T: 1-800-985-4852
E: info@realgap.com
P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

China Experience

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: China Experience **Trip Code:** CHXP **Duration:**

Trip Highlights

- Discover one of the most fascinating lands on the planet
- Visit iconic cultural sites and experience some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world
- Walk the Great Wall of China
- Get lost in the Forbidden City
- Learn Kung Fu from the Masters in Shaolin
- Learn the art of Dumpling making in Xi'an
- Stand to attention with the Terracotta Warriors
- See Giant Pandas
- Volunteer with local Chinese children
- Explore the incredible scenery of Guilin
- Take in the views from the top of the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai

Overview

Our China experience is an incredible journey of discovery starting in the capital Beijing. From the Great Wall of China to the Terracotta Warriors of Xi'an, you'll be blown away by the sights and sounds of this country.

Take in the bustling metropolis of Beijing, host to the 2008 Summer Olympics and home of the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. See the world famous Terracotta Army, see Giant Pandas, master the art of Kung Fu, explore the incredible scenery of Guilin and volunteer in a school or orphanage.

This trip will truly give you a taste of China - one you'll never forget.

Destination Info

The country we know today as China actually derives from a long line of smaller civilisations dating back six millennia. China's influence on modern life is nothing short of remarkable having given the world a huge array of inventions such as paper, the compass, gunpowder and even pasta. The country is steeped in traditions and

ancient practices and it is all just waiting to be rediscovered by you.

China's rapid development over the last 20 years has helped transform it into a global economic super power, but its historic roots are here to stay. You only have to visit one of the many temples, the Great Wall or the Terracotta Army to see that!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Beijing
On arrival at Beijing International Airport, you will be met by one of our programme representatives who will take you to your hostel accommodation in the city. Depending on your time of arrival you will have time to relax after your long journey or start exploring this exciting city independently. A welcome meal will be held the following evening as participants are likely to be arriving at different times throughout the day.
No meals included.

Day 2: Tiananmen Square / Forbidden City
Beijing is a fantastic city and is a great place to start your journey. It is packed full of history and ancient Chinese culture. For your first morning you will be visiting Tiananmen Square followed by the Forbidden City, a beautiful imperial palace complex from the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is the largest ancient temple complex in the world. In the evening, a welcome dinner will be held for the group, giving you the opportunity to sample the famous Beijing Roast Duck!
Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 3: Great Wall of China
No trip to China would be complete without a visit to the Great Wall. Today we visit what is perhaps the most famous section at Badaling approximately 80km northwest of Beijing. Built during the Ming dynasty; this beautiful section of the Great Wall winds through stunning mountainous scenery. A comfortable pair of shoes is a must today as the walk along the wall can be steep and uneven at times. The views from the wall are simply breathtaking and will no doubt be one of the images that stays in your mind for many years to come.
Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 4: Summer Palace / Beijing Hutong tour
After an early breakfast, we head to the incredible Summer Palace, a vast public park full of temples with two thirds of the grounds occupied by a lake.

Having had a tasty lunch, we take a Hutong tour to see some of the many narrow streets hidden away in the depths of the city. This is a great opportunity to see a completely different side of Beijing and will leave you feeling worlds away from the modern high rise buildings that occupy the city centre.
Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 5: Free time
Today you will have free time to explore the city. You may like to visit some of the many other sites the city has to offer including the Temple of Heaven, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Park with the Birds Nest Stadium as it's incredible centre piece, or delve into the local markets in search of a bargain souvenir from your time in China's capital. Your tour guide will also be able to make some recommendations for you.
Breakfast included.

Day 6: Free time
There is no rush today. You may like to have a lay in, enjoy a lazy breakfast or do some last-minute shopping. You will have free time today until the evening when we board an overnight train bound for Qufu. The journey takes 8.5 hours and you will be given a bunk bed in a Yingwo (hard sleeper).
Breakfast included.

Day 7: Qufu: Confucius Temple / Kong Family Mansion / Mausoleum
Your train should arrive in Qufu at approximately 8am. On arrival you will be met and taken to your guest house accommodation to freshen up and have breakfast. After breakfast you will be taken on a cultural tour of Qufu. The city is most famous for being the home of an ancient philosopher named Confucius, also known as Master Kong, who lived, studied and is buried there. Master Kong was responsible for the creation of Confucianism which had a profound effect over Chinese culture.

As part of your fascinating tour today, you will be visiting the Confucius Temple, Kong Family Mansion and the Cemetery of Confucius; discover more about his incredible life and how his teachings affect modern day life in China today.
Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 8: Zhengzhou: Transfer by train to Zhengzhou and free afternoon
After breakfast, you will travel by bus to Yanzhou railway station to board the train to Zhengzhou. The train

journey is approximately 6 hours and there are stunning landscapes to enjoy along the way. On arrival in Zhengzhou you will have some free time to relax.
Breakfast included.

Day 9: Shaolin Temple / 4-hour Kung Fu lesson
Today you will visit the home of Shaolin Martial Arts, the spiritual Shaolin Temple. Learn Kung Fu from the master during your 4-hour lesson and enjoy the picturesque mountain scenery surrounding the temple. At the end of the day, we travel to Luoyang City where we spend the night.
Breakfast , lunch and dinner included.

Day 10: Luoyang: Longmen Grottos / overnight train transfer to Xi'an
The Longmen Grottos are quite different to anything else you are likely to see in China - hundreds of doorways carved into the rock of the mountain side lead to chambers containing statues and niches. The spectacular centre piece is the statue of Sakymuni which towers to almost 8 metres, carved out of the mountain rock. Your visit to the Grottos will be focused around the Guyang Cave which is the earliest of all the Longmen Grottos, this particular cave is packed full of hundreds of intricate sculptures and statues.

In the afternoon we travel to Xi'an by train. The journey time is approximately 5 hours, arriving in Xi'an at around 8pm where you will be met and taken to your accommodation.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 11: Orientation, free time, foot massage and welcome dinner
Your Xi'an orientation will be held in the morning today, so you must be ready by 10am. During the orientation you will be introduced to the volunteering project that Real Gap is involved in within this historic city and you may also be able to meet volunteers from Real Gap. After your orientation, our Chef will cook some delicious Chinese food for you to try. In the afternoon you will have free time to explore the city.

In the evening, a welcome dinner will be held where you will have the opportunity to try a traditional Chinese Hot Pot. After dinner you can indulge in some total relaxation as you are treated to a foot massage!
Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 12: City tour and Karaoke party
In the morning, after breakfast, you will be taken on a tour of intriguing Xi'an city with its ancient city walls, Bell Tower, marking the geographical centre of the ancient city and Drum Tower. After lunch on Muslim Street you will have the rest of the afternoon free to explore this fascinating part of the city.

In the evening a Karaoke party will be arranged for you, a great opportunity to impress your new found friends and locals alike! The party is included in the programme but you will be required to pay for your own drinks.
Breakfast included.

Day 13: Terracotta Warriors
After breakfast we will see the world famous Terracotta Warriors, a spectacular site which is likely to leave you speechless; with hundreds and hundreds of life size warriors, all individual, standing to attention complete with horses alike. This is the most significant archaeological excavations of the 20th century.

In the afternoon you will be taken to visit the Shaanxi history museum where you will able to learn more about Xi'an and how it was the capital city of China over 3 dynasties totalling more than 1100 years.

In the evening, we will have dinner in a restaurant near the Wild Goose Pagoda. Entry into the Pagoda is not included.

Breakfast and dinners included.

Day 14: Panda Conservation Centre Visit

Today you will see one of China's most treasured possessions - the Giant Panda, in a Panda conservation centre set in a remote wilderness area in the foothills of the Qingling mountains. The future of the Giant Panda is uncertain with the global population of these magnificent creatures in decline. The centre that you will visit is not only home to a number of Giant Pandas but also other species which are indigenous to China including Lesser Panda (Red Panda), Crested Ibis, Golden Monkey and the sheep-like Takin. You will also have time to explore the local village to see the more rural way of life in China.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 15 - 18: Community volunteering

From day 15 to 18, you will have the chance to help with some much needed community work in the Xi'an, the project you are involved in will vary depending on the needs of the project at the time of your visit however your project will be one of the following:

- Teaching: You will have the opportunity to teach children in a primary school or you may be placed in the university.
- Childcare: You will be helping to look after young children in a care centre or kindergarten.

During the evenings of days 16 – 18, some great activities will be arranged for you.

Day 16: Tonight you will have the opportunity of having a traditional Chinese acupuncture experience or going to a beautiful Tang Dynasty Dancing Show. Please note entry to the Tang Dynasty Dancing Show is at your own cost and you will need to arrange your own transport back to the accommodation.

Day 17: Dumpling-making lesson, dumplings are something that Xi'an is famous for and you will of course be able to sample your handy work afterwards!

Day 18: Exploring the bustling bar street with its fantastic atmosphere. A great evening is sure to be had by all. Transport not included.
Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 19: Free day Xi'an

Today you will have free time to explore the city.
Breakfast included.

Day 20: Free day in Xi'an, overnight train to Guilin

Today you will have free time to do some last-minute shopping or sight-seeing. In the afternoon, you will be taken to the railway station to board the overnight train to Guilin. The journey takes approximately 29 hours.
Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 21: Arrival to Guilin

You will arrive into Guilin at around 11pm, where you will be met at the train station and escorted to the hotel.
No meals included

Day 22: Guilin / Yangshuo

After breakfast, you will be driven to Zhujiang Pier (40-minute drive) to start your boat cruise down the picturesque Li River, which is the highlight of any visit to Guilin, until you get to Yangshuo County. Along the river, you will be inspired by breathtaking views of peaks and pinnacles, crystal-clear water and picturesque pastoral views of rice paddies and water buffaloes. Visitors feel they have stepped into a traditional Chinese painting. After checking into your hotel, you will be free to explore Yangshuo and its famous West Street.

Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 23: Yangshuo

Free day to explore Yangshuo at your own pace.
Breakfast included.

Day 24: Yangshuo / Guilin
Morning free in Yangshuo. Return to Guilin with your guide and driver around noon time, today's excursion will bring you to Elephant Trunk Hill, Fubo Hill and ReedFluteCave;

Elephant Trunk Hill: the symbol of Guilin, a karst rock formation, resembling a giant elephant drinking water from the Li River.

ReedFluteCave: 5 kilometers away from the city center, famed as “A Natural Palace of Art”. The cave is filled with stalactites & stalagmites in a myriad of bizarre shapes. It is a showcase of nature’s splendor.
Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 25: Guilin / Shanghai

Today will be free to explore Guilin until your local guide escort you to the train station to catch your train to Shanghai. The journey takes approximately 23 hours.
Breakfast included.

Day 26: Shanghai
You will be arriving in Shanghai in the afternoon. Your tour guide will take you to your hostel to freshen up. After a short rest, you will be visiting the Xin Tian Di, in the evening, the Bund.
Breakfast included.

Day 27: Shanghai: Nanjing Road / Oriental Pearl Tower / free time with optional visit to world expo

After breakfast, we visit one of the most famous buildings in the Shanghai skyline, the Oriental Pearl TV tower which stands at an impressive 468 metres and is the tallest TV tower in Asia! In the afternoon, you will have free time to explore the city or you may like to visit the Shanghai World Expo Park.
Breakfast included

Day 28: Departure

After a fascinating and thoroughly memorable experience, it is time to bid farewell to your new found friends. Today is a free day with no activities planned, you are free to depart at any time, either to continue with your travels independently or make your own way to the airport for your flight home.
Breakfast included

Please note: Itineraries and activities are subject to change

Accommodation

Throughout the programme in China you will be staying in a number of different types of accommodation including Backpackers Hostels, Volunteer Apartment, Guesthouses and Sleeper Trains.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

You will be able to access the internet at Internet Cafés throughout your time in China, in the major towns and cities. This will be at your own cost but is usually very cheap.

Telephone

The international telephone access code for China is +86. To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial

+44 for the UK followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap dial +44 1892 516164.

Laundry

Laundry facilities will be available in most of the accommodation used during your itinerary, this will be at your own cost and is normally fairly cheap.

Meals

Meals are included as per the programme itinerary, there are a number of lunches and dinners that are not included in the programme but this gives you the opportunity to try different things and make the most of the places you are visiting.

What's Included

- All accommodation
- Meals as per the itinerary
- Airport pick-up
- Trip to the Great Wall of China
- Trip to the Forbidden City
- Four-hour Kung Fu lesson
- Transport as per your planned itinerary
- Services of a tour guide in each city
- 24-hour emergency support

What's Not Included

- All flights
- Travel insurance
- Some meals
- Transfer to Shanghai International Airport
- Tips and gratuities (approximately $5 per day)
- Transport to and from volunteer project
- Bottled water

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and, therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels, nor is it exhaustive.

Also, please be aware that the weather can change considerably from winter to summer and you should pack according to when you are travelling to ensure that you have the appropriate clothing.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money in Chinese Yuan Renminbi
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about necessary immunisations)
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do

General

- Personal hygiene kit, toiletries and towel
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Sun cream (high factor recommended)
- Sun hat / bandana
- Small torch
- Diary and writing pens
- Camera/batteries/film or memory card
- Water bottle - at least 75cl
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mobile phone - set for roaming
- Personal stereo
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Travel guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide

Clothing

- Clothes for Project work, including trousers
- Boots or sturdy trainers
- Casual clothes
- Set of nice clothes for evenings out
- Flip flops/sandals
- Working gloves for your project work at the Panda sanctuary
- Towel
- Underwear - enough for at least seven days, possibly more
- Pyjamas/nightwear
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Waterproof jacket (a must as it can rain all year round)
- Warm clothes for winter and early mornings

Medical Kit

- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Tissues/Toilet roll – can be bought very cheaply when you are in China
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Personal medication e.g prescription drugs/inhalers
- Painkillers
- Contact lenses and solution if necessary
- Plasters
- Lip Balm with SPF
- Tweezers (not in hand luggage)
- Scissors (not in hand luggage)
- Sanitary products for women if necessary
- Mosquito repellent (ensure it contains DEET or equivalent)
- Ear plugs - in case you sleep next to a snorer!

Minimum Age
Minimum age 17 years old, maximum dependent on health of participant.

Minimum Numbers
This trip requires minimum numbers to operate.

Flights
Your flight to China should arrive at Beijing International airport in China on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged to depart from Shanghai International airport on your programme end date.

To book your flights, please contact your Travel Advisor who can look into the best flight quote for you.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

Please note: This programme requires a minimum of 4 participants to run. Please contact us to confirm whether the minimum numbers have been met for your start date, we recommend that you do not book your flights until we have confirmed these numbers and the programme will be running.

FAQs
1. **How big are the group sizes?**
   Each trip will vary from around 5 to 10 people.

2. **Will we have any free time?**
   Yes, enough time to explore more of the country's sights or chill out and relax!

3. **How much spending money will I need?**
   We recommend taking around £100 a week approx but this depends how you spend your money. China can be very cheap! However please be aware that tipping is part of Chinese culture and therefore allow $5 USD per day for tips and gratuities.

4. **Do I need a visa to visit China?**
   Yes, you will need to apply for a tourist visa within 90 days of departure.

5. **Will we get to see the Great Wall?**
   Yes of course! One of the star highlights of your trip.

Police Check
This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

In China the currency is the Renminbi Yuan (RMB or CNY, symbol ¥), which is subdivided into 10 Jiao which is in turn equal to 10 Fen. Coins come in denominations of 1 Jiao, 1 and 5 Yuan and 1, 2 and 5 Fen. Notes come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Yuan.

Credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, AmEx can be used at upmarket hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and department stores. ATMs that accept credit cards are mainly in large cities at branches of the Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, though a fee may be charged.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 3.23 $

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 1.28 $
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.52 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.28 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

You will require a visa to enter China and you should consult your relevant embassy to ensure you can secure one. Once you have booked your trip you will be provided with further instructions and supporting documents to obtain the correct visa.

Passports and visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. As a general rule most countries expect that you will have at least 6 months' validity on your passport beyond your intended stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, and you should consult the relevant embassy.

Cultural Considerations

China is becoming more and more liberal all the time, so, especially in the major urban areas, you do not need to dress too conservatively. Bear in mind that you will get stared at, even more so if you go out and about in something outlandish!

This may happen, more so in rural areas and you might even find yourself being asked for a photo! This is not meant in a hostile manner and although it may be annoying, just try to ignore it or feel flattered that they are taking such an interest in you.

Looking scruffy will not go down well, especially in restaurants and hotel check-ins. The best way to gain respect is to make an effort with your appearance.

Spitting is not considered to be anti-social in China. It may seem disgusting, but there isn't really anything you can do except ignore it- they probably think we are disgusting for something we do that we think is completely normal. Anyway, you'll get used to it… eventually!

"Saving Face" is an important concept in China which is based on social standings; so pointing out things negatively and criticising will cause immense humiliation for the person on the receiving end. It also means that getting stressed and shouting at someone will get you absolutely nowhere. If you need to be negative towards someone, make sure that you do it in a polite but firm manner, to keep embarrassment to a minimum.

When visiting markets and street vendors you will need to bargain for the item you wish to purchase. Generally when the vendor spots you are a foreigner the price will shoot up, so try offering a price about 70% lower and work from there. Don't get too aggressive and treat it as a bit of fun- you're only going to be arguing over pennies! This is also the vendor's living so paying that little bit extra will make a greater difference to them than it will to you.

Religion

Many religions are represented in China but generally the most popular are Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Chinese Folk religions, ancestor veneration and the worship of localised deities. Muslims, Jews and Christians also have a small representation.

Smoking, Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in China and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I'm sure you'll find it refreshing after a hot and humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whist on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Asian culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don't need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you keep safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your day sack without your permission
- Always walk around in groups
- Never go out alone after dark
- Stick with the escorted trips. If you do go out in the evening unescorted, you do so at your own risk. Please tell the co-ordinators where you are going and what time you will be back.
- Please do not get into fights or arguments with locals. We cannot guarantee your safety and it could provoke future attacks on other travellers
- Please do not leave your drinks unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if you card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

This information is not intended to scare you. Unfortunately, bad things can happen, as they can do in any country and we want you to be prepared. We want you to stay safe and have a good time.

The majority of the locals are friendly, warm and hospitable people who love meeting our travellers. Please be friendly, respectful and stay aware and you will have a great time.

Language Guide

Mandarin is spoken by about 70% of the population, but Cantonese is also an official language. As it is such a huge country, China also has hundreds and hundreds of different dialects.

We suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello! - *Ni hao!*
Nice to see you! - *Hin gow shing jian dow ni!*
Goodbye/See you - *Zai jian*
What's your name? - *Ni jiao shen me ming zi?*
Who is he? - *Ta shi shui?*
How old are you? - *Ni dwo da le?*
Where is…., please? - *Qing wen…., jai nar?*
Please kindly send/drive me to X - *Qing song wo dow X..*
How much is that bag? - *Na gur bow dwo shao qian?*
I'll take this one - *Je ge wo yow le*
Thank you - *Xie xie*
You're welcome - *Bu ker chi/bu yong xie*
I'm sorry - *Dui bu qi*
That's all right - *Mei guan shi*
One - *Yee*
Two - *Er*
Three - *San*
Four - *Si*
Five - *Woo*
Six - *Liu*
Seven - *Qi*
Eight - *Ba*
Nine - *Jiu*
Ten - *Shi*

Food & Drink

Everyone knows Chinese food, or thinks they do anyway! Just like with India you will find that the Chinese food we have here and the actual Chinese cuisine are somewhat different. They also have some slightly strange dishes too if you fancy something a ittle different – (like chicken's feet and river snails)! Due to China's vast size there are many regional variations, making for an extremely diverse cuisine.Some areas go for subtle flavours whereas others go for very strong, somewhat odd mixtures but all are united in terms of fresh vegetables, rice and noodles. Dim Sum, which means 'little eats' are very popular all over China, made up of buns and pancakes, and dumplings are generally eaten for breakfast!The best place to get authentic Chinese snacks is from small vending stalls on the streets, which are also good for breakfast! Western food is pretty widely available, especially in the more touristy locations. In Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong you'll even be able to get your Starbucks coffee fix!

Of course, the main difference on the Chinese dinner table is chopsticks instead of a knife and fork, but that's only superficial. The real difference is that in the West, you have your own plate of food, while in China the dishes are placed in the middle of the table and everyone shares. If you are being treated to a formal dinner and particularly if the host thinks you're in the country for the first time, he will do the best to give you a taste of many different types of dishes.

The meal usually begins with a set of at least four cold dishes, to be followed by the main courses of hot meat and vegetable dishes. Soup will then be served (unless in Guangdong style restaurants) to be followed by staple food ranging from rice, noodles to dumplings. If you wish to have your rice to go with other dishes, you should say so in good time, for most of the Chinese choose to have the staple food last or have none of them at all.

Perhaps one of the things that surprises a western visitor most is that some of the Chinese hosts like to put food into the plates of their guests. At formal dinners, there are always "public" chopsticks and spoons for this purpose, but some hosts may use their own chopsticks. This is a sign of genuine friendship and politeness. It is always polite to eat the food and if you do not eat it, just leave the food on the plate.

People in China tend to over-order food, as it is embarrassing if all the food is consumed. When you have had enough, just say so. Or you will always overeat!

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Chinese who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for China, please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/china/

Weather

The best times to visit China tend to be in the spring, March and April and in the Autumn, September and October in the lower plains, whereas the higher altitude areas are best between June and September. Although daytime temperatures may be reasonable, between 20C to 30C, the nights can still be really cold. China is such a vast country that it is worth bearing in mind that northern and southern areas will have completely different climates, so it is best to research the area you are going to, rather than the country as a whole. The south is subtropical with the temperatures in Yunnan ranging from 20°C in the winter to 29°C in the Summer, while Beijing's climate in the north ranges from 1°C to 31°C.

Time

China is 8 hours ahead of GMT

Electricity

In China the electric system is 220 Volts and frequency 50 Hertz. Outlets in China generally accept 2 types of plug:

Flat blade plug

or

V-shaped flat prongs

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

Phone: 1-800-985-4852
Email: info@realgap.com
Post: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960
Web: www.realgap.com