

CATALOGUE

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1. China Visa

Prior to departing for China, all travelers will need to obtain a China visa in their passport. All passports must have 6 months validity remaining at the time you apply for your China visa. If any passport will expire please apply now for a new passport. You will obtain your own visa by using a courier service or by personally walking your application(s) into a Consulate or Embassy. Lead to China cannot provide visa services but we can make an invitation letter with official signed to help you get the visa.

In order to get your VISA, you'll need:

- a) Your original passport with at least 6 months of validity and 2 blank pages;
- b) A black and white photocopy of the passport page with your photo, and of the pages that contain any past Chinese VISAs that you have obtained (only applicable if you have already been to China);
- c) A recently-taken color passport photo (48mm x 33mm) with light background;
- d) A photocopy of previous Chinese passports (only applicable to foreign citizens who were once Chinese citizens and have obtained foreign citizenship);
- e) Proof of legal status in the country where you're applying for the VISA, such as a resident permit (only applicable if you're applying for the VISA outside your country of citizenship);
- f) An Application Form completely filled in, printed and signed;
- g) The Declaration printed and signed (only needed if you're applying through the CVASC,);
- h) A printed copy of the appointment receipt (only applicable if you're applying through the CVASC – you will be able to make an appointment directly on CVASC's website);
- i) Between 30 and 140 USD, according to the country where you're applying for the VISA.

If you're applying for a tourist VISA (o L VISA), you'll also need:

- a) A return ticket flight;
- b) An invitation letter or hotel invoice for the whole duration of your trip.

It will take between one and four working days to get the VISA. And finally, a last word of advice is be sure to put the passport at a safe place during your trip abroad, and keep a separated photocopy of your passport and visa in case of emergency.

2. International Flight

Lead to China does not provide international flight booking service. You are suggested to visit a couple of flight search engines and find the cheapest price. If you are traveling on a budget, make sure to book your flight a couple of months before your departure or you risk paying a lot of money for your ticket. Most international flights to China land in Beijing, Shanghai or Hong Kong.

If you have booked the flight to and from China, please be sure to tell us your international flight information before departure, including arrival date, flight number, arrival times and etc. So that we can arrange guide and drivers to pick up on time.

3. Baggage Allowance for Chinese Domestic Flights

When traveling in and through China, it is important to understand the baggage restrictions in place before arriving at the airport.

For in-China flights the baggage allowance is one checked bag no larger than 44 pounds and one carry-on bag which cannot exceed 14” 19” 22”. Anything beyond this will incur charges. We estimate that you should plan to bring an additional \$50-\$100 if you are planning to have luggage in excess of these restrictions.

For information about Airport Security for your China domestic flights please visit <http://en.bcia.com.cn/server/notice/safe.shtml>. Please note the new regulation on bringing electronics with a Lithium battery. They can only be taken onto the plane as carry-on rather than checked baggage. “Passengers can carry electronic products that incorporate lithium/lithium ion battery cell or battery, and such devices must be intended only for private use (such as watches, calculator, mobile phone, laptop computer, portable video camera). Lithium battery must be protected from short circuit and can only be taken as carry-on baggage. Each passenger can carry two standby batteries at most.”

4. Vaccinations for Travel to China

For visitors and tourists to China, there are no required vaccines. This means that by law, there are no vaccinations that you must get before you visit. However, physicians and the Center for Disease Control do advise to make sure that all travelers are up to date on their routine immunizations.

The following vaccines are recommended to be current before traveling to China:

- a) Tetanus-diphtheria (DPT)
- b) Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR)
- c) Varicella (chickenpox)
- d) Hepatitis A is recommended for all travelers over 12 months of age to China.
- e) Typhoid is recommended especially if you’ll be in rural areas where you may eat or drink outside large restaurants and hotels where you may come in contact with contaminated water or food.
- f) Possible Immunizations That You May Need if Visiting China

If your stay in China is longer than a short two-week visit, the possible immunizations are collected here:

- a) Yellow Fever is required by Chinese law only if you are arriving from an infected area such as Africa.
- b) Japanese Encephalitis is recommended for longer-term travelers, especially children, who are susceptible to mosquito bites and will be outdoors during mosquito season (which can last from May to November in southern China).
- c) Hepatitis B is also recommended for longer-term visitors/residents as it is very common throughout China.
- d) Rabies is recommended for any traveler who may come in contact with or handle animals, especially dogs. Rabies is common in China while the vaccination is not.

5. Chinese Currency & Money Exchange

The currency used in China is known as the Chinese Yuan (CNY) or the Renminbi (RMB) or commonly known as "kwai". The most common bill is 100RMB and is what is distributed by the ATMs. 100RMB bills are widely accepted even for small purchases although you may get a strange look if you buy a 2RMB bottle of water with it.

Cash is king while travelling in China. Credit cards are only accepted in hotels, larger restaurants and larger stores or malls. Expect to pay cash at markets, small restaurants and for taxis.

ATMs are virtually everywhere. Banking is a big business in China. They provide instructions in English and accept international cards which are part of a major network such as Interac, Cirrus, Plus, Visa and MasterCard. The maximum withdraw is partly dictated by your own bank and is generally about 2500RMB. You will also find ATMs in hotel lobbies and department stores. Before using, please make sure that the VISA or MasterCard symbol is on the ATM. If one ATM does not work with your card, just try another bank.

How much cash in RMB I should bring to China?

Firstly, you cannot bring in more than \$5,000 USD, or CNY 20,000, without declaring it and having the relevant paperwork.

In general, how much cash to take depends on your travel length, destinations, number of travelers, and whether you have paid for accommodation, air tickets and train tickets beforehand, etc. Besides, if you want to do a lot of shopping, you need to exchange much more RMB. If you have paid most of travel expenses in advance, we suggest you to bring about 1000 RMB/day to take taxi, have dinner and buy some gadgets, etc.

6. Mobile, SIM Card, Internet and VPN

Mobile and SIM Card

If you are planning to travel to China and are wondering whether you can use your mobile phone, the short answer is probably "yes," but there are a few options you might want to consider. Some options might save you money depending on how much you plan to use your phone.

Most mobile phone providers offer customers international roaming services when you sign up for your phone contract. The problem is that if you use a foreign phone card, you'll end up spending a lot of money. The most practical solution is to buy a Chinese SIM card.

With an unlocked phone, you can simply buy a local pre-paid SIM card in China. There are 3 carriers in China, China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom, using TD-SCDMA, WCDMA, and CDMA2000 networks, respectively. You can simply buy a SIM card in China from one of the carrier shop according to your phone's network mode. In any case, remember to bring your passport with you as it's now required, in order to by a phone card.

If you want to call abroad with your Chinese SIM card, you'll need to ask to the operator to enable the international service. In this case, you'll have to pay at least 300 Yuan.

Internet and VPN

If you want to read the news, check emails, use some APP and so on while travelling in China, you need to open the internet data plan. When registering for a SIM card for the first time, you can tell the front-desk clerk that you need an unlimited data plan. All three telecommunication operators in China offer such a motivating service to the first-time card users, so the total price is not very expensive, from roughly 50 yuan to 100 yuan.

You've probably heard that Internet access can be a little tricky in China, with the websites you're used to using at home not being accessible in China. Getting a VPN service can circumvent the problem (the China firewall) and make your trip a little easier.

VPN use makes it possible to access websites usually blocked on the Chinese Internet, including social media and search platforms such as Facebook, Google services (like Gmail, Google Search, Google+, Google Docs, etc), YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, as well as news sources like The New York Times, Bloomberg, and Le Monde.

However, most famous VPN providers' websites are blocked. We suggest you to search out few available VPN suppliers on the Internet or BBS and install them in advance before leaving. We suggest having two (or more) VPNs... in case one fails to connect, as you often need a VPN to download a replacement VPN or updates.

Free Wi-Fi Service

Free Wi-Fi connections are available in hotels in urban cities and tourist cities. Outside of the hotels, popular restaurants and cafés also provide free Wi-Fi for customers. When you check-in a hotel, or just sit down in a restaurant, you can ask a member of staff for the Wi-Fi code to connect to their free Wi-Fi. However, we strongly suggest that you do not rely upon hotels, restaurants, and other sources too heavily since the connection is much slower.

7. Top Apps for Traveling in China

Are you going to travel to China and would like to use of some tools that will make your experience easier? We present the 10 applications that we consider to be the most useful and effective for traveling to China.

Social Apps: WeChat

WeChat is the top one and recommended for you to get in touch of your local Chinese friends, travel guides, or other expats in China. Nowadays, weChat ID is more popular than your phone number in China.

Send text, voice messages, photos, and make phone and video call to friends no matter where they are, for free. Users also can post status and share photos and links on their "moments" timeline.

WeChat is now a mobile wallet and an indispensable social connection portal, and its developer Tencent still endeavors to offer more technology support to make it the "App for Everything".

What's more, WeChat is available in 20 languages in addition to Chinese and is capable of translating text messages received in any of these languages into the language you have configured in your profile. Therefore, it's a huge advantage to travelers in China, as not only does it facilitate a means of communication with people but also helps to reduce the language barrier.

Language Apps: Pleco

Pleco is one of the best language-learning apps, and will also save your time if you can't read things such as menus, signs and addresses etc. You can either input using pinyin (the alphabetic system of Mandarin), or you can draw out characters in order to translate them.

City maps: Google Maps

It is no doubt that mobile map applications are very helpful for travelers. With them , you may calculate the time and the most convenient transportation means for your routes. Unfortunately for some people, Google Maps doesn't work in China (unless you have a VPN). Nonetheless, new versions allow you to download some city maps for offline use. However, as Google states, the bad news is that some maps aren't available for offline use.

There exists another possibility available for both iOS and Android, which is called Baidu Map. Bad news once again: Baidu Map can only be used in Chinese. Addresses can be entered in pinyin format, but it's essential to be able to recognize Chinese characters to be able to use it.

Taxis: Didi Chuxing

In China, taking a taxi is not an easy undertaking. With Didi Chuxing, you can request a driver to come pick you up at your location or the place you indicate. The vehicle can be a public taxi, a private vehicle, a shared vehicle or other options, each with a different price estimated beforehand. This amount is calculated based on the type of vehicle and destination address that you manually input into the application. Once you accept the price, the driver picks you up and takes you to the destination indicated with no need for oral communication. Users can pay by cash or some mobile payments like WeChat Pay and Alipay.

China's Groupon + Yelp: Dianping

Just like Yelp for China. Hundreds of restaurant reviews, including features like showing highly rated restaurants near you. This app offers you a similar service to Yelp! providing you with a range of reviews, descriptions and locations of restaurants, bars, accommodation around China. Dianping also has a feature that show highly rate restaurant around your current location.

8. China Packing List

No matter your preferred dumpling flavor, season of travel, or Chinese destination, your suitcase, carry on, or backpack should be filled with these essentials.

Important documents & papers: Copies of passport and other documents, such as credit card numbers, embassy contact info, tour confirmation etc (also save docs on a USB thumb drive and your email account)

Electronic products: Unlocked mobile phone, camera, power convert and adapter plug

Money: Wallet, credit card and small sum of cash

Medications: Vitamins, sleeping pills (if necessary), medical record and doctor's contact information

Other essentials: Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, hand sanitizers, deodorant, earplugs, guide books, snacks, water bottle, coffee, quick dry towel, pen, comfortable shoes & clothes.

9. Travel Insurance

While China is a very safe country with relatively low crime, it pays to be prepared. The insurance which we provide to our clients are limited, and the settlements we can claim in China is complicated. Therefore, for your convenience, we recommend that travelers should purchase comprehensive travel insurances at home before going abroad for a holiday, which policy usually covers a wide range of inconveniences from lost & damage of baggage, to flight delays & cancellations, etc.

Here below are some online insurance companies for your reference, but Lead to China is not liable for any dispute or loss of the deal between you and the relevant companies: worldnomads, insuremytrip, Globalink.

10. Tax Refund

International tourists to Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Chengdu, Shenzhen and other major cities are now able to enjoy tax refunds on goods purchased while on vacation. The refund rate is 11% of the invoice value. The minimum spend necessary to get a tax refund is RMB 500 (around \$80 USD) at one store in one day. The purchase must have been made within 90 days of departure, and the visitor must not have exceeded a stay of 183 consecutive days in China.

11. Accommodations in China

Types of Rooms :

- a) Single Room - designed for one person
- b) Double Room - containing one king-size or queen-size bed
- c) Twin Room - with two single beds

- d) Triple Room - containing three single beds or a standard room with an additional single bed
- e) Connecting Room: They are made up of two or more separate but adjoining rooms, which are connected by a door.

Size of the bed:

Room Type	Bed Equipment	Bed Size	
		cm	inch
Single Bed	1 queen size bed	150 x 200	59 x 78
Double Bed	1 king size bed	180 x 200	70 x 78
Twin Bed	2 single beds	120 x 200	47 x 78

Mattress : For Chinese people, sleeping on the hard beds is healthy. So the beds at the hotels in China are not as soft as those in foreign countries. But as the internationalization of Chinese hotels, foreign guests' preferences are also taken into account. If you aren't quite accustomed to the hard bed at your hotel, you can go to housekeeping department to ask for more blankets in order to sleep more comfortably. Certainly, some international hotel chains have more comfortable beds, but the price will increase accordingly.

Check in/out: For all hotels, check in is generally after 2:00 p.m. and check out is usually by noon the next day.

When you need to check in early, you please let us know in advance because the earliest check-in time is dependent on whether the room is vacant or not on the day when you arrive, and the late check-out time may charge extra money.

When checking in, you will need to present your passport and fill in a form. The hotels also normally require a small amount of returnable deposit.

Language: Under normal circumstances, all foreign-related 3-5 star hotels receptionists in China are required to speak English. This is guaranteed in hot tourist cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Xian and so on. But, in some remote areas or places with few foreign tourists, it is hard for you to meet the staff speaking English even in the best local hotel.

12. Meals & Restaurants

You might have noticed that such letters like B, L, D appear in the final travel itinerary we've made. If not specially required by the customer, B here is that a buffet breakfast enjoyed at hotel, L represents the lunch which will be generally arranged in a Chinese restaurant around the tourist attractions, combined with the day's schedule. D commonly refers to taste some particularly famous Chinese food like roast duck meal, dumpling feast and so on.

Please note that it is possible to occur some situations of being very busy, noisy and vacancy of service in the restaurant for lunch during the itinerary. This is because the optional restaurants near the tourist attractions are less, and tourists will all come in at lunchtime.

13. Tour Guide

All of our guides are certified by the national tourism administration. They are friendly, experienced and knowledgeable. They are skilled in organizing your trip and are fluent at communication. We usually arrange local guides for clients throughout the trip. The local guide will meet you at the airport, escort you to visit highlight spots and then see you off at the airport in each city. Our guide will be with you during the planned tour for the day. If the program is only a half day one, you will be on your own the rest of the day. However, you may ask her/him for some suggestions on bars, restaurants, shopping and public transportation, etc.

14. Tips

Tipping is not widely expected or required in Mainland China. However, at superior hotels and restaurants catering to western tourists, porters, room service and wait staff may have become used to receiving small tips. You can tip in cash, some small gifts brought from your country would also be appreciated.

Then, how much to tip will be appropriate?

Tour Guide & Driver

The amount of your tip is your decision. As a guideline, 80-150RMB/day would be usual for the guide and half the amount for a driver, given separately to each person is preferable. Remember tipping is at your discretion.

Hotel

In general, RMB 10-20 should be enough for the room attendant if you stay at the same hotel for a couple of days. For the porter, 10Yuan for each piece of luggage carried for you may be appropriate. Tipping at hostels or inns is not expected.

Restaurants

You don't need to tip at fast food restaurants or roadside stands. At fine restaurants in larger cities, if you are satisfied with the service, you can leave small change to your waiter, or give one or two dollars as a tip. It depends entirely on how you rate the service. Leave more if you are happy with the service or none if you are not.

Tip in RMB or USD?

We recommend that you'd better give RMB, which will be more convenient for them. Because they don't have to change money.

15. Toilet

Bring toilet paper

One of the unusual things to know before going to China is that most Chinese toilets do not provide toilet paper. Hotels and nicer restaurants will have it available, but it's always a good idea to carry a roll of toilet paper or a box of tissues!

The Squat Toilet

There is one thing that many people find surprising when they first get to China is the squat toilet. It's like that, only with walls, a door (sometimes) and a ceramic hole in the ground that (sometimes) flushes. Using squat toilets in China may not be on a person's "top 10 list" for their vacation, but it actually becomes a part of their Chinese experience. Good advice is to use the bathroom before leaving your hotel.

Bring hand soap or hand sanitizer

Like toilet paper, hand soap is not standard in many Chinese bathrooms. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer with you just to be sure.