

OPTIONS for your FREE / Last Day in SHANGHAI

NON-SHOPPING OPTIONS for your free day/night in Beijing

For those who prefer to do **more touring of Shanghai** on your free day (last full day in China before you fly home) instead of shopping, there are plenty of choices. Your national and/or local guide can help you with this as well as the hotel personnel. The guides may put together several attractive packages. We have personally enjoyed our own touring of the Shanghai Museum (www.shanghaimuseum.net/en/). We also love to get a cab to the Nanjing Road area entrance for the **Bund Sightseeing Tunnel** ride that goes beneath the HuangPu River over to modern Pudong. There the **Pearl Tower** (www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shanghai/oriental_pearl.htm) is a fun spot to tour (have a lunch buffet in the rotating elevated restaurant and/or tour the Museum in its base which features a scaled modeling of old Shanghai). We have also visited the skyscrapers in Pudong for a fancy meal – love the (now 3rd tallest) **Jin Mao Hyatt Hotel** (take 1st elevator to 50th floor, then switch to 2nd elevator to the 54th floor) to get to the restaurant and access the cavernous hotel lounge (56th to 87th floor open view) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jin_Mao_Tower and www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shanghai/jinmao.htm)

Cabs are inexpensive and are easy to get in both directions - and your hotel card is your easy aid for a safe cab ride back – taxis are plentiful at all tourist spots.

SHOPPING IN GENERAL – 2017

This is the first time that we are ENDING in Shanghai instead of Beijing so we are unfamiliar with what shopping opportunities there will be. We will have to rely on the local guides for this.

TREASURES IN CHINA – China is known for exquisite workmanship and detail and are experts in creating many crafts. All tours to China must include the obligatory side trips to “factories” where you can learn how things are made – and these are always cleverly connected to an adjacent storeroom full of examples for sale – surprise! Our tour operator ensures that we only visit reliable places showcasing excellent quality at excellent prices. Bargaining is usually possible but not always (especially at official stores). BUT, please take care to watch the final agreed upon total BEFORE you sign your credit slip. One gal missed the extra zero in the RMB total and failed to re-check the currency conversion - and thought she was buying something for a converted US price of \$310 at a great bargain but was really paying \$3100 USD. And the credit card company was insisting that she was responsible since she signed the slip. It is easy to get confused with currency conversions and the slips will be written up in Chinese currency – so be careful and check that final price! Even though we request that no one linger and hold up departure of a busload of your companions, be sure of what you are paying before you sign. A follow-up research by our reps in Beijing determined that \$3100 was the accurate price for the high-end jade she bought. She was very lucky that her credit card company finally adjusted her cost while not penalizing the store.

You will find terrific bargains in China, though. Things to be looking for in general include **SILK** - fabrics, clothing, carpets and bedding – you will find these primarily in Shanghai & Beijing. For carpeting and bedding, know the sizes you need BEFORE you leave the US.

You will see fabulous **jade** (real jade is VERY cold to your skin and translucent when you shine a light through it), **lacquer**, **pearls** and **cloisonné** – and find small “**snuff**” bottles and the like with intricate paintings done **INSIDE** them in reverse. **Art** in general is marvelous in China. “**Paper-cutting**” is another special art you will find in some places. There will be craftsmen on board our cruise ship and you will have an opportunity to watch things being made in person and then be able to purchase them. Things are typically more expensive on the ship - until the next to last day – but they can mean more if they were made while you watched. And you might miss out on a specific choice if you wait till the end of the short cruise.

Check that any large items you find and purchase can be shipped home since carrying them through the tour and the 4 domestic flights (with their very restrictive luggage and carryon limits) will be difficult or even impossible – but be aware that Shipping and Duty costs to the US can be high.

COUNTERFEIT MONEY (theirs and ours), Empty CD, DVD, etc., packages, & other issues

Do be careful when shopping with street vendors. It is not uncommon for folks to try to pass off counterfeit or foreign paper change to you since they know we are not familiar with all their variations of paper money. I do carry a small device I bought in Beijing that can detect counterfeit. I have some extras and will share them as able.

When you try to pay with a US dollar bill where they are accepted (usually street vendors and flea markets), don't be surprised if they refuse it because of a tiny tear or too many wrinkles or a small ink mark on it. They have trouble having the bills accepted when they trade them in because of any flaws. I've never had any of those returned from the tip envelopes, but I still try not to bring any "flawed" US paper money so as not to create a problem for them or give them something that ends up as worthless to them.

I've heard of folks getting knock-off CDs & DVDs from street sellers only to open them at home and find nothing inside, movie shot with a personal handheld camcorder inside a movie theater, the wrong content, or something in Chinese. You cannot trust what you are getting from these street sellers that will come up to you all the time whispering "CD"... "DVD"... or "Rolex" – and some of the knock-off Rolex, etc., watches will run for maybe a month or more, so be careful. If you'd like a bamboo fan & decide to buy a boxful for a bargain price, you may find less inside the box than you were quoted, or some empty boxes, or a poorer quality inside – OPEN any box or any package before you leave the vendor or he or she runs off (*if there's no time, don't buy*).

A real bargain is to purchase **postcards** as a great way to bring home wonderful pictures of China. These are cheaper and often better than any photos you could take. You will be inundated with people trying to sell them at every stop of the bus. Don't forget to bargain to get as many as you can for \$1 – the result will vary with each seller. You can always get a lower price per unit if you buy more "pieces" (as they will encourage you to do).

Maps are another common item for sale – be sure your choice is in English! When we cruise the Li River in exotic Guilin, don't bother to get any of the **Snake Wine** they offer you to taste (and may charge for that) and then hope to sell you. Remember that taking alcohol on the flights is prohibited as an inflammable liquid in checked luggage and impossible as a carry-on and will most likely be confiscated.

Only 2 people from our tours have ever experienced **pickpockets**, but travel guides do warn you to be careful at all popular tourist locations - even while watching the **10 min. evening waterfall show** outside our **hotel in Guilin** (don't take ANYTHING other than a camera outside for that, if possible). We go earlier than most anyone else to the Great Wall in Beijing to avoid the crowds and crush of vendors, but be careful as they begin to trickle into the area. Several years ago, one gal almost lost her new pocket-sized digital camera to a fellow who pretended to be with another tour group and then swooped in to grab it and run. She was very alert and also knew to always have the strap wrapped well around her wrist. He broke her strap but failed to get away with the camera. The other incident was a loss of a cell phone from a tiny shoulder purse while watching the waterfall show outside the Guilin Hotel a few years ago. Be mindful of what's easy to grab or to pilfer from your pockets, etc. China still continues to be much safer than any other country we have visited but there is no place that is completely free of risk.

HOW TO BARGAIN ...

Bu Yao (Boo Yowl) means "**I don't want it**" – but if they are VERY pushy, yell a firm **Bu Yao** and then follow it with a polite **Xie Xie** (shyeh shyeh) which means "**Thank You!**" – it works !

But ... **Bu Yao** ... followed by **Tai gui le** (tie gway leh) means "**I don't want it – it's too expensive.**") means you **DO** want it, but you want to pay less – and then the bargaining will begin! Be sure to only say all this when you really want to bargain as they are relentless then to try to make a deal.

Use your money converter or calculator (or theirs) to punch in what you want to pay in the local Yuan (RMB). A good rule of thumb is to cut at least in half whatever they give you as their starting price. Others will tell you that you should end up paying no more than half of what they first quoted so they suggest you start much lower than half. Have fun! And the more "pieces" of an item you buy, the lower the per item price you will get.

HOTEL BUSINESS CARDS

Before you leave the hotel, ask the concierge at the front desk to provide you with a **business card** from the hotel. It will give the hotel name in both English and Chinese. Use this to show your return taxi driver the name of your hotel in Chinese. You can also ask the concierge to write the name of your destination in Chinese on the back of the card (you should add the name in English so you know what it means). If you plan to go to TWO places, have them provide you with two cards and write the name of only one destination on the back on each card. Add the name in English so you can keep them straight. The hotel doorman will also tell your cab driver in Chinese the name of your first destination after you show him your card.

TAXI CABS

Don't hesitate to take a cab – taxis are not expensive, just very small. The bigger they are, the greater the price. The rates are often displayed on the sides of the taxis. Also, insist that they run the meter – do not pay a flat rate as it is usually much higher. You can normally squeeze one person in the front next to the caged area for the driver, and two to three people in the back. Trunk space for bringing goodies back to the hotel can be limited. You may need to upgrade to one of the narrow vans for that and/or for carrying more people – or take 2 cabs.

Larry says a taxi ride is an experience you don't want to miss! We have had some unbelievable experiences and never seem to see any accidents although we know they must exist! You won't see road rage, and the horn is used for information giving to the other drivers, not for emotion (they beep before they cut in, merge or pass another vehicle – it all works well). Be sure to take the hotel business card with you – see the notes above. If you feel you were given a good ride and a fair price, they do appreciate a tip – it is not required but hoped for

******Remember your luggage limit on your flight home on Air China now allows **only ONE** checked bag at **50 lbs. each** (largest checked bag still **62 linear inches** in size and the **maximum total for two is 107 linear inches** – add one length, one width and one depth to get linear inches). If anyone gets worried before the flight home, I will have a weight and tape measure combo device with me.*

Have a ball – it's another adventure * ^ *

Find your birth year below to find the Sign and Element for you.
The dates are for that particular year in the Chinese Lunar Calendar:

Year / Sign / Element / Date Range

1910 Dog Metal (2/10/1910 to 1/29/1911)	1965 Snake Wood (2/2/1965 to 1/20/1966)
1911 Pig Metal (1/30/1911 to 2/17/1912)	1966 Horse Fire (1/21/1966 to 2/8/1967)
1912 Rat Water (2/18/1912 to 2/5/1913)	1967 Goat Fire (2/9/1967 to 1/29/1968)
1913 Ox Water (2/6/1913 to 1/25/1914)	1968 Monkey Earth (1/30/1968 to 2/16/1969)
1914 Tiger Wood (1/26/1914 to 2/13/1915)	1969 Rooster Earth (2/17/1969 to 2/5/1970)
1915 Cat Wood (2/14/1915 to 2/2/1916)	1970 Dog Metal (2/6/1970 to 1/26/1971)
1916 Dragon Fire (2/3/1916 to 1/22/1917)	1971 Pig Metal (1/27/1971 to 2/14/1972)
1917 Snake Fire (1/23/1917 to 2/10/1918)	1972 Rat Water (2/15/1972 to 2/2/1973)
1918 Horse Earth (2/11/1918 to 1/31/1919)	1973 Ox Water (2/3/1973 to 1/22/1974)
1919 Goat Earth (2/1/1919 to 2/19/1920)	1974 Tiger Wood (1/23/1974 to 2/10/1975)
1920 Monkey Metal (2/20/1920 to 2/7/1921)	1975 Cat Wood (2/11/1975 to 1/30/1976)
1921 Rooster Metal (2/8/1921 to 1/27/1922)	1976 Dragon Fire (1/31/1976 to 2/17/1977)
1922 Dog Water (1/28/1922 to 2/15/1923)	1977 Snake Fire (2/18/1977 to 2/6/1978)
1923 Pig Water (2/16/1923 to 2/4/1924)	1978 Horse Earth (2/7/1978 to 1/27/1979)
1924 Rat Wood (2/5/1924 to 1/23/1925)	1979 Goat Earth (1/28/1979 to 2/15/1980)
1925 Ox Wood (1/24/1925 to 2/12/1926)	1980 Monkey Metal (2/16/1980 to 2/4/1981)
1926 Tiger Fire (2/13/1926 to 2/1/1927)	1981 Rooster Metal (2/5/1981 to 1/24/1982)
1927 Cat Fire (2/2/1927 to 1/22/1928)	1982 Dog Water (1/25/1982 to 2/12/1983)
1928 Dragon Earth (1/23/1928 to 2/9/1929)	1983 Pig Water (2/13/1983 to 2/1/1984)
1929 Snake Earth (2/10/1929 to 1/29/1930)	1984 Rat Wood (2/2/1984 to 2/19/1985)
1930 Horse Metal (1/30/1930 to 2/16/1931)	1985 Ox Wood (2/20/1985 to 2/8/1986)
1931 Goat Metal (2/17/1931 to 2/5/1932)	1986 Tiger Fire (2/9/1986 to 1/28/1987)
1932 Monkey Water (2/6/1932 to 1/25/1933)	1987 Cat Fire (1/29/1987 to 2/16/1988)
1933 Rooster Water (1/26/1933 to 2/13/1934)	1988 Dragon Earth (2/17/1988 to 2/5/1989)
1934 Dog Wood (2/14/1934 to 2/3/1935)	1989 Snake Earth (2/6/1989 to 1/26/1990)
1935 Pig Wood (2/4/1935 to 1/23/1936)	1990 Horse Metal (1/27/1990 to 2/14/1991)
1936 Rat Fire (1/24/1936 to 2/10/1937)	1991 Goat Metal (2/15/1991 to 2/3/1992)
1937 Ox Fire (2/11/1937 to 1/30/1938)	1992 Monkey Water (2/4/1992 to 1/22/1993)
1938 Tiger Earth (1/31/1938 to 2/18/1939)	1993 Rooster Water (1/23/1993 to 2/9/1994)
1939 Cat Earth (2/19/1939 to 2/7/1940)	1994 Dog Wood (2/10/1994 to 1/30/1995)
1940 Dragon Metal (2/8/1940 to 1/26/1941)	1995 Pig Wood (1/31/1995 to 2/18/1996)
1941 Snake Metal (1/27/1941 to 2/14/1942)	1996 Rat Fire (2/19/1996 to 2/6/1997)
1942 Horse Water (2/15/1942 to 2/4/1943)	1997 Ox Fire (2/7/1997 to 1/27/1998)
1943 Goat Water (2/5/1943 to 1/24/1944)	1998 Tiger Earth (1/28/1998 to 2/15/1999)
1944 Monkey Wood (1/25/1944 to 2/12/1945)	1999 Cat Earth (2/16/1999 to 2/4/2000)
1945 Rooster Wood (2/13/1945 to 2/1/1946)	2000 Dragon Metal (2/5/2000 to 1/23/2001)
1946 Dog Fire (2/2/1946 to 1/21/1947)	2001 Snake Metal (1/24/2001 to 2/11/2002)
1947 Pig Fire (1/22/1947 to 2/9/1948)	2002 Horse Water (2/12/2002 to 1/31/2003)
1948 Rat Earth (2/10/1948 to 1/28/1949)	2003 Goat Water (2/1/2003 to 1/21/2004)
1949 Ox Earth (1/29/1949 to 2/16/1950)	2004 Monkey Wood (1/22/2004 to 2/8/2005)
1950 Tiger Metal (2/17/1950 to 2/5/1951)	2005 Rooster Wood (2/9/2005 to 1/28/2006)
1951 Cat Metal (2/6/1951 to 1/26/1952)	2006 Dog Fire (1/29/2006 to 2/17/2007)
1952 Dragon Water (1/27/1952 to 2/13/1953)	2007 Pig Fire (2/18/2007 to 2/6/2008)
1953 Snake Water (2/14/1953 to 2/2/1954)	2008 Rat Earth (2/7/2008 to 1/25/2009)
1954 Horse Wood (2/3/1954 to 1/23/1955)	2009 Ox Earth (1/26/2009 to 2/13/2010)
1955 Goat Wood (1/24/1955 to 2/11/1956)	2010 Tiger Metal (2/14/2010 to 2/2/2011)
1956 Monkey Fire (2/12/1956 to 1/30/1957)	2011 Cat Metal (2/3/2011 to 1/22/2012)
1957 Rooster Fire (1/31/1957 to 2/17/1958)	2012 Dragon Water (1/23/2012 to 2/9/2013)
1958 Dog Earth (2/18/1958 to 2/7/1959)	2013 Snake Water (2/10/2013 to 1/30/2014)
1959 Pig Earth (2/8/1959 to 1/27/1960)	2014 Horse Wood (1/31/2014 to 2/18/2015)
1960 Rat Metal (1/28/1960 to 2/14/1961)	2015 Goat Wood (2/19/2015 to 2/7/2016)
1961 Ox Metal (2/15/1961 to 2/4/1962)	2016 Monkey Fire (2/8/2016 to 1/27/2017)
1962 Tiger Water (2/5/1962 to 1/24/1963)	2017 Rooster Fire (1/28/2017 to 2/15/2018)
1963 Cat Water (1/25/1963 to 2/12/1964)	2018 Dog Earth (2/16/2018 to 2/4/2019)
1964 Dragon Wood (2/13/1964 to 2/1/1965)	2019 Pig Earth (2/5/2019 to 1/24/2020)