

# china fact file



<b>tourist office in uk</b>	Website: Address: Telephone: Facsimile:	www.tourist-offices.org.uk/china China National Tourist Office, 71 Warwick Road, London, SW5 9HB 020 7373 0888 020 7373 9989
<b>china embassy in uk</b>	Website: Address:  Telephone: Office Hours (GMT):	http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk 49–51 Portland Place, London W1N 4JL Visa Section 31 Portland Place, London W1N 3AG (020) 7631 1430 Visa Section Mon–Fri: 0900–1230 & 1330–1700
<b>chinese visa application service centre</b>	Address: Telephone: Facsimile: Email: Office Hours(GMT)	Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct London, EC1A 2AT 0207 842 0960 0207 842 0961 <a href="mailto:ukcentre@visaforchina.org">ukcentre@visaforchina.org</a> Monday - Friday) Visa application: 9:00-15:00 Payment and collection 9:00-16:00
<b>british embassy in China</b>	Address: Telephone: Facsimile: E mail:	11 Guanghua Lu. Beijing. China +86 10 5192 4000 +86 10 6532 1937 <a href="mailto:beijingvisamail@fco.gov.uk">beijingvisamail@fco.gov.uk</a>
<b>british consulate general</b>	<b>Shanghai</b> Telephone: Facsimile: E mail:	+86 21 6279 7650 +86 2162797651 <a href="mailto:britishconsulate.shanghai@fco.gov.uk">britishconsulate.shanghai@fco.gov.uk</a>
	<b>Guangzhou</b> Telephone: Facsimile: E mail:	+86 20 8314 3000 +86 20 8333 6485 <a href="mailto:guangzhou.consular@fco.gov.uk">guangzhou.consular@fco.gov.uk</a>
<b>area</b>		9,596,960 square kilometres
<b>population</b>		1.28 billion
<b>capital</b>		Beijing
<b>language</b>		Mandarin is the official spoken language, Cantonese, Shanghainese and many minority dialects.
<b>tipping</b>		The government does not discourage tipping any longer. Tipping is not expected in restaurants, bars and hotels. The guides however will expect a tip to supplement their low wage income, see Q&A notes.
<b>bank opening hours</b>		Mon-Fri 9am-6pm / Weekends 10am-5pm
<b>post office hours</b>		All week - 8am - 8pm
<b>office opening hours</b>		Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm
<b>shops opening hours</b>		Big shopping centres Mon-Sun 9am-10pm
<b>time (+/- GMT)</b>		China is a single time zone, eight hours ahead of GMT
<b>electricity</b>		220v AC, 50AC. Plugs come in a variety of shapes including flat two pin & flat three pin.

<b>public holidays</b>	New Year Jan 01 & 02, Chinese New Year (or Spring Festival) which last one week (based on the lunar calendar but often in February), March 8 – Women’s Day*, May 1-7 Labour’s Day, June 1 – Children’s Day*, July 1 – Communist Party Day*, August 1 – Army Day), Oct 1-7 National Day. Holidays marked with an * are not general holidays.
<b>telephone</b>	Public phones have now been installed into many hotels, which can be used easily with a direct dial phone card (IC card). BCellnet, Orange, and Vodafone mobiles work in Beijing and in many places on the Wall. Please note that as most hotel receptionists will not speak English, it will be difficult for anyone to call you from the UK and get through to your room. The dialling code for China is 00 86. Please check with your mobile phone provider if your network & contract enable you to have coverage in China.
<b>photograph</b>	There are many photographic opportunities in China but be careful of the signs of ‘No Photo’ or ‘No Flash’ in order to protect the relics. The Chinese are happy to pose for photos if asked and in the country farmers will be thrilled if you offer to send them copies. Film and batteries are on sale at most tourist spots, and hotels.
<b>postal</b>	Post to and from China takes about a week. Hotels and Friendship stores offer postal services.
<b>currency</b>	Renminbi (The People’s Currency). The standard unit is the Yuan. For up to date currency exchange, go to <a href="http://www.xe.com">www.xe.com</a> . Paper money was invented by the Chinese and is still the main form of currency. Beware of counterfeiting, which is a problem. Your guide will give you advice as to how to tell a fake!
<b>currency regulations</b>	You can take Yuan with you that you can purchase through HSBC foreign exchanges & other exchanges. Taking sterling cash that you should change at Beijing airport is also advisable. You will not have the opportunity after this so make sure you have enough Yuan or a Credit Card after leaving Beijing airport. You cannot sell Yuan outside China. You must therefore convert your Yuan back into pounds before leaving China so keep one of the exchange notes for later use. You can exchange foreign currency back at the airport.
<b>exchange</b>	It is not possible to change Scottish or Northern Irish bank notes. Foreign currency and travellers’ cheques can be changed at the main branches of the Bank of China, tourist hotels, Friendship stores and some department stores.
<b>credit cards</b>	Credit Cards are gaining ground in the shopping centres, hotels but not in the country lodges where you are staying. Most cards (Visa, Mastercard, American Express) are accepted.
<b>travellers cheque</b>	Travellers’ cheques can be exchanged into Chinese Yuan in the big shopping centres, friendship stores or hotels in the city of Beijing. Try and stick to main issuers (i.e Thomas Cook, American Express) as less well-known names, may not be accepted.
<b>passport/visa</b>	UK Citizens DO require a visa to enter China. You cannot obtain visas upon entry to China. We will supply you with the relevant form and application advice 3 months prior to departure. You will need to attend the Chinese Visa Application Service Center yourself to process your application or apply by post but this costs extra. A single entry visa costs £64.50. You will also need a passport photo. Your passport must have at least six months to run from the end of your challenge and 1 blank page for your visa. Also see Travel Tips.
<b>gifts and souvenirs</b>	Keep receipts of all gifts purchased.
<b>duty free</b>	400 cigarettes, 2 bottles of wine or .75L of spirits. Declare your video camera, laptop, or lensed camera on a form on entry to China.
<b>vaccination and health</b>	Nomad Travel Stores Medical Centre recommended the following vaccinations: diphtheria; tetanus; hepatitis A; typhoid. Vaccines sometimes advised: Japanese B encephalitis; rabies; tuberculosis; hepatitis B; cholera. Urban and densely populated areas are normally malaria free. Serious risk of malaria in China is now confined to a few areas not normally visited by package tourists or business travelers and not areas visited on your trip. There are mosquito’s however so to avoid bites by covering up with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers especially after sunset, using insect repellents on exposed skin and, when necessary, sleeping under a mosquito net. Also see Health notes.
<b>hospitals/pharmacies</b>	If you do get ill, medical facilities in the big cities are adequate and in Beijing there are high-standard international clinics for foreigners. Medical costs are minimal and Western medicine is quite usual, as well as traditional Chinese medicine.
<b>water</b>	The tap-water is <u>not</u> safe to drink. Bottled water will be provided during the trekking sections, and you can buy bottled water or soft drinks in hotels and lodges for meals. Also see Health notes.

## climate

In the Winter, cold and dry winds blow from Central Siberia. In the Summer the Pacific Ocean brings warm, moist air, sometimes producing rain formed cyclones. Beijing is pretty much on the same latitude as London. As a result the summer coincides with the UK's as does winter. Without the calming effects of the Gulf Stream, however, the climate tends to be more extreme than in the UK. In the summer months temperatures along the wall can rise to well over 35 degrees centigrade with little shade, in the winter they can fall to below freezing. Spring and Autumn tend to be the best times to go as you avoid these extremes. It is a relatively dry region but there is always the possibility of showers. Summer (July / August) daytime temperatures will be quite warm, up to 30 degrees centigrade. Hopefully with clear sunny days, but there is also the possibility of showers. Winter (late November to mid-March) daytime temperatures will be closer to 10 degrees centigrade, plus wind chill, but can fall at night to 0 degrees centigrade or below.

## temperature

South East China: Average summer = 30-36c, Average winter = 18c – 4c

Northern China: Average summer = 26c – 35c, Average Winter=10c-minus 4c.

## geography

The third-largest country in the world, China is bounded to the north by deserts of central Asia and Mongolia, to the west by the inhospitable Tibetan plateau and Himalayas, and to the East by the East and South China Seas.

## culture/customs

Calligraphy has traditionally been regarded as China's highest form of visual art – to the point that a person's character was judged by the elegance of their handwriting! Decorative calligraphy is found all over China, in temples and adorning the walls of caves and the sides of mountains and monuments.

## do's & don'ts

- Do always dress and behave modestly.
- Do keep a cool head and a sense of humour!
- Do keep your passport in a safe place at all times.
- Don't indulge in hugging and kissing in public.
- Don't get involved in drugs. Dealers and smugglers face execution!