

REAL
Gap Experience

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China Experience

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: China Experience **Trip Code:** CHDT **Duration:** From 27 days

Trip Highlights

- A sunrise trek on a deserted section of The Great Wall
- Board bamboo rafts and float down the Li River in Yangshuo
- Join one of Asia's largest bar crawls in cosmopolitan Shanghai
- Volunteer at a childcare centre near Shaolin for children lost on China's railways
- Visit Chairman Mao's Summer House in a bamboo nature reserve
- See the world's highest bungee jump in Macau



Overview

This is an incredible circular tour of China which has been designed to show you an unforgettable view of real China. The volume and variety of experiences included in the itinerary make this trip quite unique.

We take you to stunning off-the-beaten-track locations which you couldn't normally get to without being able to speak Mandarin. We also visit all of China's unmissable attractions - Giant pandas, The Great Wall and The Terracotta Warriors. You get a chance to give something back, when volunteering at a childcare centre and a soup kitchen for homeless people. All these experiences are interspersed with some great nights out along the way too!

The trip aims to provide you with a safe, interesting, hassle-free and unforgettable experience during your epic 5,458km journey through The Middle Kingdom!

Check out what Hannah thought of the [China Experience!](#) Alternatively, **download more detailed information**

[HERE.](#)

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



The trip offers many un-missable attractions and activities included in the price. However, it has been designed to be flexible, so you can spend as much or as little time with the group as you want. During the free time we offer loads of optional activities. Any activities which aren't included in the price have their price listed in brackets, if no price is listed then the activity is included for free.

Day 1: Meet the Group

You will be required to make your own way to the accommodation. Once you have arrived and checked in, feel free to take a self-guided mini tour around Hong Kong or relax in preparation for the next 26 adventure filled days!

Day 2: Depart from Hong Kong

Meet your group and in-country team in the hostel reception at 7am, before taking a tram up to Victoria Peak to enjoy views over Hong Kong. There will be a pre-departure briefing on top of Victoria Peak and after you've taken in the views you'll take the tram back down and will head to the hostel for any last minute preparations.

You'll depart the hostel and will cross the border to board your 3 hour bullet train to Guilin. On arrival in Guilin, you will have the chance to get some dinner or wait for 2 hours and get some in Yangshuo.

Day 3 – Day 6: Yangshuo (near Guilin)

You'll arrive in the village of Yangshuo early in the morning. Yangshuo is one of the most popular areas for backpackers in Southern China, nestled amongst stunning karst peaks and winding rivers. You'll spend your time easing into the chilled pace of life here and the perfect way to do this is on one of our free un-missable attractions, a bamboo rafting cruise down the Li river. Other activities you can do here are hiking, biking and swimming by day, and soaking up the atmosphere in Yangshuo's vibrant bars in the evening. The nights usually start with some ice-cold local beers on a roof top bar, located in one of the most spectacular locations any bar in the world could boast! Optional activities in Yangshuo include a minibus to Moon Hill Cave at incredible view points and swimming spots (85CNY), kayaking (150CNY), learning to cook Chinese food at a cuisine institute (120CNY), watching cormorant fishing which the Brits will recognize from the HSBC advert where farmers use birds to catch fish for them (45CNY) and enjoying various Chinese herbal remedies such as cupping, where hotcups are placed on your back in order to withdraw the impurities from your body (35CNY)! On the afternoon of day 6 take the bus to Guilin to board a night train to Chengdu.



Day 7 - 9: Chengdu

The capital of Sichuan Province, one of the largest and most vibrant provinces in Western China, Chengdu is a feast for the senses. You're now in the heart of real China, so the first thing we do is have a mandarin lesson so that you can survive away from the group and start exploring a little more independently. In China they say that if you lose one sense, your other senses improve, which is why many blind people in China study the ancient art of Chinese massage. We spend a relaxing afternoon being massaged in one of the best blind massage places in the city (40CNY), before heading to try Sichuan Hot Pot, a bubbling broth of spicy sauce in which you dip strips of meat and vegetables (80CNY). Don't worry, there is a non-spicy broth available as well! The next morning, we have an early start in order to catch feeding time at the Panda Breeding Research Centre, the world's main and biggest centre!

Later on, enjoy a night out in Chengdu! In the morning of day 9, you can visit Wenshu Monastery, Maos Statue, Peoples Park and a traditional tea house. In the afternoon, you will take a public bus to Chengdu north and later board your train to Xi'an.

Day 10 & 11: Xi'an

After arriving and transferring to the hostel, we head straight for the Ming Dynasty City walls for an optional bike ride (100CNY). Explore the local area, taking in the Bell Drum Towers, Muslim Quarter and Great Mosque. In the evening, enjoy some local street food and visit a nearby silk market.

The following morning, we'll hit another un-missable attraction, The Terracotta Warriors, a Wonder of the Ancient

World. In the evening, you can take some time to give back to the local community by volunteering at the local soup kitchen or visiting a home for the disabled.

Day 12: Dengfeng

You'll be up early to catch the bus to Dengfeng, a small town just next to Shaolin, the home of Kung Fu.

In the afternoon, you'll go to a local market to get supplies to take to a nearby childcare centre. The centre focusses on teaching the children Kung Fu to give them a skill to support themselves in later life. You can have a Kung Fu lesson from one of their teachers (150CNY) or help the children practice their English and watch the incredible Kung Fu performances that they put on.



Day 13: Shaolin Monastery

Staying in Dengfeng, not Luoyang like almost all other tourists, means that today we can arrive early and avoid the crowds at the flagship of Kung Fu, the Shaolin Temple (120CNY). Take an optional hike to Dharma Cave, a spiritual spot for Buddhist Pilgrims and be rewarded by the beautiful views of both the shrines/temples and views of the area.

Depart Zhengzhou to board your train to Beijing.

Day 14-17: Beijing

After arriving and freshening up in a hostel, have your 3rd Mandarin Lesson. You and your group will be set a Mandarin Challenge and winners will get a prize. Later we will head off to our next un-missable attraction, perhaps the most un-missable of them all, The Great Wall of China. We visit a stunning section of the Wall, which because of its remoteness, means we usually get the place to ourselves. We hike along the wall for a few Kilometres (optional) before camping overnight on the wall itself! (Seasonal: 1st May to 30th September only). If you can't camp on the wall you'll stay overnight in a farmhouse just a few minutes from the wall. In the morning we get up early to watch one of the most incredible sunrise imaginable!

The remaining time in Beijing is spent visiting the Olympic Birds Nest stadium, enjoying a stunning Chinese Acrobatics Performance (140CNYT), Forbidden City (60CNY) as well as much more. Later in the afternoon on day 17, we are off to Hangzhou!



Day 18 & 19: Hangzhou and Moganshan

After arriving in China's most beautiful city, you'll board a bullet train and then take a minibus to Mogan Mountains, famed for its bamboo forests. After a bit of hiking and a good night's rest, we'll trek to a beautiful crystal clear mountain lagoon which will be our swimming spot. After lunch, we'll take the bullet train to Shanghai.

Day 20 - 22: Shanghai

After arriving in cosmopolitan Shanghai, you'll realise straight away that this is a city which comes alive at night, and there's no better way to get an overview of the city's best bars than when on the Drunken Dragon Bar Crawl (160CNY). Other optional activities include walking tours of the former British and French concessions, a visit to the underground propaganda museum (20CNY) a walk around Yu Gardens (20CNY) a tour through People's Square, Nanjing Road (one of the busiest shopping streets) and a walk along the Bund before heading off to the top floor of a skyscraper to enjoy some champagne while sitting in a hot tub (entrance to bar 100 CNY plus the cost of the champagne). There is also an optional excursion to ZhuJiaJiao Water Town, a Chinese equivalent to the Italian Venice.

Day 23 & 24: Nanjing in Fujian Province

In the morning we say goodbye to Shanghai and take a bullet train to Nanjing, not to be confused with the more famous Nanjing City north of Shanghai. On arrival we'll transfer deep into the Fujian tea growing hills where we're lucky enough to stay overnight in a traditional mud roundhouse, the traditional homes of the Haka Minority People. Because these are still real homes, not just quaint attractions for tourists, they are surprisingly well equipped with running water, electricity and even WI-FI! On Day 24, we'll have a tour around the UNESCO World Heritage Site exploring more of the Haka Minority roundhouses, picturesque villages and the tea fields.



Day 25: Fujian Tulou

The day is spent with a bike tour and exploring more roundhouses in the area. If your legs are getting tired there is a support vehicle with us at all times if you've had enough of cycling! In the evening take your final night train to Guangzhou and transferring to take a bus to the Zhuai border.

Day 26: Macau

For lunch, try some hawker delicacies offered while passing through the border. Arrive in Macau, known as the Vegas of the East. Perhaps, given the fact that Macau's casinos now turn over 5 times as much money as Las Vegas's do, perhaps it won't be long before Vegas is known as the Macau of the West! The afternoon is spent seeing The World's Highest Bungee Jump and then heading on to explore the colonial old Portuguese side of town, before trying your luck in the Venetian Casino in the evening.

Grab your luggage and head to the ferry port to take the hydrofoil back to Hong Kong - an amazing way to arrive into Hong Kong! Back at the hostel, have some well-earned rest after having completed your epic 5,458 journey through China!

Day 27: Hong Kong

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.

Accommodation

We stay in hostels which have been chosen because of their great atmosphere and location. They are all safe, clean and hygienic.

You will be staying in dorm rooms that sleep 4-12 people and are mixed sex.

Some nights are spent on night trains, where you have a fully flat bed.

Meals

Food is not included on the trip, but our guide will always offer to take you to a local restaurant where they can arrange a great discount for you. You should budget approximately 30CNY per meal (25 CNY for breakfast). If you want to eat cheaper than that, then your guides can help you order basic and delicious fried noodles/fried rice for 10CNY per dish.

What's Included

- All accommodation
- All the attractions and activities listed above apart from those optional activities with a price listed in brackets
- All transport for the above itinerary
- A combination of English-speaking Chinese and Western tour guides throughout
- 24-hour emergency support
- Mandarin tuition
- All tips, taxes and charges



What's Not Included

- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Food and drinks
- Optional activities and the transport to them – any activity with a price in brackets
- Transfers on arrival or departure



Additional Information

What is an 'Experience'?

An Experience is a guided group tour that'll show you the best of what a country has to offer. You will have some free time, but a member of our awesome in-country team will be available 24/7 and they'll take you on a journey of a lifetime – we'll take in a mix of iconic locations and 'off the radar' secret spots so you get an all-round experience. All of our Real Gap Experiences include super cool cultural experiences (cookery lesson anyone?) and some include volunteer work so you can give back to a local community.

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.

Essentials

- Flips flops
- Trainers/sports shoes
- 3-tshirts

- 2 pairs of shorts/skirts
- 1 pair of jeans
- Underwear
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Swimsuit
- Towel
- Washbag
- Camera and charger
- Light sweater/hoodie
- Creditcard
- Suncream
- Mosquito repellent (containing deet)
- Day sack
- Passport/visa
- Documents - photocopy of passport photo and visa page, credit cards, insurance policy and the phone numbers of your next of kin

If travelling between October - April, the following items are also required:

- Thermal vest/trousers
- Wooly Hat
- Gloves
- Winter jacket

Other suggested items:

- Body belt
- Student card
- Cards and other travel games
- Books
- Plug adaptor (three/two pin - flat)
- Ipod/MP3 player
- Wetwipes
- Alcohol handwash

Minimum Age

Minimum age 18 years old, maximum dependent on health of participant.

Minimum Numbers

This trip requires minimum numbers to operate.

Flights

Your flight for this trip should arrive at Hong Kong Airport. You may choose to arrive before your start date so that you can explore Hong Kong some more or perhaps depart after your end date.

To book your flights why not contact our flight specialist on 01892 277037, who'll find you some great deals.

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 number of 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 generally consist of a group of around 5 to 20 people.

2. Will we have any free time?

The trip has been designed to be flexible, so you can have as much or little free time as you want depending on how many of our optional activities you sign up for.

3. How much spending money will I need?

You will need money for food, drinks and optional activities which should total no more than £130 per week.

4. Do I need a visa to visit China?

Yes, once you have sent us a scanned copy of your passport we will issue you with a visa invitation letter to support your visa application. You should apply for your visa within 90 days of departure.

5. Will we get to see The Great Wall and the Pandas?

Yes these are both included for free as they are deemed un-missable!

6. How long are the journeys between destinations?

The journeys vary from one hour to 24 hours with the majority travelled on China's extensive rail network. To make sure that you make the most of your time in China the longer journeys will be taken as overnight sleeper trains.

7. Do I need to take a sleeping bag?

No, all bedding is provided

8. Do I need to take a mosquito net?

No, you don't need to take one with you.

9. Will there be a safe/safety deposit box available?

Yes, all of the hostels have lockers in the rooms and a safe at the front desk.

Support & Advice

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

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our UK 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 and Real Travel are part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Beware: Don't book with an organisation that has no financial protection for their clients. Not only are they breaking the law, you could lose all your money or be stranded overseas.

Our ATOL licence (6527), offers complete financial protection for any flight inclusive trips. To acquire an ATOL licence we have to undergo a very rigorous inspection from the Civil Aviation Authority, so you know that we tick all of the boxes. The ATOL license means that no matter what happens to us, your money will either be returned or if you've already left, your trip will be guaranteed.

We are also a Member of ABTA which means you have the benefit of ABTA's assistance and Code of Conduct. Many of the travel arrangements that we sell are protected in case of the financial failure of the travel company. If you have any questions about the financial protection that applies to your booking then please ask our team and they'll be happy to help.

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.

Whilst 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 General Practitioner 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.

A useful website to visit in the first instance is <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>

Zika Virus

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and whilst the infection often occurs without symptoms it can cause an illness similar to dengue fever. There has recently been reported a possible link between exposure to Zika virus (ZIKV) in pregnancy and microcephaly and other congenital malformations and investigations are ongoing. We recommend you visit the [FCO website](#) and select your destination country for the latest travel advice prior to booking.

If you are already pregnant it is recommended you seek medical advice from your GP as [The National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) advises you should consider avoiding travel to areas where ZIKV outbreaks are currently reported.

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 your 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 little 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



China Experience

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 Foreign and Commonwealth Travel Advice.

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

Volunteer numbers

Please note: You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us.

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