



CAPITAL REGION SMART

China Trip 2015

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much luggage can I bring?

You are allowed 2 checked bags totaling 70 pounds, with a 50 pound limit on either bag.

2. Will my cell phone work in China?

You need to check with your cell phone service provider regarding international calling plans.

3. Do I need to change my dollars to Chinese Yuan?

American dollars, Visa and Mastercard are accepted in the factory stores, but you may want to change some money to Yuan for some of the places you will be visiting. We recommend only changing small amounts each day rather than one large sum all at once as it is difficult to exchange Yuan back to dollars. The hotels will change travelers' checks into Chinese Yuan for you as well. Street vendors will accept U.S. currency. We suggest you ask your tour guide what they recommend about changing U.S. dollars to Yuan.

4. What kind of food will we have?

Breakfast each morning is a buffet at the hotel with American breakfast items – eggs, bacon, toast, etc. Lunches and dinners are at Chinese restaurants and consist of meats (pork, chicken, beef), vegetables, and rice. Vegetarian is available; ask your guide.

5. Is it safe to drink the tap water?

No. Even at the hotels, it is not recommended not even to brush your teeth (showering with it is ok, just do not drink it). Bottled water is available at the hotel and on the tour bus – it is recommended you buy the water on the bus (2 bottles for \$1) as it is significantly cheaper than anywhere else.

6. Do we need electric voltage converters?

Some hotels have one 110-volt outlet in the room, but not all of them. You may borrow a converter from the hotel if you need one.

7. What kind of hotels are we staying in?

These are 4 or 5 star hotels that are as nice as or nicer than the Hiltons, Marriotts, etc. found in the U.S. We will not know the specific hotel names until much closer to our departure.

8. What airline are we flying, and can we request certain seats?

The airline is Air China. It is a 300-passenger commercial airplane. Seat assignments are made at the gate the day of departure. Any seating requests will be addressed at the time of check-in. If you want to sit next to someone please go to the ticket counter together.

9. When will the passports and visa applications be collected?

We will start that process in early August. We will contact you when we are ready to collect your passport, visa application, and two additional passport photos. It takes about 2 weeks to get the visas stamped and your passports returned.

10. Are we required to tip?

There is a one-time tip, of approximately \$39, collected during the tour. This covers your tour guide, bus driver, and hotel personnel. You are welcome to tip additionally if you are so inclined.

11. Are there excursions offered during the tour?

Yes. Several of them take place after dinner, but a few are during the day. Examples are the Peking Opera, a canal boat cruise, a Cirque de Soleil show, a high-speed train ride, a Hutong tour etc. Your tour guide will let you know what is being offered each day. There are additional charges for each excursion, paid in U.S. dollars collected by your tour guide, either on the day of the event or the day before. We highly recommend participating in all day time excursions; they allow you opportunities to visit with the local people. If you choose not to participate in the excursions there may be no other activities planned so you may be asked to wait on the bus for your group to return. See the OPTIONAL TOURS listed on a separate page for full details.

12. Is it acceptable to not participate in the tour on a given day?

Yes. If you do not wish to ride the bus, you must let your tour guide know. But please be aware that the bus will not return until after dinner each evening, so you would be on your own for the entire day.

13. What is the weather like at that time of year?

The average high temperature in Beijing during late October is in the mid-60s, with overnight lows in the mid-40s. In Shanghai, the highs are in upper 60s to low 70s. Beijing has a very low average rainfall at that time of year, but Shanghai gets about 3-4 inches per month.

14. How long is the flight from JFK to Beijing?

It is approximately 13 hours, non-stop.

15. What is the time difference between New York and China?

China is 13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. So if it is 10:00am in New York, it is 11:00pm in China.

16. Do the tour buses in China have restrooms?

No. The longest bus ride without a stop is 2 hours.

17. How many people will be on the tour?

Approximately 30 people will be departing from Albany for the tour. Once in China, you will be grouped with approximately 20 people on each tour bus. You will stay with this group for the entire trip. You most likely will not see the other passengers for the entire trip except occasionally at breakfast or dinner.

18. Are there any physical limitations? How much walking is required for the tour?

Some of the sites require a good deal of walking in order to see everything. For example, at the Great Wall, there are 40 steps leading to the top of the wall. From there, you can do as much or as little walking as you like. To see the Forbidden City, it is a 2.5-mile walk from one end to the other. If you do not wish to take that walk, you can remain at the bus and wait for the group to return.

19. What is the daily schedule like?

Usually, breakfast is served at 7:00am, and we board the buses at around 8:00am, your tour guide will let you know at the end of each day the time for your morning departure. We do not return to the hotel until after dinner each evening, between approximately 6:30 and 8:00pm.

20. Can three people share one hotel room?

Yes. The hotel will provide a rollaway bed at no additional charge. Please indicate on your registration form that there will be three people in the room.

21. Are any shots or vaccinations required?

No. However, we do suggest that you speak with your own doctor to find out if he/she has any recommendations.

22. Do I need to fill out the entire visa application form?

No. You need to fill out your first and last name, your date of birth, your home address, current occupation and your signature at the bottom.