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**Freedom Tours Ltd.**

***MAINLAND***

***CHINA***

***TRAVEL***

***ORIENTATION***

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## **GENERAL ORIENTATION PACKET FOR TRAVEL TO CHINA**

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2. Planning Your Trip
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## A) OVERVIEW OF TRAVEL TO CHINA

### **1. WHERE YOU ARE GOING: AREA, HISTORY, CLIMATE**

You are now planning to discover one of the world's most interesting cultures! China is a very significant nation with a long history and many noteworthy accomplishments. The history of Chinese civilization can be traced distinctly to the time just after the tower of Babel. The written language of China had its developmental beginning at that point and many Chinese characters are actually based on the creation story from the Bible. China is the largest nation on earth in population and has only been truly opened up to the outside world since the late nineteen seventies.

China was ruled by Emperors for about 4,000 years and each dynasty (or family rulership) came to power declaring itself to have "the mandate from Heaven" to rule. Dynastic rule ended in China at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and after a brief time of moving toward democratic rule, was taken into a fierce civil war. The end of that war came in 1949 when the communist ruler Mao Tsa Tung came to power. Mao is still revered as the Father of the Peoples Republic of China, (even though he is responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese) and his body lies in state in a large building in Tiannanmen Square in Beijing. China is still a communist country, ruled by old line communist dictators that control religion and censors speech. They are the worst human rights violators of any nation on record today. There is a move toward more openness in some areas, however, with economic development being their great motivation. Some reforms have begun since the time they were accepted in the World Trade Organization in December of 2001.

China has 56 people groups recognized by the government. The majority, or Han Chinese, make up about 95% of the 1.3 billion population. The other 55 minority groups (actually the 55 can be classified as 495 distinct groups) live mostly in the western part of the nation. The minority groups have a significant influence on national policy, however, as the government understands the need to keep the Chinese empire united under one government. Placing high value on the Chinese minority groups has created a sense of diversity of peoples in the nation.

China also is very diverse in geography and in climate. Stretching from the lower tip of Siberia to the tropical rain forest of Yunnan and from the Pacific Ocean to the Gobi desert to the Himilayan mountains it contains the driest places on earth and the highest mountains on earth. Most of your travels will be in climate similar to the U.S. midwest of Ohio and Indiana to the tropical areas similar to very south Florida.

### **2. PLANNING YOUR TRIP**

The first step in planning your trip is to consider what you may want to see in China. Remember that China is a vast nation, about as large as the United States in the area where most of the population lives. In Beijing you will find the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, The Forbidden City, The Temple of Heaven and many other cultural and Historic sites. In Xian is the burial ground of the first Emporer of China and the Terracotta Soldiers. In Yunnan province are jungles, deserts, mountains, the Rock Forest, many Temples and religious sites and many other unique things to see. Hong Kong is a beautiful and interesting city that everyone should see at least once.



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The second consideration is time of year you will be traveling and climate at that time. China's climate is varied and almost exactly like the United States. Beijing is about the same latitude as Columbus, Ohio with similar weather patterns. Going north gets much colder. Hong Kong would be similar to Miami, Fl.

Usually, two weeks (or 12 days) is a minimum for having a good time in China. Remember that you will use two days to get there and one whole day to get home.

### 3. **BUDGET**

**Cost:** The cost of your tour is divided into three distinct categories as follows:

#1: The international flight. We will arrange for your booking.

#2: The cost of your tour inside of China. This includes cost of your visa, all hotels, all tips, all meals (three per day), all transportation and domestic airfare, entrance to all sites, cost of tour guides, laundry service on one day, daily unlimited supply of bottled water. You may pay for this tour using your debit or credit card (online, at [www.FreedomToursLtd.com](http://www.FreedomToursLtd.com)) or by check to "Freedom Tours Ltd."

#3: Incidental costs that you arrange: This tour has been designed so that you will not need any money after you arrive inside China. We understand, however, that sometimes you may want some flexibility, so any personal incidental costs will be paid by you during the tour. These may include your personal souvenirs; telephone calls or e mail back to the USA; any overweight baggage costs incurred on domestic flights for your own luggage; room service, mini bar fees or other meals different than what we have already provided (we provide all meals); any massages, facials or other services not scheduled on the tour.

Cost of personal incidentals is approximately as follows:

Immunizations	Variable
Massage	\$ 10.00 usd
Facial	\$ 10.00 usd
Taxi	\$ 2.00 usd average one-way
Meal	\$ 5.00 usd average
Western meal	\$ 15.00 - \$25.00 average
Mini Bar	\$ 2.50 usd per soda or water
Laundry	\$ 4.00 usd per item cleaned on average
Ladies Chinese outfit	\$30.00 usd per item on average
Man's Suit	\$60.00 usd per suit on average
Extra Tour in Beijing if you do not want to shop	\$ 20.00 usd per tour on average (ie: Temple of Heaven / Forbidden City)

**Payment Schedule:** The registration fee (including cost of your visa) must be paid at least 60 days prior to departure. All fees, including international airfare, must be paid thirty days prior to departure.



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## 5. *HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS*

You will stay in four or five star hotels every night, with the exception of "special interest" activities covered in the "special interests" packet. Each traveler will share a room with another person. If you wish to have a private room, please request on the form provided and add \$ 350.00 to the price of your tour.

The maids may enter your room each evening to turn down your bed and see if you need anything, do not be alarmed.

You may be asked if you want a massage, don't do this unless we clear it first. There are some good ways to get a therapeutic massage (which you may need after two or three days of our kind of work) but do not do so in hotels unless under our advisement.

**Electricity:** All electricity is 220volts, so bring only equipment that works with this, or bring a converter. Also, you will need the plug adapters and Hong Kong is different than the Mainland, and Beijing is like Hong Kong (so bring them all!!)

**Water:** You *CAN NOT* drink the water in the hotels. We will provide bottles of water for you each day.

## 6. *FOOD*

**Meals:** Breakfast will always be in the hotel and will be a combination of Chinese and western buffet. There is more Chinese than western, but one can usually get an omelette, bread, fruit and some breakfast meat. Most other meals are Chinese, family style meals. It is good to practice using chop sticks, but we will always carry some western table ware if needed. Every few days, we will enjoy a break and eat at some western food restaurant.

**In Hong Kong:** Food in Hong Kong is mostly Chinese food, but you can get KFC, McDonalds, Applebees or some other steak houses. Good food in restaurants in HK is very expensive, usually about \$20- \$30 per meal per person. Better to eat KFC or McDonalds or cheaper Chinese food.

**In Mainland:** There will be some chicken or pizza American style in Mainland, but not much. Most will be Chinese food ordered and eaten family style. Minority food will be harder to recognize but you can get normal Chinese food similar to US style. If you are concerned about eating so much Chinese food just be aware that there is always sweet and sour chicken, pork and eggplant. Also there are green vegetables and other food you have not seen in the U.S. which is very good that most Americans enjoy. While in our centers, however, you will eat traditional Chinese family style food three meals per day.

## 7. *MEDICAL ISSUES & IN CASE OF EMERGENCY*

Please bring any medications that you will need, or that you think will help give you comfort in the event of sinus problem, back pain, etc. There are few western medicines in China and the Chinese equivalent is not as strong as the American medicines. There is one joint venture, Chinese/American hospital in Beijing. Other cities have only sub standard Chinese hospitals. The joint venture hospital is very expensive. Bring your insurance information with you, but we don't know if it is possible to pay there with an insurance card. We do have several friends who are doctors who we will call in the event of some medical problem.



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Always carry your passport on you. In the event of emergency the Chinese are good about getting doctors and hospitals, checking ID, etc.

Your family or friends can contact you at any time, day or night, by simply calling the offices of Freedom Tours or PGM, Inc. Our office can, in turn, call us directly on the Tour Operator's China mobile telephone 24 hours a day. In the event of a family emergency or a health concern, it is very easy to send you back the USA early if necessary.

## **B) PREPARING/PACKING FOR YOUR PLANNED TRIP**

### **8. PASSPORTS AND VISAS**

You will receive in your Tour Preparation Packet, a visa form that is partially filled in. You must complete the form and return the form and your passport 60 days prior to departure. Cost of the visa is included in your tour package. In the event that you plan to visit China again this year, please notify us and add the appropriate amount and we can arrange for you to receive a double entry or six month unlimited entry visa.

To obtain a passport (begin four months prior to departure)

1. Get six passport size photos. You will need two to send with your passport application, one for your first visa, one for your second visa (which we will need to get in Hong Kong) and that leaves you two to carry in case of an emergency.
2. Go to the post office and get a passport application. Fill out the application, attach the two photos, resubmit the application at the post office. Take along your birth certificate and the application fee.

### **9. GETTING YOUR PLANE TICKETS**

We will be responsible to help you obtain your international airplane tickets. We will purchase all flights within China, also.

### **10. IMMUNIZATIONS**

You must arrange for your own immunizations by contacting your doctor or local health department and notifying them of your tour. You will visit areas that are know to have malaria. Hepatitis B is also recommended, as well as any immunizations currently suggested by United States health departments. (Cost not covered in the tour package).



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## **11. MONEY AND MONEY MANAGEMENT**

The currency in Mainland China is the Renminbi, or RMB, or Yuen, or Kwai. (Different names for the same thing). The most common official name is the Renminbi or Yuen. The exchange rate is about 8.1 per dollar, but we often can get 8.25, so let us change money for you especially if you have a large amount.

You can use a credit card at four and five star hotels but not for much of anything else. Bring a credit card just in case, also bring a debit card if you use them. In some places you can access your U.S. account through ATM machines. In general, however, be prepared to pay cash for everything

## **12. TELEPHONE USE/ CALLING BACK HOME**

**Communication Back To The USA:** Upon arrival we will instruct you how to buy and use a local telephone card so that you can call home. One card costs about \$12.00 usd and will accommodate about two moderate calls. Internet is available in the hotels, and will cost about \$ 6.00 for each use, up to 30 minutes.

You should consider bringing an ATT or MCI telephone card with you. You can simply go to any Yellow telephone and dial "10812" and you will be connected to the same MCI operator as you get in the United States. Then follow the same procedure as you would in the United States. Dial a similar number to access ATT. There is also a simple access number for both of these from Hong Kong.

If you want to call from a pay phone without a credit card, then you must purchase a Chinese telephone card (electronic) that goes into the public telephone. There is one type for Hong Kong and another type for China. These are pre-paid cards which you purchase for \$3.00, \$ 5.00 or \$12.00 USD.

Always carry some change for using telephones in case you get lost. One yuan coin or one Hong Kong dollar will operate the pay phones.

1. To call North from Hong Kong: (001) (86) (City Code)\_\_\_\_\_number
2. Hong Kong Directory Assist: 1081
3. To call a mainland mobile from Hong Kong: (001) (86) (eleven digit mobile number)  
Do not use city code as cell numbers are national.
4. To call the United States simply follow the directions for the card you have.

## **13. PACKING**

**Packing:** You will be allowed one suitcase per person to check on the airplane which can weigh no more than 50 lbs. (20 kilograms). Any overweight baggage will cost \$1.00 per pound for each domestic flight that we take (there will be three domestic flights on this tour). This is the reason that we save most shopping until the last two days.

Some tricks we use to get around this:

1. Everything you bring for us we will separate and we will pay this fee.
2. Put all of the heavy items in the carry on and try to take two carry on's on board.
3. Leave some luggage at the hotel if you are coming back that way. This is a common service that all hotels provide to their guests.



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**Clothing:** The weather in China is comparable to the United States for each time of year. Since Beijing is the same proximity north as Ohio is, you can expect Ohio weather there in May or any time of the year. Hong Kong, which is relative to Mexico City on our continent will be obviously very, very hot in the summer and mild during the winter. You can feel comfortable wearing blue jeans anywhere in China. Dress casually, as a tourist would. Bring one or two casual dress outfits for public speaking or special dinners. Ladies can wear slacks of any kind, anywhere. Jewelry is acceptable, also. China is accustomed to seeing tourists and is becoming more westernized each year.

You should pack using suitcases that latch together, stand upright and can be pulled easily as one unit. Be very careful, however, about size of the carry on. In Hong Kong airport they are the strictest of anyone in the world. You should not have a carry on that is more than the allowable size. Weigh your suitcases accurately.

Sometimes on a hurried trip we miss the laundry services. It usually takes 36 hours to get laundry back, unless you pay the hotel rates which can be about the value of each article of clothing. So balance this with your need to pack light.

**Some Special Items to take:**

Sun Screen / Chapstick and lotion (in our elevation the sun ultraviolet rays are intense)

Elevation medicine (if you want help adapting to 1.5 mile high)

Toilet Paper (only a couple small packets or some tissues for emergency situations)

Extra pair reading glasses

Medicines (Especially for sinuses, headaches, etc. Good stuff is not easy to find here)

Bible & teaching notes

Comfortable walking shoes

Rain jacket

Salt and Pepper (You will get MSG on your food. You may request NO MSG) but then you will need your own salt and pepper).

A few snacks are ok to bring, but most people find they don't need them to live on. Many you can buy here.

Bring a good Chinese traveler's dictionary. Berlitz For Travelers is best.

*Most consumer goods are very plentiful here so don't overpack. Hair dryers, toiletries, etc. are no problem. Curling irons are nearly impossible.*

**PACKING YOUR DOCUMENTS AND MONEY**

\* Take cash and travelers checks if you prefer. Contrary to common thought, **I prefer to take all in cash** since some areas of the globe do not take certain kinds and in China it will require a trip to the Bank..

\* **Along with your passport you should take:**

Driver's License / 4 extra passport photos / 1 xerox copy of your passport (leave another copy at home with a friend) **Remember that most Fanny Packs are very easy to cut and snatch.**





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## **14. THE TOUR SCHEDULE**

We must maintain a very tight schedule to accommodate all of the activities that we have scheduled. Every room will receive a 6:00 am wake up call every day. Breakfast is promptly at 7:00 am in the hotels where we stay. Everyone must attend the 7:30 orientation each day. Luggage must be fully packed and setting outside of each room by 7:30 am every morning that we will be traveling. Due to the nature of some of our activities as listed in the "special interests" packet, we reserve the option of changing the schedule at any time. You may not be notified of the reason of the change for several days. We always try to substitute "special interest" activities if one is canceled, however. Tourist activities should never need to be canceled.

## **14. GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS**

### **AT THE AIRPORT**

Airlines suggest arriving at the airport two hours early for an international flight. Don't cut corners here: you will need all of those two hours.

Your luggage will be checked all the way to China, but you will need to pick it up at Chicago and carry it with you to the International Terminal.

Ask for seating assignments on all flights going and coming at this time, especially if you have a specific preference (ie: Emergency Row).

### **TRAVELING ON THE AIRPLANE**

This will be the longest flight that you will probably ever make. Be prepared. The down sides to this are:

- \***Weariness** (so maybe take a sleeping pill as you get on the plane)
- \***Stiffness** (maybe you want to set in an Exit row or a Bulkhead seat where you can stretch your legs during the flight. Or, if flying with a friend, each of you get an aisle seat across from each other)
- \***Dryness** (air flow will dry you out, so plan to drink a lot of water. It is available on the plane)
- \***Respiratory Discomfort** (due to inadequate air flow and dryness. Take some hard candy or lozenges)
- \***Often if you are in the back of the plane** they will run out of food choice before they get to you.
- \***Inflatable neck pillow.**