



# Hiddenchina.net

## Classic China Group Tour 2012

- Spring Trip: 8<sup>th</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> April
- Summer Trip: 22<sup>nd</sup> July - 12<sup>th</sup> August
- Autumn Trip: 14<sup>th</sup> October - 4<sup>th</sup> November
- Conveniently starting in Shanghai and ending in Beijing
- Experienced English-speaking tour leader throughout the whole trip
- Shanghai, Nanjing, Dragon Backbone Rice Terraces, Li River, Yangshuo, Chengdu with Pandas, Chongqing, Yangtze Cruise, Xian, Luoyang, Beijing



## CLASSIC CHINA GROUP TOUR

The tour is perfect for first time visitors to China who appreciate a mix of group travel and personalized service. You will not only enjoy a group tour to China's must-sees, we also include all those hidden treasures normal tour operators do not include in their itineraries!

- Travel Dates 2012: 8<sup>th</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> April (Spring Trip)  
22<sup>nd</sup> July - 12<sup>th</sup> August (Summer Trip)  
14<sup>th</sup> October – 4<sup>th</sup> November (Autumn Trip)
- Destinations: Shanghai, Nanjing, Longjitian, Yangshuo, Chengdu, Chongqing, Yangtze, Yichang, Wuhan, Xian, Luoyang, Zhengzhou, Beijing
- Duration: 22 days
- Starting in: Shanghai
- Ending in: Beijing
- Group size: min. 8 participants, max. 16 participants

## TOUR INTRODUCTION CHINA GROUP TOUR

This tour leads from Shanghai to Beijing and covers China's most important sites. A tour leader supported by local tour guides will guide you throughout the whole trip. Hence this trip is perfect for first time visitors to China who want to see all the classic sites as well as China's hidden treasures on this high quality group trip.

HiddenChina.net not only shows you the classic sites such as Shanghai and Beijing, the karst mountains and rice terraces near Guilin, Sichuan's capital city Chengdu and the panda base, the Yangtze cruise, Terracotta Warriors in Xian and the warrior monks at Shaolin. We also lead you to all those hidden treasures along the road which most tour organizers do not include in their travel itineraries.

Furthermore we will not bring you to the highly frequented tourist restaurants where you are just one tourist among many, we take you to small and cozy places with local specialties, where the local people go eat.

Instead of staying overnight at international hotel chains, we prefer to bring you to comfortable and clean 4 star hotels, which have much more local flair. In addition, the comfort of having a tour leader from beginning until the end of the tour will make you enjoy the tour much more, since he will take care of all your needs while the local guides can focus on showing you all the sites.

(B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)

**DAY 1 ARRIVAL SHANGHAI****(L/D)**

After arrival in Shanghai you will be picked up by the tour leader and the local guide and transferred to the hotel for check-in. After the check-in will take you straight to the lunch and to avoid the jet lag, we will keep you busy in the afternoon and visit the Oriental Pear Tower in Pudong and the lovely museum beneath the tower, which gives you a great introduction to the development of Shanghai. Afterwards we will go for a stroll on the Bund and have the welcome dinner at a restaurant nearby the hotel.



Overnight in 5\* Howard Johnson Hotel (about 15 walking minutes from the Bund and nearby Nanjing Street and People's Square).

**DAY 2****SHANGHAI****(B/L)**

Today is dedicated to discover the sites of Shanghai with the Yuyuan Garden, the French Concession and Xintiandi where we will have lunch. Afterwards we will visit the Urban Planning museum which gives you a great overview of the city of Shanghai. Later have a stroll at the Nanjing Lu and the rest of the afternoon / evening is free.

**DAY 3****SHANGHAI - NANJING- SHANGHAI****(B/L/D)**

In the morning transfer to the train station where we take the bullet train which takes us with up to 300 km/h to the city of Nanjing. Nanjing used to be one of the capitals of China and has not only a very rich history, but is also one of the most beautiful cities of China.

After arrival, we will visit first the Museum of the Taiping Uprising, which was a movement that started in 1850 to overrule the Qing empire and cause in its consequence around 30-

40 Mio. casualties and is among the deadliest wars in world history. The museum is situated in

downtown in a beautiful temple area and invites with its courtyards, pavilions and gardens to rest a while.

After lunch visit the Memorial Museum of the Japanese Massacre in 1937, when over 300'000 Chinese citizens got massacred by the invading Nanjing. After the visit transfer to the Ming Tombs and visit, then return to the railway station and return to Shanghai for dinner.

**DAY 4****SHANGHAI - GUILIN - LONGSHENG****(B/L/D)**

In the morning transfer to the airport and flight to Guilin, second largest city of the Guangxi Autonomous Region. The driver and local guide will bring you northwards to the famous 700 year old rice terraces of Longsheng. These terraces are the most spectacular in China, also known as Longjitan or „Dragon's Backbone“. In the afternoon you will have the chance to discover the picturesque village inhabited by the Zhuang minority and do some pleasant hikes in the rice fields. You will stay overnight in the simple but cozy guest house „Lulus Countryside Inn and Cafe“ run by charming local people.  
Overnight in local guesthouse

**DAY 5****LONGSHENG - YANGSHUO****(B/L/D)**

After breakfast we hike back to the parking lot and drive around 3.5 hours to the village of Xingping, which is located on the shore of the Li River at the beginning of the most spectacular part of the Li River. Instead of taking the touristy boats from Guilin, we will board after lunch the traditional bamboo rafts and cruise the most scenic part of the River in the traditional way. Arrived at



the village of Yangdi we will disembark and have stroll in the village before the bus takes us to Yangshuo.

After the check-in we will go for dinner and then visit the famous “Impression Sanjie” Show which was created by Zhang Yimou, the Director of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing. With over 600 protagonists, this 1 hour show will give you a good glance into the local folk customs of the Zhuang minority.

Overnight in 3-4\* Hotel in Yangshuo

DAY 6	YANGSHUO	(B/L)
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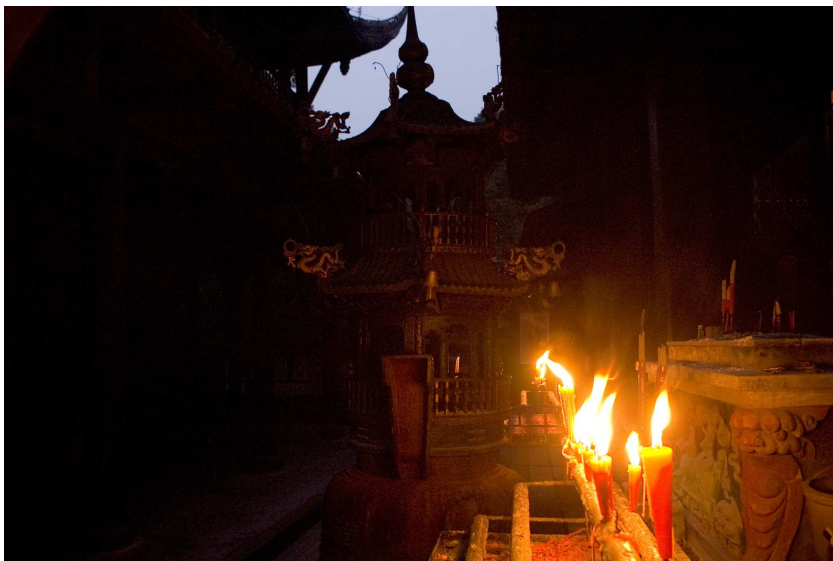
Today we will discover the area around Yangshuo. You will not only visit small local farm villages, but also one of the many caves of the area. The lunch will be on a small local farm of the Zhuang people and the farmers will cook us their traditional food. After lunch further discover the area and return to the hotel. The evening is at your own disposal, where you can either relax in the hotel, go for some western food and drinks at the bar street or discover one of the local specialty restaurants. Of course our guide team will help you to find a suitable place for you.

DAY 7	YANGSHUO - CHENGDU	(B/L/D)
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In the morning transfer to the airport of Guilin and flight to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. With 15 million inhabitants, Chengdu is one of the largest second tier cities in China and also a gateway to Tibet. After check-in at the 5-star “Kempinski Hotel”, you will explore the city with some of the old alleys and temples and have a traditional Sichuan hotpot dinner in the evening.

Overnight in 5\* Kempinski Hotel

DAY 8	CHENGDU	(B/L)
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After breakfast the journey takes us northwards to the Dujiangyan Water Irrigation System, one of the many UNESCO World Heritage Sites you will visit on this trip. This masterpiece of engineering was built over 200 years ago and regulates the water flow in the Chengdu Basin. Dujiangyan was severely hit by the Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008, which caused nearly 80'000 casualties. Here you can get an

idea of how quickly the area recovered from this devastating event.

In the afternoon transfer to the museum of the mysterious Sanxingdui culture, which dates back to 1700 B.C. and which had its prime time around 1000 B.C. With its exceptional jade, copper and gold sculptures you will get an excellent impression of the advanced handicraft of that time. Afterwards return to the hotel, where you have a free evening. For dinner you can try one of the local restaurants nearby, visit one of the Pubs for Pub fare or have a German dinner and beer in the "Paulaner" which is located in the Kempinski.

**DAY 9****CHENGDU****(B/L)**

In the morning you visit the Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding located close to Chengdu City. Especially the panda cubs are extremely funny to watch, and apart from the giant pandas you also have the opportunity to observe the red or lesser panda.

In the afternoon transfer about 2 hours to the Leshan Giant Buddha, with 78 meters one of the oldest still existing Giant Buddha Statues in the world. The evening and dinner

is individual, where you can either eat in the hotel or in one of the restaurants nearby.

**DAY 10****CHENGDU - CHONGQING****(B/L/D)**

The morning is to relax, sleep in or enjoy the infrastructure of the hotel. In the late morning we bring you to the railway station, where you take the train to China's largest city, Chongqing. With its 35 million inhabitants, it is definitely not a jewel among the cities in China, but an important industrial and strategic as well as starting point of the Yangtze river cruise. In the afternoon / evening you will board the ship and start the cruise.

Overnight and Cruise on 5\* Cruise Ship.

**DAYS 11-12****YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE****(B/L/D)**

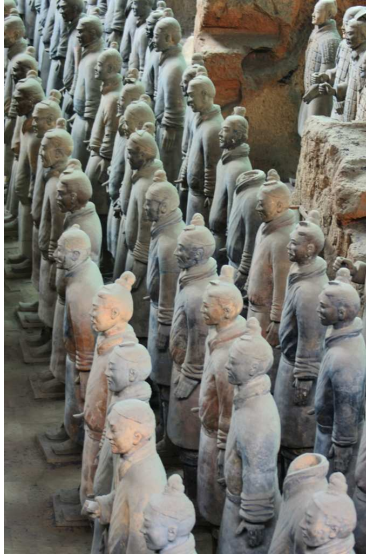
Yangtze river cruise with occasional stops and short excursions

**DAY 13****YICHANG - WUHAN - XIAN****(B/L/D)**

At around lunch time arrival in Yichang. From there transfer around 3.5 hours to Wuhan, one of China's most important industrial cities, where we will take the flight to Xian. From the airport drive around 1 hour to downtown for the check-in.

After the check-in we will take you for a stroll and dinner to the Muslim Quarter.

Overnight at the 4\* Bell Tower Hotel.

**DAY 14****XIAN****(B/L)**

After breakfast we drive around 1 hour to the world famous Terracotta Warriors. The site of the terracotta warriors of Xi'an is probably one of the most stunning historical monuments in the world. Already in 246 BC, 13-year old emperor Qin Shihuang gave the order to build this monument. Only discovered in 1974 by a local farmer digging a well, this site with its over 6'000 terracotta soldiers might well be called the most important archaeological discovery of the 20th century.

After a lunch in the area we drive to the Han Mausoleum which is a much smaller site and also the exposed figures are much smaller, nevertheless, it's a very interesting relic site and gives a great impression of the ancient burial rites in China.

Later return to Xian and if there is time, we might be able to visit the Shaanxi Provincial Museum. Free evening.

**DAY 15****XIAN - LUOYANG****(B/L/D)**

In the morning transfer to the railway station, from where you will take the speed train (approx. 2:15 hours) to Luoyang in the neighboring Henan Province. After arrival transfer to the famous Longmen Buddha Grottoes, one of the three most famous ancient sculptural sites in China.

Overnight in a cozy 4-star hotel near Longmen

**DAY 16****LUOYANG - SHAOLIN TEMPLES – ZHENGZHOU - BEIJING****(B/L)**

After breakfast transfer to the famous Shaolin temples, where you have the chance to watch a performance by the warrior monks and get an impression of the abilities and training methods of this martial art technique. In the afternoon transfer to Zhengzhou and flight to Beijing where we will take you to the hotel and the rest of the evening is free.

Overnight in the cozy 3-4 star courtyard "Bamboo Garden Hotel"

**DAY 17****BEIJING****(B/L/D)**

Today you visit the major sites in Beijing. We start our tour at the "Tiananmen Guangchang", or Square of Heavenly Peace, from where we enter the Forbidden City through its famous south gate and its Mao Zedong picture. After a 2 hours tour through the Imperial City, we will leave through its North gate and proceed to the Hutong, the old residential areas of Beijing. Lunch will be at a family style restaurant with local specialties. In the afternoon visit of the Lama Temple, the most important Buddhist facility in Northern China. Later return to the hotel and in the evening Beijing roast duck

dinner.

**DAY 18**

**BEIJING**

**(B/L)**

Today will be rather active as we go for a hike on the Great Wall of China. If necessary, we will split up the group in hikers and non-hikers.

**The hiking group meets at 8:00** for the departure. The coach will transfer you to the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in about 1.5 to 2 hours, where you will see some small farm villages and climb through a forest to the „wild“ (i.e. unrenovated) part of the Great Wall. From there the hike takes you on the Great Wall downwards to the renovated section of Mutianyu in approximately 2 hours. For this hike we recommend good shoes, however, outdoor shoes or solid sports shoes are enough, you will not need hiking boots.



**The non-hikers start at 11:00** and drive directly to the renovated section of Mutianyu.

From the parking lot you will access the Great Wall by cable car, where you will have time to do some easy hiking on the Great Wall. Both groups will then go for a late lunch at a countryside restaurant offering the local specialty: BBQ trout. In the afternoon transfer to Beijing, evening at your own disposal.

**DAY 19**

**BEIJING**

**(B/L)**

Today we will have a special mean of transport: the legendary Chang Jiang 750 sidecar. The Chinese side car is a copy of the Russian M72 and the German BMW R71 and the ideal vehicle to explore Beijing and its surroundings; whether you want to drive yourself or rather sit back and enjoy the ride in the side car. In your case we will have a driver for you and per apart form the driver, two people will fit on a sidecar, one person behind the driver, one person in the sidecar.

On the way to the Summer Palace we will stop at the Olympic Venue, where we visit the famous „Birds Nest“, the Olympic Stadium and the „Water Cube“. After a stroll through the Summer Palace, you will visit the Temple of Heaven in the afternoon and the Pearl Market. Individual evening

**DAY 20**

**BEIJING**

**(B/L/D)**

Today is dedicated for shopping, relaxing and preparing for the departure flight. Our guides will take

you to some typical shopping areas where you have the chance to buy some souvenirs for your friends and family at home. Farewell dinner in the evening

DAY 21

BEIJING

(B)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. End of trip.

For inquiries and bookings please contact Mr. Christoph Mueller:

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**RATES**

**Rate per person in Double / Twin Rooms:  
Single Supplement**

**RMB 35'980 / CHF 5'280  
RMB 14'980 / CHF 2'250**

**Group size: Minimum 8 people / maximum 14 people**

Prices subject to change due to exchange rate fluctuations.

Prices based on the value of the Chinese Yuan CNY.



**INCLUDED**

- experienced tour leader and local tour guides for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- all inland flights (economy class) and train tickets (first class)
- accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- full board except on free afternoons/evenings (described as B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary
- all transfers in a/c coach as mentioned in the itinerary

**NOT INCLUDED**

- international flight tickets and China visa
- personal expenses such as laundry, tips etc.
- transports not mentioned in the itinerary (such as taxis in the evening, etc.)
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies

**INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT**

**HIDDENCHINA.NET GMBH RECOMMENDS THAT YOU PURCHASE TRAVEL CANCELLATION  
INSURANCE**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and also carries a certain amount of surprises and risks. Hiddenchina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides arrange for a maximum of comfort for our clients. All Hiddenchina.net guides are carefully chosen and selected for their real-world abilities and experience; this allows us to manage the unexpected that is encountered along our tours. We hereby state that a voyage in China requires a degree of patience, adaptation and tolerance. Additionally, due to lack of infrastructure in the rural areas there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of Hiddenchina.net accept – upon contract signing - that they are aware of these circumstances in China, and accept that in order to keep the client(s) security and comfort at a maximum during the trip, incidental changes may occur.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS**

Traveling in vastness of China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from the international standards of 5-star hotels in the big cities, to “very poor” in remote villages. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, clients have to be ready for the unexpected (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides, flooding, and weather) or other surprises. In hotels for example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a “special massage service“. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should be aware of when traveling in China.

**FACE**

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it’s a “must know”: in China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered a reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way and you will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. Be reassured that for every problem in China there is a solution, it is up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is counterproductive, in most cases.

**SECURITY**

Large cities in China are extremely safe! Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters especially when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick-pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, you will find that China’s large cities are much safer than practically all European and North American cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking even at 4 o’clock in the morning.

## HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor or general practitioner before you go on a China trip and take the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need; you may also want to consult your country's national health authority. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of malaria remedies. The avian influenza is a serious issue in Asia and has been the focus of the World Health Organization (WHO) for several years. As a traveler should also consider taking appropriate medicines under the advice of their physician and buy some common incidental remedies (e.g. Tamiflu, appropriate cold medicines) before the trip begins.

We at HiddenChina.net will always take particular care to introduce you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, when traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, carrying a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. Your body will have to deal with a wide range of new foods, spices and other ingredients in China and also adjust to different bacteria (micro flora) than found in Europe's and North America's clean environments. When going on a China trip of a few weeks, you may have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. It is recommended that you take appropriate pharmaceuticals which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you may lose during a bout of diarrhea or intestinal discomfort. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication, e.g. Imodium, Pepto-Bismol. Always carry convenient packets of tissues and toilet paper with you, as you will not find any in public toilets!

Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. In all instances of traveling to China, we recommend getting specific, up-to-date advice from your doctor on appropriate vaccinations and medications.

## CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high altitude, to sub-tropic, and desert, China has every environment. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. In southern China this season usually begins late May or early June and lasts into August. This is a serious problem in China and this year alone in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt your tour according to the season and avoid the areas with heavy rain, or other such weather related problems.

## LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check baggage of 20 kg (economy class); please refer to your airline for specific allowances. The Chinese Border Control does not allow certain food products such as cheeses, meats, pornographic, or political material. Please ensure that your "Swiss army knife" and other "dangerous products" are checked with your luggage and not in your hand luggage/carry-on luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. If you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of belongings. However, do not worry if you forget something, almost everything you need for daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Please be aware that many customs authorities, like the ones in Paris and Milan, can fine you heavily if they discover fake, brand name products from China in your luggage. Copied brand name products such as Yves St Laurent, Gucci, Prada, etc. are openly available in most major cities.

### **SHOPPING**

Except for imported luxury goods more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Europe and North America; clothes especially can be bought at very low prices. Many shopping areas offer fake/copy products (sometimes of extremely good quality), however, prices are not always indicated and you will have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a fake/copy product, you can get into trouble in Customs especially at major airports such as Paris, London, or Milan. The campaign against fake/copy products is now at a point which authorities can or will take away your purchase and possibly fine you heavily. For golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy high-quality whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Similarly, you can have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls, etc. all at very low prices. For most Europeans and North Americans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD in China you pay between ¥8-10 (about 1 EURO) and ironically most of the movies are available here even before they are shown in European and American cinemas. The advantage of DVD's is that they take only a little space and weight in your luggage, but be aware that in most cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards in China are only accepted in major stores, 3-star hotels and upwards, and western restaurants. Cash can be withdrawn conveniently at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed most reliably at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels; you will need to show your passport for changing money.

### **BARGAINING**

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly viewed as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the first price given by many shop keepers will be set 400–500% above the final price they will sell his or her merchandise. So when the vendor asks for ¥100, you can set your offer to ¥20-25. Then it depends on your bargaining skills as to what price you will finally pay. A simple trick is, when an item seems too expensive for you, walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also keep in mind that staying friendly and smiling when bargaining is the best approach. Once you have agreed for a price, you have to buy the product, otherwise you and the vendor will lose face. Note: the Chinese Yuan (¥), is also called RMB within China.

### **LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR**

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English-speaking taxi drivers or shop assistants. We recommended that you take a phrase book with you, so that you can

show what you need to express. Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners and they are also very proud of their country and culture. However, some of their behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a difficult place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by rather obvious throat-clearing noises. The best way to get around these differences in social graces is to ignore them and accept it as part of the culture; for even in China they also say “Ru Xiang Sui Su!”, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. On the other hand for the smoker, China is a paradise, as it is more or less acceptable everywhere to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap. Social drinking in China is also noteworthy as you might be invited to test your skills. Even modest social contact can include unexpected rounds of drinks, as the Chinese find this is an opportunity to be more indulgent than most European or North Americans. The easiest way to avoid unwanted drinking without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to “health” problems you’re not allowed to drink.

### **TIPPING**

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in 5-star surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants, taxis, and smaller inns and hotels tipping is a “no-no” (except in 5-star hotels). However, the other exception is for tour guides and drivers of organized tours, these individuals should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid 10 Euro per day and rely on the additional tip income. This is acceptable because with Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides and drivers usually get a commission from the shops. European tour groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, for European tour groups then the guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some inexpensive souvenirs with you from your home country, for example watches or picture postcards.

### **SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION**

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe and North America, but similarly there are topics which should be avoided, and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic. In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status, job, and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don’t feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it is just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape an awkward direct question (if you don’t want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart’s eyebrows rise, you can explain how expensive life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political-related discussions such as the Cultural Revolution, criticism of the system or Chairman Mao, the “Tibet” and “Taiwan” questions, human rights, and the treatment of animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. For the sake of social tact, it is wise to hide these questions in compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “Face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are much more open to discuss critical and inflammatory topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people may tend to physically touch you, which should not be taken as a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by polite means –to feign a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

### **TRAFFIC, TAXI AND SUBWAY**

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor. Subways are the most convenient way to get around town as you will not get stuck in traffic jams. In Beijing, tickets for lines 1 and 2 cost 2 Yuan for however far you are going. All signs and announcements in the subway system are in Chinese and English.

In the cities, taxis are quite convenient as well. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be wary of taxis found at major tourist sites as there are also unofficial drivers trying to make extra money. We at HiddenChina.net recommend that you always take a licensed taxi, however, if you take a taxi that has no meter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), be sure to negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. Even in taking this precaution, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end of your ride. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So it is a good habit to take a bilingual map, a taxi card, or a guidebook with you. A convenient method is to tell the reception staff in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway toll fees/fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan (RMB) for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

### **USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP**

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (rolls of film can be bought and developed on the spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit/bank card, and a lot of patience. Ladies please note: tampons and similar hygiene products are rarely available in China outside of the major cities.