

POTTY PROTOCOL / BASIC BUS BITS/BEHAVIOR / HOTEL PECULIARITIES/DEPARTURES / Misc. TOUR TIPS & CALLING HOME

1. POTTY PROTOCOL

The buses in China do not have onboard bathrooms. If anyone experiences an emergency, please advise the National Guide or Local Guide on your bus ASAP so they can help make a detour. We are all humans and no one will complain. We are normally not on a bus for more than an hour at a time at the most. You could encounter an all Eastern toilet at some of the tourist locations but most if not all have changed that by now.

Tissue is often not available in public restrooms – but if it is, you will probably find it in a dispenser on the restroom wall and **must be obtained before entering a stall** as it will probably NOT be available in the stall. **It is a good idea to always have your own supply with you just in case.** You can buy mini-rolls for travel in most drugstores or grab some from your hotel room and place in a zip-lock bag in your pocket or purse – easy to re-supply throughout the tour. I carry a very small packet with tissue and seat liners to take to the restroom with me.

Also, you will normally see a **waste basket** next to all commodes for disposal of bathroom tissue. **Please use the basket whenever possible** instead of flushing the tissue down as their sewer system is often not up to our standards yet and it can overflow and embarrass you if we don't cooperate.

Most (not all) public restrooms now have two sets of bathroom stalls – Western style is to one direction and Eastern style (the infamous “squat” version) is to the other side. If you don't like what you see, check around the restroom for an alternate style. **At the very least, there may be ONE Wheelchair-Accessible/Handicapped stall which WILL be Western style but also can get a long line for it.**

Magellans does sell disposable devices for women that claim to make it possible for female non-squatters (us older gals?) to use the Eastern toilets if we should ever encounter that as our only choice or not want to wait in the long line for the Western version. I have never tried this nor have I ever had to use an Eastern toilet (so far ...) in all the years we have been going to China – that should give you gals great hope. Of course, using an Eastern toilet for non-liquids may present a huge challenge to **all** of us, so watch what you choose to eat before any long bus ride (only long one is 2 hours between Shanghai and Suzhou) and use the restroom before boarding the bus. For those who don't know, the Eastern toilet is a shallow toilet bowl embedded in a raised section of flooring with no grab bars. The Chinese are able to squat and have strong legs. I would need a forklift for retrieval if I tried to use one.

Larry uses a clever method (already mentioned before) for always having a supply of tissue. He carries in his pocket a small ziplock bag to hold an amount of tissue culled from the hotel room bathroom tissue roll. This is a simple solution and is easily replenished as needed.

When you're out and about on your own (especially on your “Free Day” in Beijing on the last full day you are in China), a handy tip for finding the best of the bathrooms is to look for a nice hotel and head on in like you are a guest there. You will find public restrooms on the main floor down a hall, or past the block of elevators, or towards the back past the lobby. Just act like you know what you are doing – I do that all the time just ask anyone who knows me. &;-)

2. BASIC BUS BITS and BEHAVIOR:

Your National Guide will follow our bus group throughout the whole tour and will have selected an English first name to make it easy on you. It is our experience that Asia Holiday hires only the best of the best for this position and it is very competitive. Our experience is that they work their hearts out for you to serve and please you. Many of you will find you will want to adopt yours and bring him/her home with you.

When your National Guide gives you the next morning's departure schedule (at the end of each evening), please make every effort to be on time - ON the bus and READY to go **by or before** that departure time - otherwise you may cause the bus not to be able to make its schedule. Be sure that you get the word to your National Guide if you will NOT be joining your group that day for any reason – otherwise the whole bus may be waiting for you in vain. **Try to rotate the seating each day** so that everyone has the opportunity to sit in front, in the middle and in the rear – to be fair to all. It is smart to keep whatever seat you take first thing each day for the rest of the day so you can leave things on the bus at your seat as needed when you are out touring.

Please take note that the Local or City Guide will be giving you information throughout the bus rides to and from each place. Therefore, the bus rides are not a great time for private chit chat since it will make it hard for others to hear what is being said if the guide is competing with you. The bus rides are usually not very long between points and rarely will reach two hours at the very most (most are one hour or less). None in China are equipped with restrooms. We are all human, so if you have an emergency, let someone know to see what can be done about it.

In summary: ****PLEASE be on time - or early - for bus departures! It holds up the whole group when you are late. Our sightseeing schedules are very full and delays really compromise the wonderful plans of the tour guides. The bus has a right to leave on time ... with or without you! Also, try to switch around where you sit each day and do not hog the front seats or the rear ones. Rotate as well as you can without any formal plan (too cumbersome) – unless the bus votes to work out its own plan. Let everyone have a chance at a good seat at some point and share the fun! **Try NOT to chat with one another while the guides are talking and giving information.** Most folks want to be able to hear all that is being said. One last thought - you will be amazed at the skill of the bus drivers – they are phenomenal!

2. HOTEL PECULIARITIES and HOTEL DEPARTURES

Your National Guide will hand out hotel room “keys” **on the bus** as we approach each new hotel for our first arrival there – no standing in line at the Reception Desk for check-in. You will be asked to surrender your passport overnight on your first arrival at the hotel in Beijing and perhaps at one or more other hotels and onboard the ship. Many countries in Europe hold onto your passport throughout your stay, but here they will make copies for the records and sometimes they are able to use that for some of the other hotels in hopes of not needing to do this again or too often. Every year it seems different!

We are always assigned “non-smoking floors” but smoking is still somewhat common (but lessening) in China so don’t be surprised to see an ashtray in your non-smoking room! If you do smell a smoking odor, call the front desk and ask for them to “spritz” the room (they have an excellent spray) and/or request a change of room if possible. You will not see them vacuum your room on a daily basis - vacuuming only occurs between check-out and check-in and not in-between - but they will take care of all the linens and clean the bathrooms. This is standard in all hotels and also on the cruise ship.

It is not unusual for there to be a doorbell outside your room for hotel rooms in China. Sometimes there is a center console between 2 beds that gives you control for turning on and off everything in the room. Your hotel plastic card “key” is often used to place in a holder inside the main door of your hotel room to allow the electricity to be on or off. When you leave to have breakfast at each hotel or leave to tour, removing your card will turn off all electricity automatically. We have discovered that placing a business card behind the plastic hotel room keycard in that slot - and then removing the hotel keycard will sometimes fool this system and allow lights, etc., to remain on – which may come in handy if at any time the hotel provides only one keycard per room with two occupants (this is happily a rare occurrence).

All rooms are checked for damaged, broken, or missing items (including items for sale in the room) before they allow our buses to depart after check-out from each hotel. Please be careful about availing yourselves of things that may appear to be free in the hotel rooms. Anything that is missing that is a charged-for item will be counted and a list will be presented to us for payment along with the room number(s) involved – and you will get embarrassed! If you decide you want to buy something that is in the room (*NOT recommended*), be sure to go to the hotel desk to settle your bill well before departure time. Get and KEEP a receipt as proof. Also if you break anything and settle that bill well before check-out, be sure to get and keep a receipt for that as well. Most hotels will have one small bottle of water per person for free waiting for you per day. If the bottle of water has a tag on it, it is NOT free and is probably an upscale brand for sale. The charge for broken or damaged items is quite high in our opinion, but the occupant of the room will be expected to pay the full amount before any of us can leave.

If you avail yourself of the Internet, either in-room or through the Business Center, please be sure to settle that bill well in advance of a departure (night before or early morning of the day we check out of each hotel). Wi-Fi is now more commonly offered without charge in the rooms, but this vary hotel to hotel and year to year. Beds in China are often notoriously hard even in many of the 5-star hotels although they have improved over the years. Some may be tough on some of you (& me) – Larry LOVES these, though. You may want to bring along a sleeping aid if this situation will cause you difficulty sleeping. I use the “1st Class Sleeper” (purchased from Magellan’s)

blown up a little bit to soften the situation. You can also ask for an extra blanket, comforter, duvet and/or pillow, etc., to use as padding underneath you. The cruise ship has offered extra duvets on request (subject to availability) to use underneath you since their beds are by far the HARDEST of all. I also recommend that you bring some ear plugs – not only to ward against a snoring roommate but also to insulate you should there be 24-hour construction going on near a hotel – not common but still possible as they continue to modernize rapidly.

If you have difficulty controlling the temperature or air flow in your room or can't figure out how to work the controls for that or anything else, call the hotel front desk and they can send someone up to help you. In some cases, a window can be opened if it is too warm, but outside noise and smells may make that less than wonderful. Sometimes, a portable fan can be provided. Our tour occurs when the weather is no longer very cold but not yet too warm, so we fall into a period when the weather outside is very temperate but the hotel rooms can be warmer than desired since the air conditioning system is usually not activated until April 15th country-wide at the earliest.

If you are given an unsatisfactory room, again call the front desk to see if you can be switched. This is not always possible – especially if the hotel is full. I will want to know of any major problems you encounter as they are rare, but I want to make sure these problems are passed along for correction. Your National Guide will be able to help you in many of these situations better than we can since they are fluent in Chinese

3. SOME TIPS FOR THE TOUR (how things will go) :

Your National Guide will collect your passports at each airport before departure (sometimes they will have kept them throughout a hotel stay until we are at the airport), check all of us in for the flight, then hand back your passport along with your boarding pass for each of the four domestic flights. I will have added name labels to the front of each of the passports I have handled so they can be identified more quickly during the handing-out process. The boarding passes for these short flights (1 ½ to 2 hours max) will be run off in a totally random manner normally – which means that you may not be assigned to a seat next to your traveling partner. If this causes you undue stress, see if you can switch seats once onboard. We have found most folks very accommodating if there is a serious problem being separated. Some of us enjoy the opportunity to get to know others on the tour better by having a different person seated next to us.

Quite often you will be asked to place your one "packed and ready to-be-checked" bag outside your hotel room the night before departure to the next city. The guide will collect and organize them late that evening for transport to the airport EARLY the next morning so they will already be checked in for your flight on your behalf - except for International Airports which require a bag/face match. The guides will still collect and transport to the airport all the checked bags and have them ready for you to check them in – usually only at Beijing and Shanghai Airports. This leaves you with only having to manage your carry-on bag and tote for the flights. **Don't forget to lay out the clothing, etc., you will be needing for the next morning – before you put your checked bag outside your room for pick-up.** **Plan ahead** re: needed toiletries vs. carry-on rules for liquids, etc. If you discover (quickly) an error in this, you can usually find one or more of our guides sorting the bags down in the lobby.

When you arrive at the other end of the flight, you will proceed to the baggage claim area to retrieve your bag. **FREE baggage carts** are available everywhere in China at the baggage claim areas and will accommodate all the bags for 2 people usually (both checked and carry-on bags). **You must push down on the handle bar to release the brakes.** Load the cart with your bag(s) and follow your National Guide to the outside curb area. Place your **checked bag** in the grouping indicated for your bus and then proceed to the new city touring bus with your carry-on. The bus driver will load your **carry-on bag** into the belly hold of the bus. You (with your tote containing personal items carried) will then board your bus to begin the tour of the new city. Having access to a jacket, umbrella, etc., via your tote or your carry-on bag could be handy if we encounter less than perfect weather. All checked bags are taken straight to the new hotel or ship & placed in your room /cabin to await your later arrival.

RE: your carry-on items:

Besides your small carry-on bag with your essentials, night clothes and one change of clothing, I suggest a tote bag (some use a smallish backpack or duffle bag) that can accommodate the following: your camera, something to read, a small umbrella, and a jacket or sweater to layer if we hit a cold snap – plus your other personal items. I also add in a pair of simple gloves, a scarf, and a hat or cap. You may never need those last items but they don't take up much space or add much weight and can be wonderful to have readily available if needed. They will do you no good if they are in your checked bag. If you put them in your carry-on bag on either arrival or departure

days, at least they will be somewhat accessible from the belly hold of the bus, but having them in your tote and with you on the bus is much better. We have had 2 instances of touring the Great Wall outside Beijing early in the morning when it was both cold and windy. All of the rest of our trips there have been quite comfortable, though.

The Itinerary and touring customs of China:

You will not be given a daily itinerary sheet nor be given exact times or sequences for each day. The wake-up, breakfast and departure times are announced to you by your National Guide the previous evening when riding the bus to the hotel (the ship's crew will place the next day's schedule in your cabin each evening while you are at dinner). Because traffic and other problems (river flow during the cruise, etc.) can affect things without warning, the touring schedule in China remains fairly flexible. They will always strive to do more than you expect but don't like to commit to exact start-stop times for each place visited so as not to lose face if the schedule must be altered slightly. Your visit to each city will always include places of historical interest as well as the obligatory visit to a factory or the like to see how some of the things for which China is famous are made – and these are always adjacent to a store which “surprisingly” sells those items. This system is what helps China keep their tours priced so low and all touring there requires this combination whether in a large or a very small grouping.

4. CALLING To/From HOME – Calling between China and the US:

If you are just calling using a regular phone, then you just need to dial: **001 + area code + phone number**. Note: **00** is for international call and **1** is for the US country code. For those bringing cellphones, be sure you have disabled everything that could cause those without you even being aware of it (for example, stop “Roaming” except if and when needed and arranged for best handling by your cell phone carrier BEFORE leaving on the tour). Be sure to have your carrier suggest the best plan for your needs if any. For those with a laptop, SKYPE is a great alternative (generally free between two parties both using SKYPE). Both ipadsn and iPhones have FACETIME which is also great.

Time Difference: Daylight Savings Time will begin for most areas in the US on March 10, 2019 at 2 AM local time. **Advise your friends and family back home** that they should **ADD (instead of subtract)** the appropriate hour(s) shown below to their local time zone to figure out what time it is for you in China.

1. **PDST** +15 hours = local time in China
China local time -15 hours = PDST

Calling from China to PDST - Easy way - reverse AM and PM and back up an additional 3 hours because China time is ahead of the time in the US. **Example:** 9 AM in China = 6 PM the day before on the West Coast.

NOTE: **MST** is the same as PDST for those living in **AZ**.

2. **MDST** +14 = local time in China
China local time -14 hours = MDST

Calling from China to MDST - Easy way - reverse AM and PM and back up an additional 2 hours because China time is ahead of the time in the US. **Example:** 9 AM in China = 7 PM the day before in MDST zone.

3. **CDST** +13 hours = local time in China
China local time -13 hours = CDST

Calling from China to CDST - Easy way - reverse AM and PM and back up an additional 1 hour because China time is ahead of the time in the US. **Example:** 9 AM in China = 8 PM the day before in CDST zone.

4. **EDST** +12 hours = local time in China
China local time -12 hours = EDST

Calling from China to EDST - Easy way - just reverse AM and PM because China time is ahead of the time in the US. **Example:** 9 AM in China = 9 PM the day before in EDST zone.