

CHINA TRIP Q&A

LET'S GO TO CHINA!

China is an amazing experience and we encourage everyone to join us on this adventure! Please read through the information below to help you prepare for your trip.

- China is a foreign country. The food is different, the bathrooms are different, and the culture is different. Do your own research before deciding.
- Read through the Q&A. It's based on Chamber staff experiences in China and will give you a feel for the trip.
- There is a lot of walking on this tour. Some days are up to a full 8 hours after leaving your hotel. You can rest at some attractions but others, like the Forbidden City, require walking from entrance to exit as a group. The furthest distance is 4km.
- You are part of a tour group and your tour guides are happy to answer any questions, but you are responsible for yourself on this trip. You stay with your group during the length of this trip. We will provide you with as much information as possible, but we encourage you to supplement this with your own research.

TRAVEL VISAS

What's a travel visa?

China requires all travelers entering the country to have a travel visa. For this, you need a passport valid for 6 months after entering China, an application form, supporting documents from the tour company (the Chamber will provide these), which will only be available about 60 days before the trip and there is currently a \$165 fee for the travel visa. See 'How do I get a visa?' for further information.

How do I get a visa?*

The Chamber will host information sessions on how to fill out your visa application. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive assistance on filling it out. The visa process can be daunting and we encourage everyone to attend the information sessions. *The process changed in 2019 and we will have updates at the information sessions.

Once your application is completed (the Chamber can assist), you leave it with the Chamber and we will send them all in together with your **passport** to the Chinese embassy for completion. This requires you to be without your passport while the Chinese embassy completes the visa.

If you plan on travelling internationally during the summer (June-August), you should consider applying on your own, the Embassy could have your passport for up to 4 weeks.

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

What's the internet and phone situation?

Complimentary internet is available in your hotels. However, service is unreliable and many North American websites you may be familiar with will be unavailable to you, like Facebook and Google.

China's Internet censorship laws are different than Canada. If concerned about accessing your email, social media and other Internet websites, please research accordingly. In our experience, Virtual Personal Networks (VPNs) will allow you to access your email and other sites but must be installed prior to arrival in China.

Cellphones will work in China with additional international phone and data packages purchased from your service provider. Contact them for more information.

Should I get travel insurance?

Citslinc and the Halifax Chamber of Commerce do not provide travel insurance. Passengers are responsible for their own travel and cancellation insurance. Please contact Theriault Financial for information on available options. Contact information: (902) 434-9088 or alisha@tfi.cc

Do I need any specific shots or vaccinations?

Ensure your vaccinations are up to date (ex: tetanus, hepatitis). Check with your physician regarding your personal situation.

Check Health Canada for any advisory notices: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/vaccines>

If you have respiratory sensitivities, please check with your physician regarding a breathing mask while in China. The air quality is very poor.

We recommend bringing Western medications with you (Advil, allergy medicine, cold medications, etc.) as they are not readily available in China.

PACKING

What's the weather like?

In September/October, the average temperature in Beijing is 13 with a high of 19 and a low of 8 (Celsius). In Shanghai, the average high is 23 with an average low of 16.

Please keep in mind, temperatures fluctuate. The climate is temperate, dress in layers. You should prepare for rain and sunshine.

What should I bring?

When you leave the hotel, you are gone for the day. Dress accordingly. We suggest bringing a bag with you on the bus with options: umbrella, hat, etc. Jeans are acceptable for all venues. Please note this is only a suggested packing list, it is encouraged you do your own research.

Suggested packing list:

- Comfortable pants (x4)
- Comfortable shorts (x1)
- T shirts (x4)
- Long sleeve shirts (x3)
- Socks, underwear (enough for the entire trip- you might not see a washer/dryer)
- Rain jacket
- Light jacket and heavier jacket
- Swimsuit (in case the hotels have pools!)
- PJs
- Belt
- Hat
- Umbrella
- Adapters
- Masks (for those with air sensitivities)
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Any pharmaceuticals you regularly use or might want (they won't be available in China)
 - Ex: band-aids, advil, cold and flu meds, allergy meds, etc.
- Ear plugs
- Toiletries
- Converter (plugs are different in China)
- Electronics and chargers
- Day bag for the bus
- Easy-to-carry bag for daily use
- Currency (see below)

How much money do I need?

We recommend bringing:

- \$250-\$300 USD cash for all optional tours (if you plan on doing all of them)
- Additional USD cash for shopping, any other purchases
- \$400-\$600 Chinese Yuan (\$75~ CAD)
- Mandatory: \$39 USD cash for tour guide tips

Most factory stores will accept Visa, MasterCard and American express, as well as Chinese currency and USD. For small, local markets, have small Yuan denominations

available- vendors do not typically provide change. Please keep in mind the above are only suggestions.

ATMs and Foreign Exchange Machines may be available in some hotels. ATMs in markets will only provide Chinese Yuan.

AIRPORT + FLIGHTS

We leave from Toronto. When do we get our flight information?

Your Citilinc trip includes your return flight Toronto to China and any flights within China. Flight numbers will be available prior to departure date, however official flight information (departure time, flight number and airline) will be available no earlier than one month before your departure date.

When should I book my flight to Toronto?

Trip participants are responsible for finding their own way to and from Toronto. It is recommended to wait until you receive your official flight information before booking your flight to and from Toronto. If you book your Toronto flight before you have received your official flight information (one month prior), you are responsible for any changes or associated costs. Citilinc will likely provide a date of departure and return but no flight times until (at the earliest) 1 month before. If you book a flight to Toronto leaving a day on either side, you will be fine.

What are the planes like? How do we check-in to our flight?

All flights are regular, scheduled passenger flights by Boeing 737, 777 or 787 or airbus A 330. The normal configuration is either 2 4 2, 3 3 3, 3 4 3 in each row. It is an approximately 12-hour flight. You will be served two meals.

We will check in as individuals, not as a group. Seat assignment is not available prior to airport arrival as per the airline. You will be assigned your seats at check-in. If you require an aisle seat, arrive at the airport as early as possible.

You will not receive physical tickets for your flights. You will receive an e-ticket number and/or a confirmation number for checking in. You can also use your passport and flight number to check-in.

How much luggage can I bring?

You are allowed to check in 2 complimentary pieces of luggage (max. 50 pounds each, but 70 as total) per person plus carry-on (i.e. luggage and a purse/laptop/briefcase). The same allocation is not permitted on domestic flights – please check with the airline for luggage allowances.

WHILE IN CHINA

What do we do when we arrive in Beijing?

Upon arrival in Beijing, usually in the evening, you will be required to go through fingerprinting, immigration, customs and a health check and then follow the signage to baggage claim. After claiming your bags, you go through arrivals and meet your tour guide (tour guides will hold up a sign with your bus number). Please ensure you are wearing your name badge provided by Citslinc. Once your group is ready, your tour guide will take you to your bus.

What's our daily schedule?

Breakfast is available starting at 6am every day. Wake-up calls are available upon request to your tour guide but if you have a smartphone or alarm clock, please set your own. Typically, buses depart the hotel at 8am for the day. This is subject to change – your tour guide will notify you every day of the next day's departure time.

If you wish to not join the group for the day, inform your tour guide the day prior. You may be required to sign a release for the day, saying the tour group is not responsible if you are late returning to the hotel.

How are the hotels?

All hotels are 4- and 5- star to Western standards. The facilities include hair dryers and internet service (not always reliable). Unless otherwise notified, all rooms will be booked as non-smoking.

All rooms are pre-assigned prior to arrival and groups travelling together are not guaranteed to be booked together (beyond assigned roommates). King-sized beds accommodated based on availability.

Throughout the trip you will be changing hotels. The day prior to hotel change, your tour guide will notify you of any necessary direction.

How many people per bus? What are the tour guides' responsibilities?

You will be pre-assigned the same bus for the entire trip, based on passenger requests (passengers travelling together can indicate on their registration form who they would like to travel with). Each bus accommodates approximately 50 people, however, no more than 25 people will be generally assigned to each bus to ensure space for each passenger. There are NO bathrooms on the bus. However, your tour guide will be diligent in notifying you when and where bathrooms will be available.

You can leave personal items on the bus each day – your tour guide will notify you if you need to take your belongings. Do not leave valuables on the bus. Your bus number will always be clearly marked. Bottled water (and beer) is available for purchase on your bus.

You may be required to have your passport with you during tours for entrance to some locations. You are better to carry it with you during travel.

Your tour guide is your main point of contact in China. They will provide you with any changes to the schedule and any questions or concerns should be directed to your tour guide. Throughout the tour, when finishing up at an attraction, your tour guide is responsible for ensuring everyone has returned to the bus and will count the passengers as they get on the bus.

Tips for your tour guide are not included in the trip fee. It is **required** and \$39 USD for the entire trip. This will be collected in cash by your tour guide. Additional tips may be accepted but are not necessary.

What kind of food will we be eating?

Western breakfast buffets are served at the hotels and are included in the trip. This is the only Western-style meal you will get throughout the day (eat up!). Your bus eats together during lunch and dinner. All meals are pre-ordered upon arrival by your tour guide are served family-style at local Chinese restaurants. There is a variety of vegetable, meat and rice options at every meal and served with chopsticks (cutlery may be available). *Note: all meals are Chinese-style meals.

One glass of beer and tea are served with lunch and dinner, however soft drinks are available upon request.

Is the water drinkable?

Tap water in China is undrinkable. Most hotels will provide two bottles of complimentary water every day in your hotel room. Additional water is readily available and can be purchased on your bus (2 bottles for \$1 USD) or from vendors.

Should we do the optional tours available?

Optional tours will be available for an additional charge. They are exciting and unique experiences and we recommend taking part in all of them. During our visit we took advantage of all optional tours and they were all great! See the 'Optional Tour' documents for examples. Tours average \$40 USD and must be paid in USD cash to your tour guide.

Please note if you choose to not participate in the optional tours, you remain with the bus until the other passengers return. Ask your tour guide for alternative options or nearby sights during this time. During the optional tours in the evening, you can return to the hotel.

What are the shopping options?

As part of this reduced-price tour, we will be visiting factory stores. See the itinerary for details. Special pricing available for tour groups, however do not feel obligated to buy. Most factory stores accept US cash, Chinese currency and major credit cards (confirm with your tour guide). Most can also ship purchases home for you.

There are opportunities to visit local markets. If you purchase from a street vendor, be prepared to barter. Do not pay the initial asking price. Most street vendors only accept Chinese currency.

TIPS:

Toilets

Most bathrooms in China have two available toilet options in the stalls (for the women): one is the typical Western-style toilet, and the second is a 'squatting toilet'. The squatting toilet requires that you squat as there is no seat. Rarely, there may be no western toilet. There are often, but not always, grips on either side and sometimes a handlebar so you don't slip. There are generally only one or two western toilets than squatting toilets and they will be lined up. You should always carry toilet paper or tissues and hand sanitizer with you as they may not be available at the toilets.

Don't sleep too much on the plane to China

When you arrive in China, it will be evening. Avoid sleeping too much on the plane to ensure a good night's rest once you arrive.

Wine/alcohol

The wine in China is very poor quality. Citisinc recommends sticking to beer.

Passports to tour guides

For some attractions and hotel check-ins, you will give your passport to your tour guide. The hotels often keep it overnight. Take your passports with you every day.

Itinerary subject to change

The itinerary is jam-packed and depending on availability, timing and other factors, it is subject to change. Please keep in mind the tour guides will do their best to ensure all trip passengers get to experience much as possible.