

WestChina

Adventure Tours

in association with



6-day Sightseeing Silk Road Highlights

3-day Trekking Tour

- Get to know the “Wild West” of China
- Visit 3 major post towns along the Silk Road
- Explore Xinjiang by bike, on foot, on donkey carts, on horsebacks, by boat and sleep in yurts
- Visit the biggest Sunday bazaar in Xinjiang
- Get in touch with the local minorities and gain an insight into their daily life
- Have a great adventure in this fascinating region with its deserts, alpine lakes, snow mountains and glaciers



SIGHTSEEING AND TREKKING IN XINJIANG

This tour will lead you through the “Wild West” of China and is specially designed for people, who want to have a unique experience in this special part of China with its deserts, lakes, mountains and glaciers. Visit ancient towns along the Silk Road, the biggest bazaar and observe the different minorities’ ways of life amidst impressive scenery. Do not expect 5 star comfort though, as you will travel on foot, by bike, by boat, on donkey carts, on horsebacks and sleep in yurts.

- Best Travel Date: June, July, September, first week of October
(heavy rainfall in August; October to March only for adventurers)
- Destinations: Dunhuang, Turpan, Urumqi, Kashgar, Karakul Lake, Mt. Bogda
- Duration: 9 days
- Starting in: Dunhuang
- Ending in: Urumqi
- Group size: min. 6 pax, max. 12 pax
- Note: This tour always starts on Wednesday as we want to visit the Sunday Bazaar in Kashgar.

QUICK INTRODUCTION

Lying in northwestern China, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, also called Xin for short, was referred to as the Western Region in ancient times. It has an area of 1,66 million square kilometers, roughly about one-sixth of the total territory of China. Xinjiang is the largest and has the longest boundary line among China’s provinces and autonomous regions. It shares 5,600 kilometers of frontier with Mongolia in the northeast; Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, and Tadzhikistan in the west; and Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India in the southwest. Xinjiang is divided into two basins by Mount Tianshan, Dzungarian Basin in the north and Tarim Basin in the south. The Karakorum highway links Islamabad, Pakistan with Kashgar over the Khunjerab Pass.

Xinjiang's lowest point is 155 metres below sea level (lowest point in China). Its highest peak is 8611 metres above sea level on the border with Kashmir. The Xinjiang-Kyrgyzstan border is marked by the Tian Shan mountain range. The Torugart Pass (3752 m) is located on this border.



In Xinjiang live 1,073,300 people from 46 ethnic minority groups, or 61.42 percent of the total population, and 6,601,000 Han people. Thirteen of the 47 ethnic groups – the Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Tajik, Xibe, Uzbek, Manchu, Daur, Tartar, and Russian – have lived there for generations.

In a short period of 9 days, you will check out three major post towns along the silk road to trace back thousands years of history and minorities (some parts involve cycling and donkey cart exploration), in between which we will bring you to the alpine lake on the Pamirs down the snow mountain and glaciers where you can relax yourself in the embrace of the purest nature and peacefulness, and fresh up away from the human noise and the dry hot weather. The 3-day trekking tour gives the traveler an opportunity to access the Bogda peak, Heavenly Lake, alpine pasture and observe the Kazak shepherds in an ecological way.

Xinjiang is vast, while enjoying its exoticism and wildness, people often complain about the time spent on transfers. But with careful planning and under the guidance of our professionals, the traveler will enjoy this journey, as you will not only travel by car or plane, but also trek, ride and cycle, which makes this trip so unique.

Every Sunday the Uygurs head for the biggest bazaar in Kashgar on donkey carts. There you can see thousands of vendors, all kinds of crafts, the veiled Uygur women and their special way of bargaining, using their hands instead of words.

DAY 1	DUNHUANG	(L/D)
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Dunhuang lies at the western end of the Gansu Corridor, called “Hexi Zoulang”. The name Dunhuang originally meant "prospering, flourishing" -- a hint that Dunhuang must once have been an important city. Its position at the intersection of two trade routes was what made Dunhuang flourish. The coming and going of horse and camel caravans carried new thoughts, ideas, arts and sciences to the East and West.

After your arrival at the airport in Dunhuang in the morning you will be picked up by your guide. You will then explore the Dunhuang desert on the back of a camel. Afterwards we will take you to a welcome lunch.



In the afternoon, you will visit the “Mogao” grottoes. It is said that in the fourth century a Buddhist monk had a vision of 1000 Buddhas, and began to carve grottoes into the sandstone cliff and fill them with buddhist images. They were abandoned and forgotten in around the 11th century until archaeologists arrived to carry away huge quantities of manuscripts, textiles and other art objects. However Mogao remains a brilliant trove of statues and wall paintings from the 4th to 10th centuries.

After a local style dinner in the evening, you will take the night train to Turpan in a soft sleeper compartment.

DAY 2	TURPAN	(B/L/D)
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After arrival and breakfast in Turpan – which is a basin in the mountains of eastern Xinjiang and is also called “an oasis in the desert” – you will explore the “Karez” System, an irrigation system of wells connected by underground channels, considered as one of the three great ancient projects in China, the other two being the Great Wall and the Grand Canal. The structure of the karez basically consists of wells, underground channels, ground canals and small reservoirs.



The next highlight will be Emin Minaret, which is the largest extant old tower in Xinjiang and the only Islamic tower among the hundred famous towers in China. Standing 2 km east of Turpan, Emin Minaret was built in 1777 in honor of the heroic Turpan general, Emin Khoja. He was an outstanding patriot who defended the unification of China throughout his life.

Afterwards we will go to the ruins of “Jiaohe” and “Gaochang”. Jiaohe - about 10 kilometers west of Turpan County - was a strategically important city on the ancient Silk Road that travelers must pass through. Gaochang is situated at the foot of the Flaming Mountains, was founded in the first century B.C. and abandoned by the end of the 13th century. Furthermore we will visit the Astana ancient tombs, which used to serve as the cemetery of the citizens of Gaochang from 273 in the Western Jin Dynasty to 778 in the Tang Dynasty and where mummies were discovered.

After lunch we will drive to the Tuyu valley, which also goes by the name of “Mecca of China”, since seven Mohammed seers are laid to rest here. It is said to be the best preserved Uyghur ancient village built in a green valley at the foot of the Flaming Mountains (the Gobi Mountain) with ancient Buddhism rock painting and Muslim tombs.



After dinner you will watch a Uyghur dancing performance. Get invited by the prettiest girls and most handsome boy dancers to join the merry crowd -- just relax and enjoy the cool summer night!

DAY 3	TURPAN - URUMQI - KASHGAR	(B/L/D)
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After breakfast we will to drive 2.5 hours to Urumqi. Urumqi is the capital of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China. With its population of about 1.6 million people, it is the largest city in the western half of China.



We will stop by the raisin wholesale market on the way. Enjoy the view onto the Great Salt Lake, of Tianshan Mountain range and snow peaks, Daban Town and the big wind energy plant. You will have a lot of opportunities to take fantastic pictures on the way.

The famous Salt Lake of Dabancheng is situated on the plain of Hechelu Daban (Daban: mountain pass) and Tug Daban of the Bogda Mountain. The water surface covers an area of 37 square kilometers.

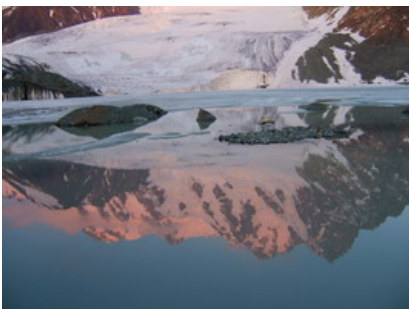
After lunch your guide will show you the way to the History Museum with its 3000-year-old mummies on display, where you will gain insight into the history of the most ancient states along the Silk Road – nowadays only ruins are left.



In the late afternoon we will drive to the airport and fly to Kashgar. After arrival in the westernmost city in China we will get picked up by our local driver. We will have dinner at a wonderful orchard sitting under a grape trellis. One or two local Uygur authority men, who will help us to understand more on the life and customs of this minority, will be invited to join the dinner. You can also watch or take part in a Uygur dance performance. (optional: 60 CNY/6 Euro per person). The rest of the evening after the dinner is free.

DAY 4 KASHGAR - KARAKUL LAKE (B/L/D)

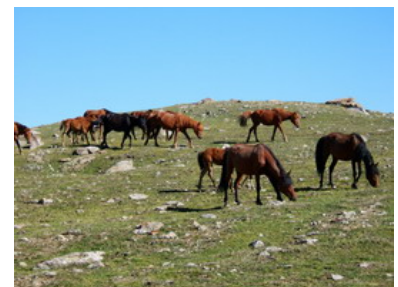
We will have breakfast at the “Caravan Western Restaurant”, run by several foreigners, who have been living in Kashgar for as long as 15 years and have learnt the Uygur language. Have a chat with them and learn why these expatriates chose to live in this fabulous city.



After breakfast we will head to Karakul Lake (5-6hours), located approximately 200km from Kashgar. At an altitude of 3600m, it is the highest lake of the Pamir plateau. Surrounded by mountains which remain snow-covered throughout the year, the three highest peaks visible from the lake are the Muztagata (7546m), Kongur Tagh (7649m) and Kongur Tiube (7530m).

Explore a rural Uygur village on the way by donkey cart. And check out a small musical instrument workshop. You will cross green fields under the bright blue sky, Uygur men and women working under the sun in the fields, and if you are lucky you may see very pretty female Uygur donkey cart drivers. Once again you will have a unique opportunity to take outstanding pictures of this beautiful region and its lovely people.

We will stop on the way for lunch and arrive at Karakul Lake in the afternoon. You will have free time to walk around the lake, ride a horse, visit Tajik yurts and enjoy the sunset. In the evening we will have an outdoor barbecue dinner and stay overnight in a Tajik yurt or camp.



DAY 5 KARAKUL LAKE - KASHGAR (B/L)


We recommend you to get up early in the morning to take a few pictures of the sunrise amidst impressive scenery. After breakfast in a Tajik yurt we drive back to Kashgar, cycle around the city to check out some historical sites and visit the renowned Sunday Bazaar. We will have lunch on the way from Karakul Lake back to Kashgar. Individual dinner.

DAY 6 KASHGAR - URUMQI - TREKKING TOUR (B/L/D)

You will have western style breakfast in the morning. We will transfer to the airport for our flight to Urumqi. After a briefing with the Urumqi mountaineering association, you will collect your gear and buy supplies for the trekking. Then we drive 1.5 hours to the starting point. After a two to three hours walk we arrive at the camp, where we stay overnight.


DAY 7 URUMQI - MT. BOGDA (B/L/D)

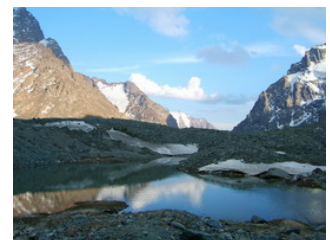

For today's ascension we need to rent horses from the Kazak. After arrival at the base camp of Bogda peak, we will have a "feast" at a height of 3250m above sea level.

Note: Take several batteries for your camera as you will certainly want to take a lot of pictures of this picturesque, breath-taking area.

DAY 8 MT. BOGDA - TIAN CHI - URUMQI (B/L)

We make our way back to Urumqi. You can choose to ride or to walk. Visit a local Kazak family and join them for lunch or snacks. Inquire about the Hazak nomads and discuss about their changing way of life: in 5 years you will not see their yurts together with their horses, sheep and oxen, as the government will force them to leave the area and find a new life in towns and cities.

In the afternoon we will reach the south bank of "Tian Chi", the Heavenly Lake. The Heavenly Lake is situated to the east of the Tianshan Mountain range, north of Bogda Peak, 97 km south of Urumqi. Known as Yaochi in ancient times, the lake surface elevates 1,910 meters above sea level, with an average depth of 60 meters. Surrounding the Heavenly Lake are snow mountains, glaciers, forests and grassland alpine lakes, featuring a vertical natural landscape belt. We will cross the lake on a speed boat. After arrival in Urumqi, we will get picked up by our driver. After check-in at the hotel you will be rewarded with the last lamb feast in Xinjiang.


DAY 9 URUMQI (B/L)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Optional: 20:20 / 23:10pm flight to Beijing on day 8.

[Contact us](#) per mail for a tailor-made itinerary.

Our other trekking tours in China:

[17-days Northern Yunnan and Eastern Tibet](#)

[8-days Horse Riding and Trekking Tour Xinjiang](#)

RATES

RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN: **ON REQUEST**

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: **ON REQUEST**

INCLUDED SERVICES:

- experienced tour leader and local tour guides for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- all transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- in the cities accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- on camping trips, tent (double occupancy), Karrimat mats or similar, sleeping bags will be provided. However it is suggested to bring your own sleeping bag for sanitary purposes.
- all meals except on free afternoons/evenings (outlined as B,L,D: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)
- entrance tickets for attractions and activities as stated in the itinerary
- trekking gear except personal clothing on trekking + camping tours

NOT INCLUDED:

- international flights
- expenses of personal nature such as laundry, tips, etc.
- alcoholic drinks, food and beverages other than those provided
- tips for drivers, tour guides or leaders
- personal clothing on trekking tours
- items marked as optional as stated in the itinerary
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)

INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!

Please visit our website www.hiddenchina.net for more information.

STANDARDS

Accommodation

3 or 4 star hotels in cities or local inns in smaller towns. We feature accommodation that is both comfortable as well as stylish with local flavor.

In small towns where 3 or 4 star hotels are not available, we will select the best hotels and always try to get you a clean and cozy room with a hot shower.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenChina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by 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 consider 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 as 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. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

SECURITY

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters 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, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of "Tamiflu" before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe's clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. 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 like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won't 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. Please get advice from your doctor.

CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your "Swiss army knife" and other "dangerous products" are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don't worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

SHOPPING

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 3* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. Money can be withdrawn at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you 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 looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need.

Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some 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 terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver 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 the 5* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, 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 souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also 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 and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's 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 (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 explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat 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. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about "face"). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not 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 elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

TRAFFIC AND TAXI

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.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. 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 take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway 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 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 (films can be bought and developed on 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.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.