

ELECTRICAL + LAPTOPS, E-MAIL, & INT'L CELL PHONES

1. ELECTRICAL

Hair Dryers and Shavers: We are staying at 5-star hotels throughout so you can expect to always find a hair dryer in your hotel bathroom. Many bathrooms will also have a plug that will operate **dual voltage shavers** and other **non-heat-producing items**, but you will still need a plug adapter in order to plug it into the socket – unless they have the new one which accepts worldwide plugs. If you bring your own hair dryer or curling iron, be sure to know if it is a dual voltage travel type or needs a converter as well as a plug adapter. Be careful so you don't burn up your unit and be without a replacement for the rest of the tour.

While onboard the 5-star ship, you will NOT find hair dryers in cabins because of the power needs and supply methods on a river ship cruising through the Three Gorges, etc., in China. They ask that you not use your own hair dryer in your cabin because of the electrical system and the problems this could cause them. They do provide some loaner hair dryers at the front desk that do work OK with their onboard electrical system or you could choose to treat yourself to a hair appointment at the onboard Beauty Salon where you will be also treated to a great head massage during the shampoo phase. I can vouch that the price and the experience are worth it! BUT you may also choose to bring along your own mini-hair dryer (preferably dual voltage travel type) to cover the 5- night cruise. BUT if you do bring one, they ask that you bring your own hair dryer to the onboard Beauty Salon to use - where the power needs are correctly met. You might also elect to coordinate with friends going on the same tour and share just one to minimize the packing needs.

Electrical Converters and plug adapters for use in China are available in the Magellan's travel catalogue and online - and they will also guide you to the right selection if you call them [800-962-4943]. They are very service oriented and ship fast. Their web site has an Electrical Connection Wizard that can walk you through the choices based on what you are bringing. You can also find these items at Walmart, most drugstores, & in the luggage section of most department stores. Try not to bring anything you can live without - keep it simple & enjoy the tour!

Basically, there are two main types of converters – one for non-heat producing appliances and one for those that are heat producing. There is also a great converter which I prefer that offers automatic high-low conversion and works for all items. It can be ordered from Magellan's with the 4 most common standard adapter plugs (one is good for China) : **Auto Combination Converter and Adaptor Plugs \$45.85 Item #EA247**. This takes the guesswork out of conversion and automatically switches itself based on the appliance being used and is good for electronic appliances up to 50 Watts & heating appliances up to 2000 Watts. NOTE: Many travel appliances now offer built-in dual-voltage capability which removes the need to bring a converter for those, but you will still need the adapter plug for use in China (PRC = Peoples Republic of China = Mainland China) – you plug your item into the adapter plug and then plug that into the wall socket.

** Your destination country is “**China, Peoples Republic of** “ which uses the 220-250 volt system.** We now need to determine if your appliance is "dual-voltage." Some appliances are dual-voltage; they are designed to operate on voltage between 100-250 volts without damage to the components. These appliances do not require transformers. Many North American-made appliances, however, are designed to operate only within the 100-125 volt range. These appliances will suffer damage if plugged into 220-250 volts.

To determine the voltage requirements, you'll need to look at the appliance. Power requirements are usually displayed on the appliance on the back where the cord is attached. Laptops, digital camera battery chargers, and other types of equipment that have a detachable cord often have a box in the middle of the cord or a large box at the plug end that displays the input power requirements. If the appliance lists 110, 115, 120 or 125 volts only, it is not dual-voltage. If the appliance lists **100-240** or 110-230 or something similar, it is dual voltage.

Magellan's has a great article online that explains everything: **Phone & Electrical Connections**. There is a Wizard for choosing the 2-prong non-grounded & 3-prong grounded adapter plugs. In China you will need :

Non-grounding Adaptor Plug E and/or **Grounding Adaptor Plug E** - be sure the adaptors you take accept polarized-blade appliance plugs (Magellan's plugs do) and fit down into the recessed sockets you'll find around the world (Magellan's plugs do this, too!). Here is a photo of the 2-prong plug adapter that you plug your 2-prong device into and then plug the adapter into the socket (the two prongs are angled towards each other):



South Pacific Style Adaptor Plug - \$2.85 Item #EA351E - E pattern slip-on adaptor plug

and here is a photo of the 3-prong (grounded) plug adapter should any of your items have a 3-pronged plug:



Grounding Adaptor Plug E - \$6.85 Item #EA23MEG - E pattern slip-on adaptor plug (grounding)

Your digital camera and/or camcorder may have or suggest its own re-charger, but it will need the adapter plug (and possibly a voltage converter if it is not already dual-voltage). You will be able to buy regular (non-rechargeable) AA and AAA batteries in China but having the time to find a store may not be easy. I always bring a supply of regular non-rechargeable batteries to have on hand in case my rechargeable ones run out of steam while out and about - which ALWAYS happens at the worst moment.

Photography: Finding in China the right media storage card for your digital camera and/or the right cassette tapes for your camcorder will be difficult if not impossible. No matter how much you think you will need, it will probably not be enough – **BRING A LOT MORE than you think you will need!** Many report returning home with 1000's of digital images taken.

Postcards are a favorite item for street vendors to hawk every time a tour bus stops – bargain to get more than one for \$1 – sometimes you can get as many as 5 for a \$1 – and **postcards are a great choice to bring home professional shots of places you are visiting**. If you can pre-print mailing labels with the home addresses of your friends and family, this will speed up the process for sending them back home. The hotel front desk can always help with the postage and mailing process.

2. LAPTOPS, E-MAIL & Int'l CELL PHONES:

For those who plan to bring a laptop (iPad, or etc.), most hotels now have Wi-Fi available somewhere in the hotel (often near their Business Centers) and/or DSL available for connection in your room. Check each hotel for what they offer, how to connect, and what the charges will be (changes every year) – and be sure to settle that bill well before we leave each hotel. All the hotels have a Business Center but they usually have only have a few computers to service the whole hotel - and they can be slow and expensive to use – but this may be all you need to occasionally check your E-mail. All the cruise ships advertise Internet access but connection is poor or impossible during much of the cruise due to the orographic features of the gorges. The best chances are when we are in port along the way (usually at night) and as we get closer to Chongqing and beyond the gorges.

You will NOT be able to access **Facebook** or **Twitter** (& other social media?) while in mainland China. You should have no problem receiving and sending E-mails or accessing “most” web sites, however.

As we travel, we recommend that you keep your laptop in your tote bag or carry-on bag as it can get damaged or stolen in your checked bag. There will be no connections available on the aircraft. The TSA web site has information re: **Lithium batteries** in your checked luggage (normally not permitted or require special handling).

Be careful when placing it on the X-ray machine belt at each airport. Place laptops in a bin by itself. Do not place any other items on top of it. This ensures the screener can see that the bin contains a laptop. Remember, the X-ray belts move both forward and backward. Try to avoid placing your laptop on the belt with other items that may dislodge it. Reclaim and secure your laptop as quickly as possible once through the screening process.

CELL PHONES / SMART PHONES - For those who want to carry their own cell phone for usage in China, you will need to consult with your own mobile phone company to see whether you can adapt yours or rent a unit that will work in China. It may be easier and less expensive to just use the payphones and a credit card or pre-paid phone card. PLEASE read the following article so you don't return home to find a HUGE bill from unexpected charges which can occur without you even being aware of them: <http://oregonstate.edu/helpdocs/taking-your-smartphone-or-mobile-device-out-country>. **For those bringing a laptop, SKYPE offers a great alternative to bringing a phone** (if both parties are both on SKYPE). For the rest of you, your guide can advise you on how to purchase a pre-paid phone card if you have a need to call home. I have used the lobby pay-phone with either a pre-paid phone card bought at the hotel or a credit card for the VERY rare times I have needed to call the US.

National Guides always have cell phones for emergencies, etc. We will have a laptop with us so I can check the ChinaVIPTour@aol.com E-mail each evening as able in case someone needs to get an emergency or serious message to you. Be sure to give your family and/or friends that E-mail address to use – but only for emergency or serious reasons, please. For real time-sensitive emergency contact, you will find in your tour package the San Francisco tel. # of our tour operator who can contact us in China as well as the tour operator IN China who can locate us anywhere (but subject to business days and hours), and the contact information for each hotel we use. Our guides will have their cell phones and can be reached anytime, anywhere by the tour operators in both the US and China. I will E-mail both the Hotel sheet and the tour contact information to you so you can forward it to your friends and family as desired.
