Discovering *China*

China, officially known as the People's Republic of China, stands as the world's most populous country, home to over 1.4 billion people.

This vast nation is not only a demographic giant but an economic powerhouse, boasting the second-largest economy globally. China's history spans thousands of years and is rich with significant contributions to art, philosophy, science, and architecture.

Iconic landmarks such as the Great Wall of China, a marvel of ancient engineering stretching over 13,000 miles, and Tiananmen Square, the world's largest public square, are symbols of the nation's historical depth and cultural significance.

Beijing, the nation's capital, is the political heart of China, while other major cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen are hubs of innovation and global influence, driving the country forward in the modern era. These cities, along with China's rich history and iconic landmarks, make it a nation of profound global influence and enduring cultural legacy.



Visa Process

If you are a UK citizen, between the ages of 14-70, you must have a visa to visit mainland China. You can apply for a visa online and then go in person to a visa for China application centre in London, Manchester, Belfast and Edinburgh.

Australian and New Zealand passport holders can travel to China visa-free for up to 30 days for purposes including tourism, business, family visits, or transit. A visa is required for work, study, or stays exceeding 30 days. Travellers should check www.smartraveller.gov.au for the latest requirements, as entry conditions may change at any time without notice.

Credit Cards

Yes, credit cards can be used in China, but their acceptance is not as widespread as in some other countries. Major cities and tourist areas generally accept international credit cards like Visa, MasterCard, and American Express at hotels, upscale restaurants, and larger retail stores. However, in smaller cities and rural areas, cash and mobile payment methods are more commonly used.

Plug Sockets

In China, the power plugs and sockets used are of type A, C, and I.
Type A: This plug has two flat parallel pins.
Type C: This plug has two round pins.
Type I: This plug has three flat pins in a triangular pattern.

Currency

China's official currency is the Renminbi (RMB), commonly known by its unit, the yuan (CNY)

Gratuities

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

Check in process

Your passport and Chinese Visa will need to be ready to check into all of your hotels in China, please have these to hand.





Average Spring
10 to 23°C
The weather is warm and comfortable with a refreshing breeze.



Average Summer
25 to 33°C
The weather is sweltering and sultry with high temperatures.



Average Autumn
15 to 27°C
There is less rain and most of the days are bright with warm and mild temperatures.



Average Winter
0 to 8°C
The weather is extremely chilly with lots of snowfall.

General Etiquette:

Greetings: Common greetings include a slight nod or a small bow. Handshakes are also common in urban areas but might vary in firmness. In more formal settings, it's common to address someone by their title followed by their last name.

Dress Modestly: Dressing modestly and conservatively is generally appreciated in China, particularly in more traditional or rural areas.

Religion and Temples

Religious Awareness: China has a diverse range of religious practices, including Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity, among others. While these practices are often tolerated, it's important to be respectful and aware of local customs.



Cultural Sensitivity

Be open-minded and willing to learn about the various cultures and ethnicities within China. The country is incredibly diverse, and people from different regions might have distinct customs and traditions.

Emergency

Dial 110 for police, fire, or medical assistance. Keep a copy of your passport and important documents in a safe place and have the contact details of the nearest British embassy or consulate.

Social Practices

Language and Communication: Learning basic Mandarin phrases can be helpful for daily interactions. Politeness is valued in communication, so using honorifics and appropriate titles is important.

Public Behaviour: Maintain a level of decorum in public spaces. Loud or aggressive behaviour might be seen as disrespectful or disruptive.



Dining

Dining in China is a rich cultural experience that varies greatly by region but is united by a few key elements. Meals are often communal, with a focus on shared dishes placed in the centre of the table. Chopsticks are the primary utensils, and it's common to take small portions from communal plates and place them in your bowl.

China's vast geography means its cuisine varies widely. 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). Each region offers unique dishes, from spicy hotpots in Chongqing to delicate dim sum in Guangzhou.

Although water quality is improving, tap water in China is still not recommended for drinking due to pollution and natural contamination. Bottled water is widely available and usually inexpensive.

What to pack

Essentials:
Passport & Visa: Ensure you have your passport, visa, and any necessary travel documents, along with photocopies.
Travel Insurance: Always a good idea for unexpected situations.
Money: Cash (especially small denominations) and credit/debit cards. ATMs are widely available.
Health Kit: Any prescription medications, over-the-counter medicines (Ensure that you travel with these in your hand luggage)

Clothing:
Pack lightweight and breathable clothes for summer (June to August), and warmer layers for spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November). Winter (December to February) requires heavier clothing. Comfortable walking shoes are essential as you'll likely be exploring on foot.

Personal Items:
Toiletries: Basic items like toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and any specific personal items you use.
Sunscreen & Sunglasses: Protection from the strong sun is crucial.
Insect Repellent: Especially important in rural or tropical areas.

Electronics:
Adapter/Converter: Power adapter suitable for Chinese outlets (Type A, C, and I) Phone & Charger: With a local SIM card, you can have better connectivity and avoid high roaming charges.
Camera: To capture your travels (with extra memory cards and batteries).

Other Useful Items:
Small Backpack/Daypack: For day trips and carrying essentials.
Hand Sanitiser: For cleanliness on the go.
Tissues: (public restrooms may not always provide toilet paper)

