



Pre-Departure Packet

SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS

As adequate preparation is the first step toward making the most of your experience, we've developed the following packet to jumpstart the process. As always, please feel free to contact us anytime. We look forward to seeing you soon in China!

PACKING CONSIDERATIONS

Clothing

- ❖ Please Google the name of each city you will visit followed by the terms “weather travel china guide” and click on the top result for a detailed month-by-month breakdown of each city's climate. Please consider this climate information when packing.
- ❖ It is recommended that you bring clothing that is easily layered, that can be matched with several different items, and that can be worn more than once before washing.
- ❖ Some locations that we visit during our travels will not be heated or air conditioned and will therefore be the same temperature indoors as outdoors. Please be conscious of this when packing.

Money

The simplest and safest method to obtain Chinese currency (RMB) while in China is to use an ATM card (also referred to as a debit card) from a major international bank. The best ATMs to use are those of Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), and China Construction Bank. Such ATMs are conveniently located throughout all Chinese cities.

Chinese ATM machines automatically convert funds from USD into RMB. In other words, the funds in the relevant US bank account should not be converted from USD to RMB in advance. The currency conversion will take place automatically upon withdrawal from the Chinese ATM.

If you haven't already, please notify your bank that you will use an ATM card during your program dates. Please do the same if you plan on also carrying a credit card (although many locations that we will visit do not accept foreign credit cards). For security purposes, bank and credit card companies may freeze the credit card and/or ATM card if used in China without first receiving notification.

Electronics

- ❖ **Laptop Computer:** If you do not want to bring a laptop computer, there will be Internet access at each of our hotel locations and at the CLI Center in Guilin. If an emergency situation is to arise and you require immediate Internet access, your CLI group leader will be traveling with a WiFi-equipped device at all times that can access the Web from any location.
- ❖ **Converter:** Electricity in China is 220V, while in the US it is only 110V. Most electronics chargers have built-in converters, though electric shavers and hair dryers often do not. Check the voltage range on all electronics before coming – many electronics range from 110-240V. American plugs will fit into most Chinese outlets, including those at each of our hotel locations.





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Miscellaneous Items (**starred items are difficult to find in China*)

- ❖ **Gifts from home for newfound friends***: You are sure to make new friends while in China, and in keeping with Chinese custom, you may want to offer a simple gift upon your departure home, such as a t-shirt, baseball cap, or other small token of appreciation.
- ❖ **Dental floss***: It can be difficult to find dental floss in China, but it is available in select supermarkets.
- ❖ **Prescription medicine***: If you take prescription drugs, be sure to bring enough to last the duration of your stay.
- ❖ **Feminine products***: Pads are available, but tampons are difficult to find.
- ❖ **Sunscreen***: Standard SPF 15 sunscreen is not easy to find in China. We will likely get plenty of sunshine while traveling in China.
- ❖ **All-terrain shoes**: At various points throughout the program, we will likely find ourselves on paths and trails that require all-terrain shoes. Please plan accordingly.
- ❖ **Small backpack for day-trips and hiking**: Each trip varies, but we may plan a few simple hiking excursions and will certainly venture out into the city on a day-to-day basis; be sure to plan accordingly.
- ❖ **VPN to access the entire Internet**: See “The Great Firewall” section below in “What to Expect.”
- ❖ **International phone card**: Although international phone cards can be purchased throughout China, it’s most convenient and inexpensive to use Skype (www.skype.com). We recommend you set up an account now if you have not already done so. Skype-to-Skype calls are free, while Skype calls to land lines cost about two cents (USD) per minute. Chinese cell phones can accept international calls, so it is also convenient to have friends and family call you (there is a surcharge for accepting international phone calls).

Note: CLI will provide you with a cell phone, free of charge, for communication with your group leaders and classmates throughout the program. During program orientation, we will collect a 100 RMB deposit from you for the cell phone. When you return the cell phone and charger to CLI at the end of the program, your 100 RMB deposit will be returned to you in full.
- ❖ **Pocket Mandarin Phrasebook**: CLI recommends purchasing a pocket Mandarin phrasebook or, if you have a smart phone, downloading a Chinese dictionary app prior to arrival. Lonely Planet’s Mandarin Phrasebook (www.goo.gl/RQ0Ia) and the app Pleco are great options.
- ❖ **Leave empty space in your bag**: You will likely return to your native country with more than you brought to China. Anticipate this and pack light.



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SKILLS TO WORK ON BEFORE ARRIVAL

- ❖ **Chopstick skills:** Very few restaurants in China have forks, since the Chinese traditionally use chopsticks for eating. Only Western-style restaurants will have forks. If you have trouble eating with chopsticks, you can always ask for a spoon (sháozi).
- ❖ **Open-mindedness:** You will encounter differences in culture, food, social interaction, and surroundings while in China, so it's very important to keep a positive and understanding mindset as you travel. When in Rome, do as the Romans do (rùxiāngsuísú)!
- ❖ **Being away from home:** For some, it may be your first time in a foreign, non-English speaking country. Think of your trip to China as a one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience the world, and take full advantage of all of the new places and people you'll encounter. Your CLI group leader will always be on hand to assist you no matter what the circumstance.
- ❖ **Mandarin Chinese:** Being able to speak the local language is a tremendous advantage when traveling in China. There are countless resources in the USA for quickly learning the Mandarin language, starting right at your school's foreign language department. Explore the wealth of online learning materials and go the extra mile when studying this critical language.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ **Friendly, excited people:** The Chinese are very enthusiastic to interact with strangers from abroad, and you will find that they are eager to learn about American culture. Locals are generally excited to help you with your Chinese, and it is common for students to sit in a restaurant or store for hours learning with new Chinese friends.
- ❖ **Curiosity towards foreigners:** Foreigners are a somewhat common site in major cities, but for many people in smaller cities, and especially in the countryside, you may be the first foreigner they have ever interacted with. Expect occasional staring and calls of "Hello!" The stares and greetings from strangers are innocent and not done in malice; people are truly curious, and once they discover you speak Chinese, you will have a new best friend.
- ❖ **Haggling/special foreigner prices:** Since parts of China heavily cater to tourism and have countless visitors each year, vendors and cab drivers sometimes try to take advantage of foreigners by overcharging them for items and services. However, once they hear that you speak even the most basic Chinese, they will be much more willing to negotiate with you and will accordingly lower their prices. Almost all goods and services can be bargained for. In most bustling markets, expect to pay 25% to 30% less than the asking price for the majority of items, and in more touristy areas, the price could drop well over half.
- ❖ **Incredible language environment:** Wherever you go in China, you will find yourself in an amazing language environment. Chinese is even used as the medium of communication between many foreigners. We welcome you to China!



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- ❖ **A safe environment:** Threats to personal safety are rare in China, and you need not feel afraid or uncomfortable while exploring the country with CLI. Fighting is a very rare occurrence, and violence is not a regular part of Chinese life. That being said, there are measures that you should take to make sure that you don't have any unnecessary experiences while traveling in China. First of all, make sure that you *keep a close eye on your belongings*. There are thieves in major Chinese cities that aim to steal wallets and cameras when owners aren't paying attention. They are almost always not violent and quickly give up once caught. Second, *travel in pairs or groups*. As a strict policy, we require that students do not travel alone to guarantee safety and prevent the likelihood of getting lost. It is always important to be aware of your surroundings, no matter where in the world you may be!

Note: One of the WORST things you can do in China is to get in a fight. If you find yourself in a tense situation, just walk away or conclude any argument diplomatically. Chinese people will not throw the first punch, but if they see one of their countrymen fighting with a foreigner, they will join in and you will quickly find yourself outnumbered.

- ❖ **Delicious food:** Though it's likely not the Chinese food you are used to from Chinese restaurants in the US, most will agree that Chinese cuisine is truly excellent. From spicy to salty, sweet to sour, the Chinese know how to cook up some memorable meals! Please be sure to note any food allergies or dietary restrictions when you complete CLI's health form.
- ❖ **The Great Firewall:** In an effort to "harmonize" the Internet and prevent anti-government activity, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) blocks access to numerous Web sites. Facebook, YouTube, Blogspot, Twitter, and other social networking/blogging sites are among those that you cannot access without a VPN. Additionally, major social and political advocacy sites, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, are blocked.

Note: Many foreigners and locals use a VPN to navigate around the firewall. Some, such as Tor Project (www.torproject.org), can be downloaded for free, but these are not as reliable as paid networks. Astrill (www.astrill.com) offers an excellent paid VPN service that secures your privacy and provides you with (relatively) uninterrupted Internet access.

- ❖ **Firecrackers and fireworks:** Events in China are often punctuated by the sparkle, boom and pop of firecrackers and fireworks. Almost all major Chinese festivals are marked by the ritual of lighting firecrackers. The loud sound is used to ward off evil spirits and thus bless important events with a fresh start.
- ❖ **Qigong, kung fu, and yoga:** Some of the most entertaining 'performances' in China are locals exercising with the sunrise each day and old ladies with boom boxes practicing their solo dance moves each night. The Chinese often exercise outside, and watching them do so is a cultural experience that few forget.



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HOW TO BEST UTILIZE CLI'S LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

As CLI is primarily a center for Chinese language and culture, you will have countless opportunities to master the Mandarin language. The follow suggestions will help you make the most of CLI's well-developed language environment:

1. **Make sure you know all 58 pinyin sounds:** Do not undervalue the importance of pinyin. Once you can make all of the sounds, you can say any word in Chinese. Concentrate on hearing and saying the slight variations between sounds.
2. **Speak (and think in) Chinese, regardless of your Chinese level:** Take the initiative to speak with those around you every day. During our bus rides and free time, review the Chinese you've learned by actually *thinking* in Chinese.
3. **Make the most of China:** Hospitality abounds in the PRC. Have the courage to ask local residents questions, to start a conversation with Chinese people we visit and to sit down with CLI's language instructors and team leader for a chat. When it comes to spoken Chinese, there is no better way to improve than to speak.
4. **Engage with the CLI community:** CLI puts a great deal of emphasis on creating a community that encourages Chinese language learning. During each of your site visits and activities while in China, you will be surrounded by CLI's dedicated and knowledgeable group of educators focused solely on ensuring that you have an incredible time abroad. Be sure to engage!

SUGGESTED BOOKS AND MOVIES (ALL QUOTATIONS FROM AMAZON.COM)

Suggested Books

- ❖ **River Town** (c. 2006) by Peter Hessler: In 1996, 26-year-old Peter Hessler arrived in Fuling, a town on China's Yangtze River, to begin a two-year Peace Corps stint as a teacher at the local college. Along with fellow teacher Adam Meier, the two are the first foreigners to be in this part of the Sichuan province for 50 years. Expecting a calm couple of years, Hessler at first does not realize the social, cultural, and personal implications of being thrust into such a radically different society. In *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*, Hessler tells of his experience with the citizens of Fuling, the political and historical climate, and the feel of the city itself."
- ❖ **Iron and Silk** (c. 1987) by Mark Salzman: Salzman captures post-cultural revolution China through his adventures as a young American English teacher in China and his shifu-tudi (master-student) relationship with China's foremost martial arts teacher.
- ❖ **Chinese Business Etiquette: A Guide to Protocol, Manners, and Culture in the People's Republic of China** (c. 1999) by Scott D. Seligman: East-West business is booming as thousands of people flock to China. The author, with 25 years of experience dealing with the Chinese, provides up-to-date advice on how to succeed, avoid gaffes, interpret behavior and make positive impressions



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- ❖ **China Shakes the World** (c. 2007) by James Kyngé: A former bureau chief of the *Financial Times* in Beijing, Kyngé demonstrates how China's thirst for jobs, raw materials, energy, and new markets—and its export of goods, workers, and investments—will dramatically reshape world trade and politics. China's appetite, though unpremeditated and inarticulate, has become a source of major change in the world. Not all is rosy, however, because China has serious problems with its environmental resources, severe pollution, and institutionalized corruption within the government, the legal system, the police force, and the media. The question Kyngé offers answers to is how the world will cope with China's extremes of both strength and weakness.
- ❖ **On China** (c. 2011) by Henry Kissinger: In this sweeping and insightful history, Henry Kissinger turns for the first time at book-length to a country he has known intimately for decades, and whose modern relations with the West he helped shape. Drawing on historical records as well as his conversations with Chinese leaders over the past forty years, Kissinger examines how China has approached diplomacy, strategy, and negotiation throughout its history, and reflects on the consequences for the global balance of power in the 21st century.
- ❖ **China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power** (c. 1995) by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn: Published in 1995, the husband-and-wife team of Kristof and WuDunn, whose reporting of the Tiananmen Square massacre for the *New York Times* earned them a Pulitzer prize, range from Beijing to the Tibetan highlands in their illuminating look at the changes and contradictions unfolding within Chinese society.
- ❖ **Business Leadership in China** (c. 2011) by Frank T. Gallo: This book is ideal for any international manager who wants to better understand how to blend the best practices of Western leadership with traditional Chinese wisdom. The content comes from a combination of English and Chinese literature, interviews with practicing executives in China as well as the author's own experience as a leader in China.

Suggested Movies

- ❖ **China: A Century of Revolution:** *China: A Century of Revolution* is a six-hour tour de force journey through the country's most tumultuous period. *China in Revolution* charts the pivotal years from the birth of the new republic to the establishment of the PRC, through foreign invasions, civil war and a bloody battle for power between Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek. Monumental in scope, *China: A Century of Revolution* is critical viewing for anyone interested in this increasingly powerful and globally influential country.
- ❖ **The Passion of Mao:** An excellent documentary. The director brings a tremendous amount of rich primary source material to the screen with an original and entertaining perspective, uncovering the relationship between Mao's political and policy achievements with Mao's colorful life story, marked by some of his comedically bizarre traits.



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- ❖ **Young & Restless in China:** A riveting and poignant documentary, *Young & Restless in China* tracks the lives of nine ambitious young Chinese professionals who are struggling to make it in this very tumultuous and rapidly changing society, as it prepares to host the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
- ❖ Any and all films by director **Zhang Yimou**, especially **To Live, Hero, House of Flying Daggers, The Story of Qiuju, The Curse of the Golden Flower** and **Raise the Red Lantern**. Zhang Yimou is well-known as the director of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony.

For more information about CLI and traveling in China, please visit the FAQ section of CLI's website (www.studycli.org/faq) or contact us anytime. We're excited to welcome you to China soon and look forward to an unforgettable educational experience! 中国欢迎你!

CLI CONTACT INFORMATION

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