Discovering *China*

China, officially the People's Republic of China, is the world's most populous nation, with a population of more than 1.4 billion.

China is not only the world's most populous country but also a leading global economic power, with the second-largest economy. Its history spans thousands of years and reflects remarkable achievements in art, philosophy, science, and architecture.

Travelers often explore China's most iconic landmarks, such as the Great Wall—an ancient engineering feat stretching more than 13,000 miles—and Tiananmen Square, the largest public square in the world. Both serve as enduring symbols of China's cultural and historical significance.

Beijing, the capital, is the country's political center, while cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen stand as hubs of commerce, technology, and global influence. Together with its rich heritage, these destinations highlight China's enduring cultural legacy and its important role on the world stage.



Visa Process

U.S. citizens between the ages of 14 and 70 are required to obtain a visa in order to visit mainland China. Visa applications can be submitted online and finalized in person at a Chinese Visa Application Service Center located in cities such as Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston.

Currently, citizens of certain countries may be eligible for temporary visa-free entry; however, U.S. passport holders must have a valid visa for tourism, business, family visits, work, or study. Travelers are strongly advised to review the most up-to-date entry requirements on the U.S. Department of State website (travel.state.gov), as regulations can change at any time without prior notice.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are accepted in China, but their use is not as widespread as in the United States. In major cities and tourist areas, international cards such as Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are generally accepted at hotels, large retail stores, and upscale restaurants. Outside of these areas—particularly in smaller cities and rural regions—travelers should be prepared to rely more on cash or mobile payment platforms, which are the most common methods of payment in China.

Plug Sockets

China uses Type A, Type C, and Type I plug sockets: **Type A** – Two flat parallel pins (same as standard U.S. plugs). **Type C** – Two round pins (commonly used in Europe).
Type I – Three flat pins in a triangular pattern

Currency

China's official currency is the Renminbi (RMB), most commonly referred to by its unit, the yuan (CNY). Prices are generally listed in yuan, and the currency symbol often appears as ¥.

Gratuities

Guide
RMB 35.00 - RMB 70.00/guest/day
Driver
RMB 18.00 - RMB 23.00/guest/day

Check in process

When checking into hotels in China, you will be required to present both your passport and valid Chinese visa. Please keep these documents readily available.





Average Spring
50 to 73°F
The weather is warm and pleasant, often accompanied by a refreshing breeze.



Average Summer
77 to 91°F
The weather is hot and humid, with consistently high temperatures.



Average Autumn
59 to 81°F
Rainfall is minimal, and most days are bright with warm, mild temperatures.



Average Winter
32 to 46°F
The weather is very cold, with frequent snowfall.

General Etiquette:

Greetings: Common greetings in China include a slight nod or a small bow. Handshakes are widely used in urban areas, though they may be lighter in firmness than what Americans are accustomed to. In formal situations, it is respectful to address people by their professional or honorific title followed by their last name.

Dress Modestly: Modest and conservative dress is generally appreciated in China, especially in traditional or rural areas. While major cities may be more relaxed, travelers are encouraged to avoid overly revealing clothing and to dress respectfully when visiting temples, cultural sites, or smaller communities.

Religion and Temples

Religious Awareness: China is home to a variety of religious traditions, including Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity, and folk practices. While religious expression is generally tolerated, it is important for visitors to remain respectful and mindful of local customs and sensitivities. Travelers should avoid behavior that could be considered disruptive or disrespectful in places of worship.



Cultural Sensitivity

Be open-minded and respectful of China's cultural diversity. The country is home to many ethnic groups, and customs and traditions can vary widely from one region to another. Taking time to learn and appreciate these differences will enrich your travel experience.

Emergency Information

Dial 110 for police, fire, or medical emergencies in China. Keep a copy of your passport and other important documents in a safe place. Have the contact information for the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate readily available in case of emergency.

Social Practices

Language and Communication: Learning a few basic Mandarin phrases can be very helpful for everyday interactions, especially outside major cities where English is less commonly spoken. Politeness is highly valued, and using appropriate titles or honorifics when addressing others shows respect. Even simple efforts to speak Mandarin are usually appreciated by locals.

Public Behaviour: Maintain respectful behavior in public spaces. Loud, aggressive, or disruptive conduct may be considered disrespectful and is best avoided. Travelers are encouraged to be courteous and mindful of their surroundings at all times.



Dining

Dining in China is a cultural experience that emphasizes community and sharing. Meals are often served family-style, with several dishes placed in the center of the table for everyone to share. Chopsticks are the primary utensils, and it is customary to take small portions from communal plates and place them into your own bowl.

China's cuisine is incredibly diverse, shaped by its vast geography and history. There are eight major culinary traditions: Sichuan (spicy and bold flavours), Cantonese (light and fresh), Shandong (salty, crisp, and hearty), Jiangsu (rich and subtly sweet), Hunan (hot and sour), Fujian (delicate and umami-rich), Zhejiang (fresh and mellow), and Anhui (rustic and wild herbs). Regional specialties range from spicy hotpot in Chongqing to delicate dim sum in Guangzhou, offering travelers endless variety.

Although water quality in China has improved in recent years, tap water is not considered safe for drinking due to pollution and natural contaminants. Travelers should rely on bottled water, which is inexpensive and widely available. Many hotels also provide boiled or bottled water for guests.

What to pack

Travel Essentials:
Passport & Visa: Carry your valid U.S. passport, Chinese visa, and any required travel documents. Keep photocopies in a separate location. **Travel Insurance:** Strongly recommended to cover medical emergencies, trip delays, or other unexpected situations. **Money:** Bring a mix of cash (preferably in small denominations of Chinese yuan) and credit/debit cards. **Health Kit:** Include prescription medications (in original packaging with copies of prescriptions) and basic over-the-counter medicines. Always pack these in your carry-on luggage.

Clothing:
Summer (June–August): Pack lightweight, breathable clothing to stay cool in hot and humid conditions. **Spring (March–May) & Autumn (September–November):** Bring layers, such as light sweaters or jackets, to adjust to varying temperatures. **Winter (December–February):** Northern China can be very cold, so heavier coats, scarves, hats, and gloves are recommended.

Regardless of the season, comfortable walking shoes are essential, as much of your sightseeing will be on foot.

Personal Items:
Toiletries: Basic items like toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and any specific personal items you use. **Sun Protection:** Bring sunscreen and sunglasses to protect against strong sunlight, especially during summer or at high altitudes. **Insect Repellent:** Recommended if you plan to visit rural or tropical areas, particularly in warmer months.

Electronics:
Adapter/Converter: Bring a power adapter compatible with Chinese outlets (Types A, C, and I). A voltage converter may also be necessary for devices that are not dual-voltage. **Phone & Charger:** Consider purchasing a local SIM card or an international data plan to stay connected and avoid high roaming charges. **Camera:** A camera is great for capturing your trip—don't forget extra memory cards and spare batteries.

Other Useful Items:
Small Backpack/Daypack: Useful for day trips and carrying water, snacks, and other essentials. **Hand Sanitizer:** Helpful for maintaining cleanliness when soap and water aren't available.**Tissues or Wet Wipes:** Many public restrooms in China do not provide toilet paper, so carrying your own is recommended.

