

## MEDICATIONS & HEALTH

**Prescriptions:** You should plan to carry with you in your **carry-on luggage** an adequate supply of any prescription drugs you need. I take 4 week's worth as a precaution against an unseen delay in returning. Officially, you are supposed to keep RX medications in their original containers (per the TSA and US Customs). I have never done this and have always carried mine in eight 7-day pill dispensers without any problem – prescription pills plus a bunch of vitamins added –(4) 1-week packs for morning & (4) 1-week packs for night].

BUT, it is possible that one could run into trouble with the authorities – although I suspect it would only be if you were carrying an unusual amount. No one seems to bother us older folks, but any younger folks could be at risk .... but then you are probably not taking many pills yet! Larry cautions that we should all follow the rules to avoid any problems. It is your choice and your possible risk. I also carry “generic” prescriptions written out by my doctor which could be filled in China ... just in case mine are ever confiscated or lost.

Please note that the new TSA carry-on limit of one 1 qt. clear zip-lock bag containing all liquid toiletries, each of which can be no more than 3 oz. in each container, **DOES NOT pertain to either Rx & up to 4 oz. of non-prescription but required liquid medications** – here is what the TSA says, specifically:

- Travelers may now carry as many travel-size toiletries (defined as containers of 3 oz. or less) that fit comfortably in one, quart-size, clear plastic zip-top bag through security checkpoints.
- At the checkpoint, travelers will be asked to remove the zip-top bag of **liquids** and place it in a bin or on the conveyor belt for X-ray.
- Also excepted are small amounts of required [*liquid*] medicines. This includes both prescription medicine that matches the passenger's name, and up to 4oz of non-prescription medicines. Low blood sugar treatments including glucose gel are allowed. Be sure all medicines are clearly labeled.

Here are a couple of pages on the TSA website pertaining to liquids and medical issues:

<http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm> and <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/index.shtm>.

I also found that **gel shoe inserts** are banned from carry-on but permitted in checked luggage by reading all the way to the bottom of the Prohibited Items page on the [www.TSA.gov](http://www.TSA.gov) site:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm#9>.

As stated earlier, I also recommend that you have your doctor write a prescription out for each prescription in “generic” terms in case you need to have it refilled while in China (in case you lose your supply, etc.). You might also discuss with your doctor the idea of bringing with you a limited prescription for a **general antibiotic** in case you catch a serious cold, etc., while traveling. You might also want to discuss with your doctor about getting a limited prescription for a **sleep aid for the flights over and back**. Some of my friends use “Ambien” and only take half a pill at a time. Or you can check out the new “Ambien CR” for their controlled-release version. I have noticed that there are now other new choices for over-the-counter and Rx types. I myself only use ONE Excedrin PM and get great results. There are other choices and your doctor will know best if or what to advise for you. I am told that a magic medicine for nausea while traveling is a prescription drug called “Compasine.”

**Non-Prescription Drugs:** It is also a good idea to think now about your favorite remedies for various ailments and bring with you a limited supply of these just in case. It is comforting to have available your favorite choices for sore throat lozenges, cold remedies (like Nyquil, etc.), aspirin or the like, cough syrup, upper and lower intestinal tract remedies (for both too active and not active enough), decongestants, allergy medications, etc., no matter where in the world you travel. Hopefully, you will need none of these, but you will appreciate having available something familiar should you catch a germ, find yourself constipated, or etc., etc., while traveling. Take along some moleskin or other items you can use should your feet need help. Be sure to place any bottled liquid medications in a zip lock bag and then into your checked bag on the bottom, if possible, since your carry-on is now very limited by the TSA for any liquids.

China has both Eastern and Western medicine and hospitals and they can provide decent care for emergencies. The national guide assigned to each bus is also great at suggesting local remedies if you have a problem. They

have a natural remedy that is a magic bullet that really works if you get an intestinal problem! There is a doctor on board the river ship, and hospitals and emergency rooms are never far away.

### **Colds and the Flu:**

Mid-March is still flu season in the US. All of you have purchased the required travel insurance. If you are not well on departure day, DO NOT GO (we hope but are not certain of going again in mid-March of 2014 and every year for the foreseeable future). You will need a doctor's statement attesting to this to get reimbursed by the insurance company. While disappointing to you (& your traveling companion who will also be covered for canceling with you), that is far preferable to traveling when you don't feel well and also spreading it to others who will come down with it while on the tour. We have had the unhappy experience in the past of a few folks coming down with a bad cold or flu on departure day and going anyway. The germs spread, especially on the long flight over, and their illness slowly crept through most of our group one year. Even one of the guides who said he never got sick got it and wondered just what it was that we brought over! It was a really bad flu that year here in the US. It was the same year that SARS had appeared and had killed 800 people world-wide while the flu here at home had killed 25,000 in the US! One of the last to get it got sick coming home, was a diabetic and a military vet, and was put into the hospital at home. They did extensive tests to eliminate anything from China and finally determined that all he had was the flu going around the US that year. He found out that his home town had suffered badly from the same thing while he was in China. So if you do come down with anything while on the tour, it is probably something one of us brought over or caught from someone else on the flight - and not some exotic Chinese bug. I always implore anyone who does not feel well at departure time to please cancel out and try again next year rather than share it around with the group. The CSA "Group Go!" insurance coverage will make you whole as long as you provide them with a letter from your doctor.

**Air Quality and Masks:** China is still suffering from pollution in the big cities as they continue to try to wean themselves off coal following the successful building of the Three Gorges Dam. You will see lots of tree planting going on in some areas of the big cities as one method to try to alleviate this. Pollution can be worse when there is no wind or if it is moist or humid outside (but not raining). If you are very sensitive to this, you may want to consider a mask to filter some of it out. Most masks will NOT prevent viral germs from getting through - medical personnel have to go for personal fittings for that kind to REALLY work. However, Magellan's sells both a mask that helps against pollution and one that helps to protect against viruses. Larry has never worn one over there and I wore one once when I was coming down with a short-lived bug. I do bring some with me in case I catch a germ and want to protect others. A nurse friend has suggested the use of something like Vaseline or Neosporin to coat the insides of your nostrils to prevent air-borne germs from invading. I have no idea if this is a worthy suggestion but I do follow it.

**Hands:** Our hands are our worst enemy since they bring us most of the germs we catch. Washing your hands frequently is just plain smart (as long as you don't make like Howard Hughes) - and having and USING a hand sanitizer is a great back-up. We forget all the places that can be contaminated: backs of chairs we pull out, salt & pepper shakers (rare to find in China), door knobs, elevator buttons, TV remotes, telephones and hotel room control consoles (you may have those in some of your hotel rooms - more on that later). I bring a larger bottle of hand sanitizer in a zip-lock bag in my checked bag and then carry a refillable small version in my tote bag or pocket - and use it OFTEN! But PLEASE don't forget to put the little bottle you carry in your pocket into the clear zip-lock bag BEFORE going through security at each of the airports. They WILL confiscate it if you don't - and will not allow you to hold up the line to place it in that clear bag at that last minute.

If you do catch a bug (always possible when one travels anywhere in the world or just to the store) and you cannot join the group on one of the days, please **make sure that someone tells your National Guide on your bus** so they won't continue waiting for you to show up before departing. Your National guide feels very responsible for your daily well-being and whereabouts. If you need help, please let someone know so help can be gotten for you. If you have any special medical needs, conditions or aids, please let us know so we can assist you as much as we are able. I encourage all of you to explore the [www.TSA.gov](http://www.TSA.gov) web site.