include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hours at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately.

It is recommended to drink more (water, non alcoholic and non caffeinated drinks) and avoid exertion after arriving over 2500m.

**If you are travelling on a tour graded at High Altitude, this information applies to you.**

## POLLUTION IN CHINA

Some of the bigger cities within China have high levels of pollution during certain parts of the year. Air quality during this time can be degraded. People with severe respiratory conditions should contact their doctor on how to best manage their condition.

## PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

Take all pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour; do not rely on being able to purchase these during your holiday. You will see pharmacies all over China but they stock Chinese traditional medicine and many unregulated brands of Western medicine. You are also very unlikely to find anyone who can speak English, nor locate any products with English labels.

Consider taking a 'personal medical kit' containing any medication or medical equipment you may need during your time in China.

Suggestions include:

- All prescribed medication (with a cover note from your Doctor for any prescribed medication and/or equipment you will carry)
- Headache tablets
- Anti-diarrheal tablets
- Cold and flu tablets
- Travel sickness tablets
- Lozenges
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Anti-bacterial hand wipes
- Spare pair of glasses/contact lenses

If you need to purchase any pharmaceuticals or medical equipment while in China – you may ask your National Escort, Local Guide or hotel

staff to help you locate a pharmacy, identify medication or to translate from the local language into English. Also, if you need medical attention they will be able to arrange a call from a Doctor, usually one who speaks English. However, the decision to purchase or take any non prescribed medication while you are in China (either Western or traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicine) is entirely your own.

## CUSTOMS & DUTY FREE

Each person can bring 1.5L of alcohol and 400 cigarettes into China. Good quality foreign alcohol is more expensive in China than in most Western countries, while cigarettes are much cheaper. If you carry over USD5,000 in cash (or equivalent in another currency) you need to declare it on entry and/or exit. Cultural relics, handicrafts, gold and silver ornaments jade, paintings, calligraphy and any jewellery purchased in China must be declared at exit. Keep your receipts for these purchases to assist in the check. All luggage is x-rayed and if any of the above is not declared, customs agents will seize them. You must also declare any food at exit, if they are placed in your suitcases.

## TIPPING

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry today and China is no exception. We strive to establish trust with our guides, who rely on and expect tips from passengers. If the guides are keen to work with our passengers regularly, they become familiar with our itineraries as well as the Wendy Wu Tours' philosophy and expectations we have of their work.

A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing; however it is not paid to Wendy Wu Tours in your final payment. This is so that it can be given directly to your National Escort in China. They will distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides and drivers – on your behalf.

Hotel porters are not covered in this amount. If you require their assistance, tipping is at your discretion.

The final amounts required of each currency for tipping will be outlined in your final itinerary.

## ADDITIONAL TIPPING

A compulsory service levy has been enforced for all vessels cruising on the Yangtze River. This is to be paid immediately upon boarding your cruise, not to Wendy Wu Tours. For group tours, this has been calculated into your overall tipping amount.

For cruises travelling from Shanghai to Chongqing (vice versa) you will need to allocate RMB300 (AUD50) per person.

For cruises travelling from Yichang to Chongqing (vice versa) you will need to allocate RMB150 (AUD25) per person.

Additional tipping amounts for your cruise director or guides are completely at your own discretion should you wish to show your appreciation.

For independent passengers, or group passengers with pre/post tour arrangements, you should allow **USD10 for guides & USD5 for drivers** per person per day.

You will also need to consider additional discretionary tipping for any local guide/vendor/driver who is involved in such activities. Examples include the trackers along the Yangtze River in Shennong Stream, Hutong Drivers in Beijing and entrance guides into the various other sites. Please be aware also, that it is likely that the expected tipping in these situations is a fee to undertake the optional activity plus a tip for the driver/vendor.

## TRAVEL WITH CONSIDERATION

At Wendy Wu Tours we believe responsible travel is not about how much you give, rather it is about how much you consider. Some of our group tours include visits to local schools, villages or homes. We urge to use this opportunity to give something back to the country you are visiting by learning a little and behaving with respect and consideration.

Please be respectful and mindful of other peoples' ways of life and cultures. Observing and being immersed in these differences is what makes travelling so rewarding.

### TAKING PHOTOS

Once again, we encourage you to think about how you would like to be treated by camera wielding tourists – always check that it is ok before taking a photograph of a local person. Simply indicate to your camera to ask and never take the photograph if someone gestures or says that they do not want you to.

Carry a small notepad with you so that you can write down the contact details of people who you have promised to send a copy of the photo to – and keep your promise! Remember that you are an ambassador of your country and your interaction with this person shapes their attitude towards the world and tourists that come after you.

### OBSERVE LOCAL RULES

Cameras are not allowed in some sightseeing spots, particularly monasteries and mosques. Please consider the reason behind this before

getting upset as otherwise you may miss out on a souvenir photograph. At other places you will be expected to remove your shoes or hats; if you do not want to remove these you should remain outside.

### DRESS APPROPRIATELY

In Xinjiang Province in western China the majority of the population is Muslim. Female passengers should wear modest clothes that cover knees and shoulders to feel more comfortable at Mosques and in public places. Women travelling to these areas will find a 'modesty shawl' very useful – either a large shawl or sarong which you can carry in your daypack while sightseeing. **If you are travelling on the Road to Samarkand or Silk Road Explorer** this information applies to you.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### CHINA

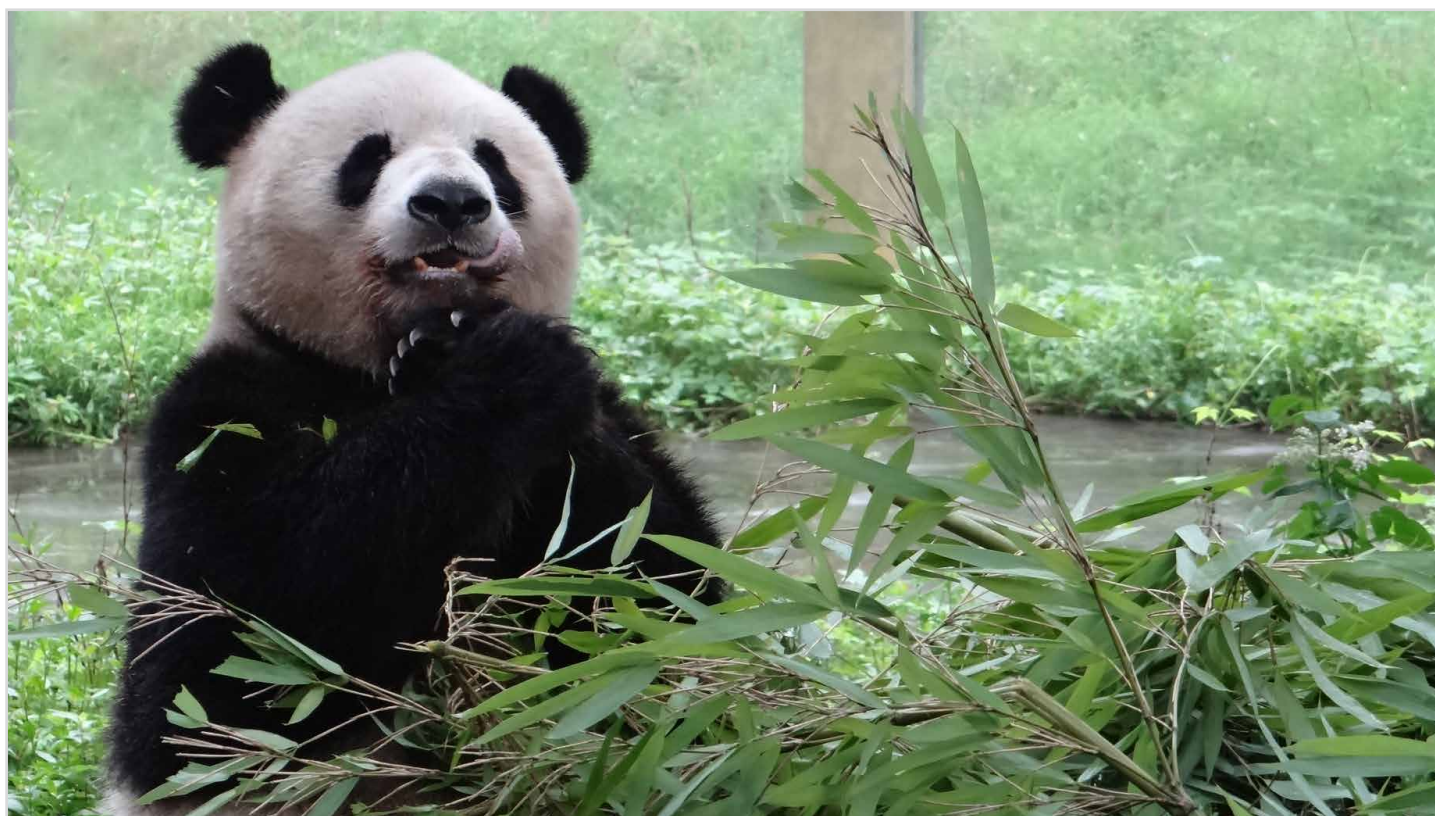
The Chinese people invented ice cream. As rumour has it Marco Polo took the recipe of combining rice and milk in the snow (along with the recipe for noodles) back with him to Europe.

The Chinese consider tea to be a necessity of life, and according to popular legend, tea was discovered by the Chinese Emperor Shennong in 2737 B.C. when a tea leaf fell into his cup of boiling water.

The most important holiday in China is the Chinese New Year, also known as the Lunar New Year. The Chinese traditionally believe that every person turns one year older on the New Year, therefore, that day is considered to be everyone's birthday.

### TIBET

Bordered by the Himalayan Mountains to the south, this region sits on a high plateau at 4,000-5,000 metres, resulting in its nickname 'the roof of the world'.



## READING LIST

### FOR CHINA

- China: Renaissance of the Middle Kingdom** (Odyssey Illustrated Guides, 8th edition) - Chan and Art
- Yangtze River: The Yangtze and The Three Gorges** (Odyssey Illustrated Guide, 7th edition) - Bonavia, Hayman, Bishop, Booz, Holdsworth and Man
- Foreign Babes in Beijing: Behind the Scenes of a New China** - Rachel DeWoskin
- River Town (Two Years on the Yangtze)** - Peter Hessler
- Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress** - Dai Sijie
- Red China Blues. My march from Mao to now** - Jan Wong
- Life and Death in Shanghai** - Nien Cheng
- Riding the Iron Rooster** - Paul Theroux
- The River's Tale** - Edward A. Gargan
- In Search of Old Shanghai** - Pan Ling
- China Inc.** - Ted C. Fishman
- Mao's Last Dancer** - Li Cunxin
- The Good Women of China: Hidden Voices** - Xinran Xue
- Wild Swans (Three Daughters of China)** - Jung Chang
- From Rice to Riches (A Personal Journey through a changing China)** - Jane Hutcheon

### FOR THE SILK ROAD

- The Silk Road (Odyssey Illustrated Guides, 6th edition)** - Bonavia, Lindesay and Qi
- The Great Game (on secret service in Asia)** - Peter Hopkirk
- Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang** - Christian Tyler
- News from Tartary: A Journey from Peking to Kashmir** - Peter Fleming
- Foreign Devils on the Silk Road** - Peter Hopkirk
- Extremes Along the Silk Road** - Nick Middleton
- In Xanadu** - William Dalrymple

### FOR TIBET

- Tibet (Odyssey Illustrated Guides, 2nd edition)** - Elizabeth Booz
- Tibet, Tibet: A Personal History of a Lost Land** - Patrick French
- The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk** - Palden Gyatso
- Seven Years in Tibet** - Heinrich Harrer
- On Top of the World: Five Women Explorers in Tibet** - Luree Miller
- Journey Across Tibet: A Young Woman's Trek Across the Rooftop of the World** - Sorrel Wilby
- The Dragon in the Land of Snows** - Tsering Shakya



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