

TRAVEL INFORMATION for CHINA 2017

Enclosed in this **FED EX** or etc. package you will find a **labeled folder containing:**

***Your passport(s)** (for most of you – unless you did your own visas or already have yours back through special arrangements). Make sure your **passport is signed**. Add in **PENCIL** your emergency contact information.

NOTE: - since our guides will be collecting & handing passports often, I've added your passport name on a label to the front cover if none is there already. It really helps them to spot each name without having to open each passport when handed back – I will bring labels to China for those whose passports I do not currently have.

***Air China Flight information** from Asia Holiday Travel - a copy of your **E-ticket** information is included in this package for the international flights on Air China (**except for those few doing their own**). All flights use these **E-tickets** now and are stored only in the airline computers – the copy is **ONLY** for your records (which means there is no risk if lost). **Your passport is all you need to check in for the flights - plus your flight # & departure date for the In'tl flights**. On that printout you may also spot some or all of the domestic flights. Our guides will collect our passports at the airports and obtain our boarding passes for us – our checked bags will already be collected and checked in for us as well. They will also take care of any changes in flights or times that could occur (very rare, though). When they hand out the boarding passes and return your passports, you may find you are not seated next to your traveling partner since these are run out through their computer in a somewhat random order. This is when some Yankee trading can occur – or you can look at it as an opportunity to get to know your fellow travelers better!

The following enclosures are in **each package** for your reference (couples share just one) and include the following:

(Note: **most use two-sided sheets** - don't forget to turn each over)

1. **This cover letter** (2 sheets double-sided)
2. **Printout of flight info** with **Security tips on reverse** along with a stapled **copy of your E-ticket** showing most flights
3. **Travel tips from Asia Holiday Travel** (2 sided) – you will enjoy some of the phraseology in “Chinglish”
4. **Hotel sheet** (single-sided) – folks doing their own international flights should show this **HOTEL sheet** to their taxi driver if using one (**not needed by those who have ordered private car pick-up at the airport**)
5. **Itinerary** – (2 sided) in color as shown on the web site – basic description of each day
6. **Map of China** (shows the routing for the 17-Day Tour with Yangtze River cruise + **Weather Chart** on reverse side (*temps are usually warmer than the averages described since we travel in the second half of March*))
7. **Calendar** (single sided)
8. **Money Matters**
9. **Tipping Chart** (2 sided) with a suggestion for pre-loading tip envelopes on the reverse side
10. **SUMMATION Guide for TIPPING + USD Bills Guide** for ordering from your bank (**PER PERSON on one side / PER COUPLE or TWOSOME traveling together on reverse**)
11. **A sheet of labels for TIP envelopes** – marked to guide you and make it easier – ready to stick on envelopes.
12. **Weather & Clothing**
13. **Luggage & Packing Tips**
14. **Electrical, Laptops, E-mail, & Int'l Cell Phone Usage**
15. **Medications & Health**
16. **Food & Drink**
17. **POTTY Protocol, BUS Bits, HOTEL Habits, Misc. Tips, & CALL HOME guide**
18. **“Know Before You Go” Checklist + sample China Entry & Departure Cards**
19. **TSA & US Customs information + US Customs Declaration Form Instructions & Sample**
20. **Free Day in Shanghai – more Touring or Shopping PLUS Chinese Zodiac signs on reverse (find YOURS)**
21. **CHINESE** (Mandarin) translation of common words & phrases + numbers by hand sign or words on reverse – you can carry with you BUT you do **NOT** need to learn
23. Your **Invoice** showing **PAID** in FULL
24. A **manila envelope** into which you can store all your China receipts – *You should add another envelope to hold photocopies of your traveling companion's passport, credit cards, etc., and hide it in your carry-on bag.*
25. **Hotel Info sheet + Itinerary in plastic sheet cover** (*one per person*) - place on top of clothing inside main section of your one checked bag per person so you can be found easily (*for the VERY rare case a bag is ever misplaced*)

PLUS: (per person)

- 1 Red **Bag Tag**, 1 **Name Tag** in a **clear plastic sleeve** with 1 **blue lanyard** attached (can cut or knot to shorten if needed).
I have added your names to the name and bag tags per instructions from the operator.

Wearing your name tag in a plastic sleeve on a lanyard prevents losing it (as happens too often when pinned on your clothing & accidentally sent out with the laundry). Many folks will also use the plastic sleeve to hold the hotel room card as well.

NOTE: Our tour is actually arranged for us each year through [Asia Holiday Travel](#), owned and operated by Mr. [K.C. Ma](#) (he will join us in Guilin - you will truly enjoy him). We met in 2001 when on one of his tours and have been in partnership with him for this annual tour ever since - and share a strong friendship as well. The Itinerary sheet and some of the other enclosures are actually produced by his staff on our behalf, some of which I have added to or changed a wee bit (hence some of the non-standard wording most of which I have chosen to keep as Chinese/English "Chinglish" flavor).

NAME TAGS, BAGGAGE TAGS, and BUSES:

Asia Holiday Travel provides each of you **one name tag** and **one baggage tag** (for your one checked bag over to and throughout China. Please add an **ID tag** of your own for BOTH your one carry-on and your one checked bag as a back-up. The Asia Holiday Travel **BAG TAG** will show your last name followed by your first name as shown on your passport. The NAME TAG shows your preferred first name or nickname (per your reservation form) in **BOLD** followed by your last name in smaller size.

*****NOTES for those using their own airlines to/from China --- do NOT add the red tour bag tag until after arriving at the hotel in Beijing. You need to start wearing your name tag for your 1st breakfast at the hotel. *****

Asia Holiday Travel asks that you **please wear your "Asia Holiday Travel" name badge (on the lanyard) beginning with check-in at the San Francisco Airport and throughout the tour** for purposes of group recognition & identification by their representatives and tour guides. I add your names to their name badges to aid us all in getting to know one another. We have also provided lanyards with clear sleeves for your name badges which we find easier to handle than remembering to pin and unpin the name badge each day (and results in fewer getting lost with no replacement possible). It is also handy for placing other items inside, behind the badge (such as your hotel room "keycard" and/or a credit card wrapped in a piece of paper or foil).

Re: baggage tags: I have added your last name first, followed by your first name as it appears in your passport in order to match the manifest the guides must use for check-in at the airports. You should also add you own bag tag as a back-up. The "Asia Holiday Travel" tag itself tells folks in China to contact **AHT** if a bag is ever found wandering on its own (EXTEMELY rare). Then it can be sent to the right group at the right place to catch up with its owner.

I have provided each person a clear plastic page holder which already has inside an extra copy of the hotel information sheet (with dates) and a B & W copy of the itinerary. Please add to that a photocopy of your ID (driver's license and/or passport) on top and then place this sheet on top in your checked bag if you want to improve your chances of getting your bag quickly should the tag come off. Add something special to the handle - like a unique ribbon, etc. - to distinguish your bag from the rest of the bags. **BE SURE you are getting YOUR bag from the baggage claim area at each airport**. MANY bags now look alike as do many special ribbons, tags, or bands used to make them stand out. SO far only 1 bag has ever gone missing over all these years of our tour but showed up soon thereafter. Only once have two people gotten one another's bag in error.

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Most of our tour group (minus a few who have made their own air travel arrangements) will be traveling to/from China on **Air China**, a code-sharing partner with United Airlines' Star Alliance (not to be confused with China Air, Taiwan's airline). You are welcome to check for yourself, but the information for the past several years is that no airline will now count any group air travel towards a rewards program such as United's Mileage Plus due to its VERY low airfare. You can't apply these miles for an upgrade nor can you count these miles towards your program.

The enclosed flight information sheet describes your flight times and flight numbers.

Air China is located in the International Terminal of San Francisco Airport – Aisle 3 (just past **United Airlines**). Their **group check-in desk** will open between 11 AM and 11:30 AM. You cannot proceed through security to the gate until at least 11:30 AM. **Asia Holiday staff will be there to assist you with the check-in process and Air China will be in charge of you in flight.**

If you were unable to get a seat assignment to your liking in advance, check in early and ask the Asia Holiday Travel rep (who will probably be "**Yong**" - the son of KC Ma and a great help to me all year) to help you if possible to get it changed. Some seats are not available in advance for booking, and cancellations and no-shows also produce possible new choices.

*****A word to the wise – jet lag is made much worse by the intake of alcohol (*don't ask us how we know this*), so minimize this as able and keep hydrated with LOTS of water. It is also VERY important to flex your feet and legs often and to get up and move about as often as practicable. Be aware that when one person reclines his/her seat, it impacts on the person behind considerably and can make the use of the tray table difficult and the ability for the person behind to be able to get up and get out to use the restroom, etc. Cooperation is encouraged by all. We will**

be together, so follow that old Golden Rule for all our sakes. Be thoughtful of one another. Also, bring reading material and/or an iPad or etc., in case you don't like the onboard entertainment offered. English language audio will also be available as a choice. Wi-Fi is not permitted on any China aircraft and Economy does not have power ports for recharging your electronics – be aware.

You will be flying 12 hours nonstop from San Francisco to Beijing to land and disembark there. Just follow the crowd as you disembark. It will head towards immigration control where you will step up from behind a brass line in the floor ONE AT A TIME as they nod to you to come forward. There they will examine your passport and visa and take a digital photo of you (standard in most countries now).

Once you have passed through immigration control, you will proceed directly to baggage claim and grab a **free baggage cart** – push down on the handle to release the brake. Put all your bags on the cart (will usually hold everything for 2 people), proceed on out the secure area (you will pass by China Customs but no one has ever been pulled aside). When you emerge, look for Larry and me and our 2 National guides holding the Asia Holiday Travel flag. Once we have gathered each bus group together, we will proceed on out and leave our checked bags to be transported separately to the hotel while we load our carry-on into the belly of our buses and ride to the hotel. The ride will take about one hour depending on traffic and weather. Our National & City Guides will introduce themselves and give a little orientation and hand out the hotel room cards – and collect your passports to be copied overnight and returned to you the next day.

You will go to your hotel rooms (**the elevator requires using your room card key to operate going UP**) and await the arrival of your checked luggage (*tips for ALL luggage handling have already been paid by us for the WHOLE tour*). Since you will be experiencing not only jet lag but also a significant change in time zones, you may well awaken very early. The breakfast buffet is on the main floor past the lobby and usually opens around 6:30 AM local time. Wear your name tag for admittance.

Some notes on each segment of the tour:

- **BEIJING** – Sights here will include Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Summer Palace, the Great Wall, Asia's largest Aviation Museum, and the Bird's Nest, among our stops with a Peking Dinner on the last night. The hotel is great and you can cross the small side street to a huge mall full of shops and eateries (most on the 3rd floor) – and a large grocery and drugstore are located below ground.
- **Flight to Wuhan; then Bus ride to the Cruise ship in Yichang** – After lunch by the airport, we will travel about 4 to 5 hours (our only long bus ride) on a fairly new expressway through lovely countryside making one pit stop enroute to Yichang – so take care of food choices and volume of liquids at lunchtime! Dinner will be onboard the cruise ship after our arrival at the river port city of Yichang.
- **CRUISE SHIP** – We will be assigned 4 adjacent round dining room tables (each seat 10) for our two buses with open seating for each meal. All meals on this newest & largest ship will be via their gorgeous buffet except for the Farewell Banquet which will be served at the tables.
- **THREE GORGES DAM Visitor's Center** – while security prevents touring inside the dam, the visitor's center is excellent in showing the whole story.
- **SHENNONG STREAM** (or **LESSOR THREE GORGES**) – this is the day that you need to have local Chinese money ready for tipping the "Trackers" if the river flow permits the Shennong Stream choice. A medium ship will take us from our cruise ship for about 45 min. to the dock where we will board the peapod boats. Each bus group will also have a local guide for the whole experience. You will love this!
- **FENGDU** (City of Ghosts) or **WANZHOU** (aka WANXIAN) – regardless of choice (based on river flow), we normally get to visit a **local school** and visit with **kindergartners**, tour a relocation home of someone moved because of the rising waters from the new dam, and tour a local open-air food market. It is not required but OK to bring small gifts for the children (stickers, etc. - they do not eat candy).
- **CHONGQING** – We will visit the Gen. "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell home that was also his WW II HQ, and a Flying Tigers museum across the street. **NOTE:** Chongqing is famous for BANYAN TREE LEAVES on which you will find fine paintings & etchings - incredible artwork - these often cost around \$30 USD (*but bargain*) as they make great gifts for framing upon return home (flat & weigh nothing).
- **CHENGDU** – We take a 2-hour hi-speed rail trip NW in the afternoon and had straight to visit the main Giant Panda Breeding Center (many babies). Our incredible hotel has a great buffet on the lower level as well as menu options for our dinner on our own.
- **GUILIN** is the Garden spot and the most painted area of all China – unusual topography – home of a major WW II Flying Tigers airfield & the site of the new 16,000 sq. ft. Flying Tigers Museum & Park on which we have been personally collaborating.

You will also tour caverns and a tea plantation upon arrival from Chengdu. The hotel is located across from one of 4 connected lakes, this one featuring 2 lighted pagodas (which you can access through an underwater tunnel) and adjacent to a strolling street of shops and vendors (around to your left when you emerge from the hotel).

March 25th will be an all day affair at the Park & Museum with a Dedication Ceremony for BUZZ BUGGY, the C-47 that Larry and crew flew there from near Sydney, AU, crossing the Himalayas (the "Hump"). This day promises to be VERY special with high-end VIPs and a special performance presented. You will have ample time to explore the park, museum and Command Cave. That evening will be a special VIP Banquet at our hotel. After the banquet, we will be invited to go outside to view the 10 min. nightly waterfall show across the front of the hotel.

The next morning before we fly to Xi'an, we will cruise the Li River for a very pastoral experience.

- **XI'AN** – home of the 8000 Clay Soldiers, Tang Dynasty show, dumpling dinner & the only ancient city wall still intact, it is also famous for lacquer furniture and crafts as well as jade.
- **SHANGHAI** – This is a coastal city which is often overcast and can often experience light drizzle. Don't forget to have a little umbrella and/or a wrap in your tote bag with you on the bus. We will tour Old Town Shanghai and the YuYuan Gardens, and see a terrific acrobatic show in the evening. Once in Shanghai, you can shop till you drop – within reason.
- **SUZHOU** is known both as the "Venice of China" and the "Silk Capital of the World" and is also famous for silk embroidery, especially its two-sided examples which are different on each side. Men are the most famous for this art! Here you will also take a lovely ride on a small boat on the ancient Grand Canal and then stroll through the Masters of the Nets Gardens before visiting the No. 1 Silk Factory to learn the whole art from start to finish.

The area around our hotel in Shanghai is a 24/7 strolling area full of shops and restaurants including several USA fast-food types. You can also find a ton of places to eat by going to the main floor of the hotel and turning left instead of going out the main doors – after you pass the escalator on your right (where the **ATM** machine is), you will find elevators on your left. Take one to the 5th floor and turn left when you emerge [there is a neat Beni-hana style restaurant straight ahead, by the way). Follow the hallways which meander to find many restaurants and stores indoors. You can also find an escalator near the end. Take it down and you will find a Wal-Mart type store on the 3rd level and a fabulous huge grocery store on the 2nd level. Take the last leg of the escalator down to the ground level (it becomes a ramp on this leg) and follow around till you emerge to the street – the hotel is right across the little street. Re-enter there and you will see that you are right by the 1st elevators you took up - but walk on back towards the lobby and the elevators to your rooms. Or stay outside to explore the stores and restaurants spread out (some are multi-story buildings) in front of the hotel.

Larry will be flying to China several days ahead of you - and I will follow 1 or 2 days ahead of you - in order to meet with staff and make final preparations for the tour. I will remain in E-mail contact. Asia Holiday Travel will also be staffed to assist you should something come up after I have left for China. It is VERY IMPORTANT to contact them if you find you must cancel at the last minute. Otherwise their agent will be scouring the airport looking for you! Call them at (800) 944-6630.

We plan to greet you at the Beijing Capital Airport upon your arrival in Beijing and have bottled water waiting for you on the buses. Asia Holiday Travel has arranged to always have cases of bottled water aboard the buses as a courtesy to you and to promote good health – two free bottles per person per day (usually \$1 per additional bottle after that). Your hotel will provide 2 small free bottles per day. If you also open the Evian or etc., you will be charged – same for contents of the mini-bar.

A serious reminder:

****NEVER, NEVER, NEVER pack your passport in your checked bag OR carry-on bag !!!** The safest place to carry your passport is in a waist or neck travel pouch that can be worn under (or on top of) your outer clothing - along with your credit cards and cash. You can find these in any travel department, drug store, Walmart, or via Magellan's catalogue. Do not carry your passport when out for the day touring and/or shopping. It is best to store these in your hotel room safe or in the safety deposit box available on board the cruise ship **except for days we fly or take the hi-speed bullet train. Your passport MUST be on your person and ready for use for the flights to/from China & on each of the days we fly to the next city. Have it at the ready BEFORE leaving the hotel and boarding the bus for each flight.**

I am sure there are still things I have forgotten, but I suspect I have already killed you with enough over-kill! Larry and I look forward to seeing you all in China. The only hard part about the whole tour is getting there because of the distance and the time change! After that, it is all wonderful! We are confident you will love the experience and will make memories for a lifetime. We look forward to sharing this great adventure with you.

Xie Xie and Zai jian ! (Chinese Pinyin for "Thank you" and "Goodbye")

See you in China -- "**China Nina**" (aka "9er") and **Capt. Larry "Sez"**

