



Hiddenchina.net

Kailash Individual Tour 2008

- Giant Pandas and Chengdu Metropolis in Sichuan Province
- Breathtaking train trip to Tibet: the roof of the world
- Three-day circumnavigation of Holy Mount Kailash
- Forgotten West-Tibetan Kingdom Guge



TRAIN TRIP TO THE ROOF OF THE WORLD AND OVERLAND DRIVE TO MOUNT KAILASH

- Date: 27th September - 17th October.2008
- Destinations: Chengdu, Lhasa, Shigatse, Lhatse, Saga, Paryang, Darchen, Mount Kailash, Tsamda, Guge, Toling, Manasarovar, Zhongba
- Duration: 21 days
- Starting in: Chengdu
- Ending in: Chengdu
- Group size: 6 pax



DAY 1, 27.9.2008 DEPARTURE TO CHINA

You fly from your home country to China.

DAY 2, 28.9.2008 CHENGDU (500 METERS) (D)

Upon arrival, you will be picked up at the airport by our guide and transferred to your hotel, which is conveniently located in the center of Chengdu, the capital of the populous province of Sichuan. After a first short sightseeing tour of the city, you will enjoy a welcome dinner in an excellent local restaurant.

DAY 3, 29.9.2008 CHENGDU (B/L/D)

After breakfast, we will visit the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, a high profile endangered species research and conservation facility, attracting visitors and scientists from around the world. In the afternoon, we will visit Wenshu Temple, the biggest and very well preserved Buddhist temple in Chengdu. We will spend the rest of the afternoon with one of the most typical Chinese pastimes: drinking tea in one of the temple's tea houses. Early dinner in the temple's vegetarian restaurant and departure from Chengdu train station to Tibet.

DAYS 4+5, 30.9. + 1.10.2008 CHENGDU - LHASA (3'600 METERS) (D)

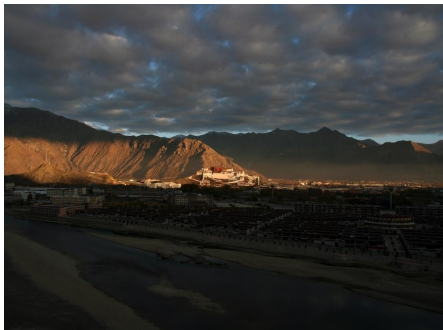
The railroad line from Chengdu to Tibet's capital Lhasa via the provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai was completed in 2006 and will lead you through a fascinating landscape. The ride takes about 48 hours through Sichuan's lush rice fields, Qinghai's inhospitable salt deserts onto the world's highest plateau Changthang (also known as Kekexil). From the 5'120 meters high Tangula Pass we will descend to the quite



fertile plains of Central Tibet. With a bit of luck you can also observe rare animals living on Tibet's highlands, like for example the Tibetan yak, the Tibetan antelope, and the Tibetan wild horse "Kyang". Arrival in Lhasa in the early evening (circa 19:00) of the second day and dinner (Nepalese and Tibetan cuisine). Overnight at "Kailash Hotel", located in the center of Lhasa.

DAY 6, 2.10.2008 LHASA (B/L)

Today we visit the most famous and mystic building in Tibet: the Potala Palace, winter residence of the Dalai Lama. This fabulous palace harbors countless treasures such as stupas containing relics of the Buddha and three-dimensional mandalas bejeweled with ancient turquoise, coral and other precious objects. We will also visit Barkhor - a kind of Tibetan bazaar along the pilgrims' path leading to Jokhang Temple, which constitutes one of the most important sanctuaries in Tibet, especially because of its magnificent Buddha statue "Jo". In the afternoon we will attend the disputation held by the monks at Sera Monastery. The rest of the day is at your own disposal.


DAY 7, 3.10.2008 LHASA - SHIGATSE (B/L/D)

Early in the morning we drive to Drak Yerpa, a picturesque cave complex near Lhasa, which was used as a site for meditation for great Tibetan leaders such as King Songtsen Gampo and Guru Rinpoche. We then travel on to Shigatse - Tibet's second largest city and former seat of the Panchen Lama, the second highest ranking lama after the Dalai Lama in the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. On way to Shigatse we will visit the 4'794 meters high Khampa-La pass and the turquoise blue Yamdrok-Tso Lake. Tibetan dinner and overnight at "Shigatse Hotel".

DAY 8, 4.10.2008 SHIGATSE - LHATSE (B/L/D)

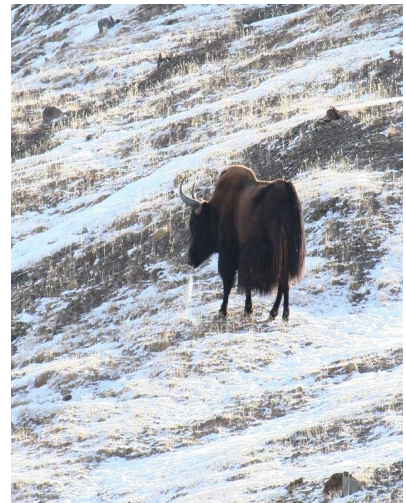
After breakfast we visit Tashilhunpo Monastery, the former seat of the Panchen Lama and one of Tibet's oldest assembly halls with impressive reliquary caskets for the Panchen Lamas. We then travel on to Lhatse, a small city along the Friendship Highway, which leads to Nepal. Overnight in a local guest house.

**DAY 9, 5.10.2008 LHATSE - SAGA (B/L/D)**

Today we start our overland drive in direction of Western Tibet, driving on a relatively well-maintained dirt road, climbing slowly but steadily. We pass crystal-clear lakes and the last trees for several hundred kilometers to come and finally arrive at Saga, the last bigger town, before we reach Ngaris nomads area. Dinner and overnight in a simple guest house in Saga.

DAY 10, 6.10.2008 SAGA - PARYANG (B/L/D)

From now on, we will travel westward through less-settled areas with desert-like steppes and the seemingly endless space of the Tibetan plateau. As we leave civilization behind, we can observe more and more rare animals like the Tibetan antelope, wild foxes, raptorial birds and the Tibetan wild horse. Overnight in a very simple guest house in semi-nomadic Paryang, which is located a day's journey away from our destination: the Holy Mount Kailash.

**DAY 11, 7.10.2008 PARYANG - DARCHEN (B/L/D)**

At sunrise, we keep on driving westward and in the afternoon you will see Mount Kailash standing proud on the horizon. This first impression will help you understand why this mountain is considered holy by four religions and why tens of thousands of pilgrims circumnavigate Mount Kailash every year. Overnight in a simple guest house in the small village Darchen at the foot of the mountain.

DAY 12, 8.10.2008 KAILASH CIRCUMNAVIGATION DAY 1 (B/L/D)

Early in the morning, we start our three-day circumnavigation of the holy mountain. We will have to trek approximately 52 kilometers and more than 1'000 meters in altitude on the so-called Kora. Our luggage will be transported by yaks. The first day's hike will be rather moderate without steep ascents. En route we will visit several holy sites. Overnight in Drirapuk Monastery offering a breathtaking view on the north face of Mount Kailash.

DAY 13, 9.10.2008 KAILASH CIRCUMNAVIGATION DAY 2 (B/L/D)

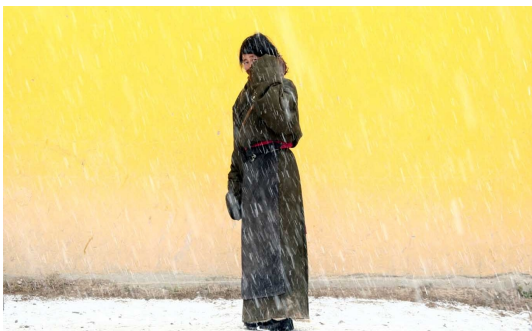
After a simple breakfast we continue our journey to the centerpiece of our pilgrimage, the ascent to Drolma-La Pass, which we will reach at lunch time. On the way we will visit a cult site, where pilgrims leave personal belongings or even their own hair. During our lunch break, you can put up prayer flags and make a sacrifice to Goddess Drolma, who - according to legend - helps the pilgrims cross the pass, which is named after her. After four hours of a steep, then moderate ascent, we will reach our place for the night: Zulpultruk Monastery.

**DAY 14, 10.10.2008 KAILASH- TSAMDA (B/L/D)**

It will takes us approximately 4 hours on a fairly even trail to return to Zulpultruk, the final destination of our circumnavigation of Mount Kailash. You will have a breath-taking view on Lake Manasarovar and mountain goddess Gurla Mandhata; certainly one of the highlights of this tour. After lunch, we continue our journey westward close to the border to India to reach a huge canyon: the site of the ancient Kingdom Guge, which used to be the center of arts and culture in Tibet more than 1'000 years ago. Dinner and overnight in a simple guest house in Tsamda.

DAY 15, 11.10.2008 GUGE AND TOLING (B/L/D)

Today we will visit the ruins of the ancient Kingdom Guge as well as Toling and Tsaparang Monasteries, one of the most impressive cultural relics of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Because of its remote location, this region has not been influenced by tourism. The Tibetan-Nepalese-Indian-style frescoes and the huge cave systems are inscribed on the UNESCO Tentative List and might be included in the list of UNESCO World Heritages Sites in 2010.



DAY 16, 12.10.2008 TSAMDA - MANASAROVAR (B/L/D)

From Tsamda we start our journey back to Lhasa and take a break at the famous Lake Manasarovar, located opposite to the south flank of Mount Kailash and also a pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists. We hike along the lake shore, where you can take a bath in one of the numerous hot springs. Overnight in a basic guest house near the lake.

**DAYS 17-19, 13.10.-15.10.2008****MANASAROVAR - ZHONGBA - SAGA - SHIGATSE (B/L/D)**

On our way back to Shigatse, the roads are most probably going to be snowy now. After having lodged in basic accommodations for several days, the comfortable Shigatse Hotel will be a welcome change. For dinner, you can choose from either Tibetan, Nepalese or Western cuisine.

DAY 20, 16.10.2008 SHIGATSE - LHASA (B/D)

After breakfast we return to Lhasa, where you can spend the afternoon at your own disposal. This day is entirely dedicated to relaxing and recovering as well as to recall the experiences of the past few days. Enjoy the unique atmosphere of Tibet's capital once more. We will have a farewell dinner with Tibetan, Nepalese and Western cuisine.

DAY 21, 17.10.2008 LHASA - CHENGDU (B)

Transfer to the airport in the morning and flight to Chengdu for your connecting flight back home.



RATES

PRICE PER PERSON IN TWIN:	2'650 EURO
	4'200 USD
	4'300 CHF
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:	ON REQUEST

Place	Hotel	Hotel Category
Chengdu	Shangri-La Hotel	*****
Lhasa	Kailash Hotel	**(*)
Shigatse	Shigatse Hotel	***

INCLUDED

- Flight tickets Lhasa - Chengdu (economy class)
- Train tickets Chengdu - Lhasa (first class, soft sleeper class)
- In the cities accommodation in selected hotels (3-5*) in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary, outside the cities accommodation in the best lodgings available, in Western Tibet accommodation in very basic shared rooms with basic sanitary facilities and in tents
- Full board (including one soft drink per meal) except on free afternoons/evenings and on board of the train (described as B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- Transfers as mentioned in the itinerary in Toyota Land Cruiser resp. in mini bus in Chengdu
- All entrance tickets, highway fees and airport taxes for excursions mentioned in the itinerary
- All travel permits for Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR)
- Local tour guide in Tibet (English-speaking)
- European tour leader

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Expenses of personal nature such as laundry, tips, etc.
- Alcoholic drinks
- Optional excursions not mentioned in the itinerary
- Expenses for medical care
- Insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- Repatriation flights in case of emergencies

I INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!

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

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

For this tour you have to be in good condition. You need adequate travel gear and some preparation according to the local customs and special characteristics. For this tour, there are some special requirements:

Once arrived in China we will take care of a slow and adequate acclimatization and provide you with professional advice, but there always is some risk involved that due to the high altitude of some passages, some people might suffer from discomfort like headache, sleeplessness and other symptoms of altitude sickness. Please inform yourself about possible risks and preventive measures before the start of the trip.

Furthermore, this tour requires you to be in good condition suitable for trekking. You should have a secure step and no acrophobia. As this tour leads into regions with very restricted infrastructure, accommodation facilities and meals can be very basic! As compensation, the traveler gets a unique insight into daily life of the local communities.

For the case of health problems, please bring a personal stock of medicines for your private use, as we are not allowed by Chinese law to provide any medication. Please also be aware that personal travel insurance for the entire trip is also necessary.

Please be informed that we cannot take any responsibility for incidences occurring due to act of nature beyond control, alpine risks or high altitude as long as they are not caused grossly negligent by our staff. Furthermore we reserve the right to make changes in the itinerary without prior notice.

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.