

Travel Tips

THE SPLENDOURS OF CHINA

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

****Please check your own country's international travel advice as well as the airline requirements before travel.****

UK guests please see the UK Government Foreign Office Travel website for latest entry and exit advice;
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china/entry-requirements>

PASSPORT

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months beyond the period of stay. It is advised to have 1 blank page in your passport. Please be sure to fill out the "Emergency Next of Kin" section in your passport.

VISAS

U.S., Canadian, Australian and European citizens will require a visa to enter China. Visas must be applied for in advance of travel and are usually valid for 3 months from date of issue for a stay in China of up to 30 days for tourist purposes without a visa within the validity of the visa dates. Longer stays are granted at the discretion of the embassy officials. All other nationalities are advised to check the visa entry requirements specific to their country before your departure. Strict rules apply on Chinese dual nationals.

All passengers will need a letter of invitation in order to apply for your visas which will be provided to you by The Big Journey Company Ltd, as well as details for the hotels where we will be staying, which will be communicated to you accordingly close to travel. You need sufficient funds and a return airline ticket.

UK Travellers - Visas for UK passengers can be obtained from the China Visa Application Service Centre (CVASC), Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London EC1A 2AT, either in person by making an online appointment via the website (www.visaforchina.org), or by postal service. There is also an office in Manchester, First Floor, 75 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3HR.

Chinese Custom Regulations

When arriving in China, tourists must fill out two copies of a baggage declaration form, handing it in to customs officials. The carbon copy must be retained to show upon exit. Personal belongings will be admitted duty free, including food, two bottles of liquor and two cartons of cigarettes. Wristwatches, radios, tape recorders, cameras, movie cameras, and similar items may be brought in for personal use but cannot be sold or transferred to others and must be brought out of China. Visitors can bring in an unlimited amount of foreign currency, and Chinese yuan (RMB) traveller's checks, and the unspent portion can be taken out.

However, bringing the following articles to China is prohibited:

- Arms, ammunition, and explosives of all kinds
- Radio transmitters-receivers and principal parts
- Over 20,000-yuan RMB in cash
- Manuscripts, printed matter, films, photographs, gramophone records, cinematographic films, loaded recording tapes and videotapes, etc. which are detrimental to China's politics, economy, culture, and ethnics,
- Poisonous drugs, habit-forming drugs, opium, morphine, heroin, etc,
- Animals, plants and products thereof infected with or carrying germs and insects,
- Unsanitary foodstuffs and germ-carrying foodstuffs from infected areas, Other articles the import of which is prohibited by state regulations.

N.B. Please note, visa and entry requirements, regulations and restrictions can vary on a regular basis. Please ensure you check in good time prior to travel the current requirements applicable to you.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

All passengers must have valid travel insurance before traveling, including health and cancellation insurance. Please ensure you have a copy of your insurer's 24-hour emergency telephone number and your policy number.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS & PERSONAL MEDICATION

Please advise us before travel if you have any medical conditions requiring special attention during your trip. If you have a specific medical condition, it is wise to carry the relevant doctor's prescription with you.

TRAVELLING WITH CPAP OR OTHER MEDICAL DEVICES

If you require CPAP or similar medical equipment, please notify The Big Journey Company at the time of booking. If distilled or ionised water is required, please let us know in advance so that our ground agents can prepare. Additional charges may apply.

LUGGAGE

Splendours of China Tour -

Light casual clothing is recommended such as t-shirts, shirts, linen type trousers/short/skirts along with fleeces/cardigans in case of cooler weather and evenings. Also, remember to pack your swimwear. Ensure to bring some comfortable footwear for walking. It is also a good idea to pack a light waterproof jacket, should there be any rain. For the Yangtze River cruise, casual attire is recommended on board as well as ashore. For the Captain's Cocktail Party and Farewell Banquet, a shirt and tie for gentlemen and dress or dress pants for ladies is suggested. Sunscreen and a sunhat are recommended. Don't forget to pack your Cameras, Video Cameras and Chargers.

Walking the Great Wall Extension –

See specific walking tour information below.

Luggage Allowances:

International airlines are often strict about the size and weight of checked in baggage and carry-on luggage. Prior to your departure, please contact your airline or visit their website for specific luggage requirements, as size and weight limitations may vary according to the airline and destination.

LANGUAGE

Given the size of the country, it is no surprise that China has 297 spoken languages! Mandarin is the most widely understood as China's official language, but many regional variations exist. Nowadays, many Chinese people can speak basic English, especially younger generations.

WEATHER

The weather in China is as varied as the landscapes the vast country covers. Stretching from the Pacific to the Himalayas, from the Mongolian plains to the tropical south of the country. It is difficult to generalise about weather in such a vast country, but September, October and early November are generally considered the best times to visit as they are the most temperate. Winters are cold, particularly in the north, northwest and northeast. Summers are hot, and often wet and humid, in central and south China. Winters in the subtropical south of the country are generally milder, but the climate here divides between a wet season in summer and a dry season in winter. October in Beijing is cool and dry, with big temperature differences between day and night. It may still feel like summer in the afternoon during a sunny day but may cool down to 3-4 °C (37-39°F) overnight.

ELECTRICITY

In China, the standard voltage is 220V and the frequency is 50Hz. They use three types of plugs in Tibet – Type A, the North American style plug, Type C, the European style plug and Type I, used in Oceania and Argentina. You will need an adapter, and/or converter depending on which electrical appliances you bring with you.

MOBILES & INTERNET COMMUNICATION

Mobile coverage is widely available across China, be sure to check with your mobile provider for coverage and rates, as data roaming can be extremely expensive.

MONEY

Currency:

China's currency is the Renminbi (RMB), with the standard unit called the Yuan (¥). Only limited RMB can be bought before arrival, so exchange money in China at hotels or Bank of China branches. Travellers' cheques often have better rates than cash. USD and GBP (not Scottish or Northern Irish notes) are widely accepted for exchange in major cities, but remote areas may only recognise USD.

Credit cards (mainly Visa and Mastercard) are accepted at large hotels, stores, and some ATMs in big cities. Diners Club and American Express are less commonly accepted. Watch for counterfeit notes. Notify your bank before travelling if you plan to use debit or credit cards.

Gratuities:

After feedback from previous guests, we offer a group tipping package for this tour, more information on this will be shared in the 'Pre-Tour Emails'.

WATER

The tap water in China is not safe to drink. Drink only bottled water and use bottled water to clean your teeth. Refuse ice if you do not know whether it has been made from bottled water. Bottled water and mineral water are widely available and can be bought at supermarkets, kiosks and many shops.

SAFETY & SECURITY

As visitors, tourists may be more vulnerable to petty crimes like pickpocketing and scams, so we recommend staying aware and taking simple precautions.

RELIGION

The Chinese state officially supports atheism, and around 3 in 4 Chinese declare themselves atheists. However, China is the home of a number of religions including Taoism and many religions exist, including Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, especially close the borders where these religions are more prevalent

PHOTOGRAPHY

China offers photo opportunities one after another. You will return with many photos that can never be repeated. Remember to pack your camera, along with the charger, spare batteries and a spare memory card!

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR WALKING THE GREAT WALL EXTENSION

The Walking the Great Wall tour will include several days of walking between 4-6 hours over uneven and steep terrain. You must be adequately fit and healthy to participate in this tour and ensure you have the correct footwear and clothing for hiking in mixed weather over an extended period.

A training programme of walking, cycling and running/jogging is the best way to improve your fitness to prepare yourself for the trek. There will be some steep climbs and uneven ground. In the months leading up to your departure, it is a good idea to do a few multi-day walks/treks lasting 3-4rs per walk/trek.

This trek is fully supported. A fully qualified English-speaking leader will accompany all groups. The leader will work alongside a team of local guides, assistant guides, porters and cooks who work hard to make the whole experience as enjoyable as possible. Our lunch and safety equipment will be carried by porters during the day. You will only need to carry a daypack. A 35l rucksack is a useful size to comfortably fit in essential items such as water bottle, camera, wet-weather gear and extra layers etc. Your 1x large suitcase will be transported separately to you to the next hotel on the itinerary.

What to Pack?

Please take a look at our "What's in my bag?" video for advice on what to take with you on the Walking the Great Wall Tour: <https://youtu.be/cMmQK3Qn1tA>

- Sport shoes or cross training shoes for travel/sightseeing; Lightweight, comfortable, broken-in hiking boots; hiking sticks (optional)
- Waterproof and breathable rain jacket and pants; midweight fleece
- Sun hat with broad brim; Sunblock Factor 50+; Lip balm with SPF
- Personal first-aid kit; Toiletry kit; Hand sanitizer gel; Insect repellent; Motion sickness remedies (if required)
- Favourite energy snacks and drink mixes
- Duffel bag (wheels and retractable handle are fine), sturdy and large enough to hold clothing and gear; Daypack or fanny pack to hold extra water, jacket, camera, etc.; passport security pouch or belt; luggage tags and luggage locks; daypack cover or garbage bag to line your day pack in event of rain; Ziploc bags to separate wet items
- Camera and spare batteries; reading and writing materials; watch with alarm or travel alarm

In case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your hiking boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well worn-in boots cannot.

Bringing a few of your favourite snacks, energy bars and drinks from home is a good idea in order to add variety to between-meal food options. Bottled water, green tea, sodas, juices and snacks are available for purchase everywhere we travel.

This tour contains a mix of accommodation standards, from a 5* city central hotel to a local family run inn or a character hotel with traditional central Chinese bamboo gardens. Relatively few Western travellers have visited many of the locations on the itinerary. The minor inconveniences we may encounter are far outweighed by the opportunities this tour offers to see and experience the real China.

Participation Statement - The Big Journey Company and its partners recognise that hill walking and mountaineering are activities that require a certain level of fitness and with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

ARRIVAL IN CHINA

Foreign nationals are required to register their place of residence within 24hrs of arrival with the local Public Security Bureau and authorities enforce these requirements with regular spot checks. However, most hostels do this for you as part of the check-in process.

Please note, standard hotel check-in is around 3pm, so should you arrive earlier than this, your room may not be available upon arrival. For those arriving early morning, we will do everything we can to work with the hotel to get you an earlier check-in subject to availability.

If you have any other questions that we have not covered here; then please send us an e-mail to:
info@thebigjourneycompany.com

Disclaimer: The above information is provided as a guideline only. The Big Journey Company assumes no liability for any errors or omissions in this document.

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