



Hiddenchina.net

Golf the Extremes of China

This golf tour covers China's most beautiful and extreme golf courses

Tee off at:

- **Mission Hills:** the world's largest golf club in Shenzhen and Dongguan
- **Guilin Merryland:** between the scenic karst peaks of Guilin, Guangxi Province
- **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain:** Asia's highest golf course on 3'100 meters
- **Spring City:** China's most awarded golf course in Yunnan Province
- **Sun Valley:** an 828 yard par 7 hole in Sanya, Hainan Island



GOLF CHINA EXTREME

For all passionate golfers, this tour is an absolute must. Combine a tour to some of China's most beautiful sightseeing spots with your greatest passion. We will bring you to China's fanciest golf courses: from the legendary 216 holes at Mission Hills, we take you to the scenic area of Guilin, where you tee off between the picturesque karst mountains. Next stop is Kunming, where you golf at one of Asia's highest rated golf courses: Spring City near Kunming. Then we take you up to the mountains, where you tee off on 3100 meters, within the lovely landscape of Lijiang, inhabited by one of China's most famous ethnic minorities, the Naxi. The last rally leads to China's tropical island Hainan, where a 828 yard par 7 hole awaits you.

- Best Travel Date: Spring / Fall (all year possible)
- Destinations: Shenzhen (Mission Hills), Guilin, Yangshuo, Kunming, Lijiang, Sanya
- Duration: 19 days
- Starting in: Shenzhen
- Ending in: Sanya
- Group size: 1 pax

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to the policy of Mission Hills and the priority of the tee times on the weekends towards their members we strongly recommend the arrival in Hong Kong on one of the following days: Sunday, Monday or Tuesday, as on the weekends it is much more difficult to book the tee times. At Mission Hills, one round of golf is included per day. If you wish to do 2 rounds per day, please advise us. Costs are RMB 800 (CHF 130) per additional round.



DAY 1 ARRIVAL IN HONG KONG - MISSION HILLS

After your arrival at Hong Kong International Airport, the driver from Mission Hills picks you up and transfers you over the border to China. After a 1.5 hours transfer you arrive at Shenzhen's Mission Hills Golf Course; with 216 holes the world's largest golf club according to the Guinness Book of Records.

DAY 2-4 MISSION HILLS GOLF COURSE (B)

Three full days of golfing at Mission Hills (one round of golf per day included, additional round on request). If possible, we also try to book you one round on the World Cup Course. Please note that the courses such as Pete Dye and ZLW are only open for members. Furthermore, courses such as Olazabal and Faldo are not available on the weekends. Please note that tee times have to be pre-booked, so you cannot add a round once you are checked-in.

DAY 5 SHENZHEN - GUILIN (B/D)

In the morning transfer to the airport of Shenzhen and flight to Guilin, where you will be picked up by our guide. After some sightseeing in Guilin, transfer to the Golf Resort.

DAY 6 GUILIN (B/L/D)

In the morning golfing and the afternoon at your own disposal. Guilin Merryland Golf Course is a hilly course, with 27 international standard holes and a total fairway length of 10,554 yards. The whole course has been planned in compliance with the principles of USGA for course building and has been created by engaging American Famous Specialist Golden Louise in accordance with the landscape of Guilin. The fairway profiling has been designed by an American fairway specialist.

The greenish course has been designed along the curve of Ling Lake as well as by the remote mountains. With the perfect overall planning and different customer-first soft and hardware facilities, the diversified mountains, clear water and unique artificial landscape of the golf course are integrated into one.



Course A is a hill fairway with different rise-and-fall changes so that each swing will be a challenge. At Course B by Ling Lake, almost all the holes are adjacent to water. With the not so wide fairway and the wind coming for the lake surface, the landing point of each swing appears to be extremely important. Due to the water in Ling Lake, the style of Course B not only changes, but also striking becomes poetic. Course C adapts

cleverly to the natural views, integrating the rivers, waterfalls, small bridges and special plantations into one. This unique course includes splendid views, wide vision and beautiful sceneries of the lake and mountains.

DAY 7 GUILIN - YANGSHUO (B/L/D)

Early in the morning you will be picked up by our guide and transferred half way to Yangshuo, where you will board a private boat and cruise on the river through the scenic mountains on a different way than most tourists and finally arrive in Yangshuo . Located in the midst of karst mountains, this is one of China's most scenic spots. Afternoon sightseeing in town and in the evening visit of the legendary sound and light show at the shore of the river. Before or after the show we take you to a local dinner.

DAY 8 YANGSHUO (B/L)

This day is dedicated to show you the picturesque surroundings of Yangshuo with its lovely farm villages and caves. If you wish, we can also organize you bikes to discover the area. Lunch will be at a local family where you eat with the local people and learn more about the rural life in the area.

DAY 9 YANGSHUO - GUILIN - KUNMING (B/L/D)

In the morning transfer to the airport of Guilin and flight to Kunming. Meet your guide at Kunming International Airport and transfer to your hotel. Welcome to the land of eternal spring. Yunnan means "South of the Clouds", and Kunming, with its nickname of Spring City, could not be a better meteorological metaphor for a place far from inclement weather. Indeed, the climate is generally the first thing travelers notice about the city. At an elevation of 1'890m, Kunming has a milder climate than most other Chinese cities. After a short break in the hotel, the guide will take you downtown to



visit the local sites, such as the Bird Flower Market and the Golden Horse & Jade Rooster Archways. In the evening enjoy the local specialty, a mushroom hotpot. Overnight in 4-5* Green Lake Hotel

DAY 10 KUNMING - SPRING CITY GOLF COURSE (B)

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to Spring City & Golf Resort (approx. 1 hour) and play golf at the mountain course (18 holes) in the morning. The mountain course is designed by Jack Nicklaus. With Lake Yangzonghai creating a perfect backdrop, inspired play comes naturally.

Generous fairways allow you to let loose with your driver, while the mountain altitude adds extra distance to your drives. A liberal sprinkling of sand bunkers and grassy hollows demand accurate

approach shots and the large, well contoured, "bent grass" greens make for challenging putting surfaces.

Yet this is a course that can be enjoyed by golfers of all levels. Five sets of tees have been designed for you to choose the distance and difficulty that best suits your quality of play. There is no one better than the course architect himself, Jack Nicklaus, to help improve one's overall enjoyment of the course. It was rated as the one of world's most beautiful golf resorts in Asia. In 1999 the US Golf Digest rated Spring City & Golf Resort as China's number one Golf Course.

After lunch, go to visit the Jiuxiang Underground Caves - a series of karst caves, which is rated as the largest of its kind in Asia. Overnight in 4-5* Green Lake Hotel

DAY 11 SPRING CITY GOLF COURSE - KUNMING (B)

Play golf at the lake course (18 holes). The lake course is designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. The opening of this course has added another exciting dimension to the "Golf Paradise of Asia", nestled amid the tranquility of the surrounding natural landscape. Preserving the natural beauty, rocky



outcrops and undulating terrain of the mountain, this excellent golf course allows players to enjoy nature, first hand. The course has been constructed to USGA standards and is maintained in year round tournament condition.

With a 150 yard drop in elevation from the clubhouse to the lake below, a terraced effect has been created. All 18 holes provide stunning views of the lake, especially from holes 8 to 11. Measuring all of 7,204 yards from the championship tees, the Lake Course is the ultimate challenge of links-style golf, where emphasis is placed on accuracy. Each hole has been shaped to offer a variety of lies for play to the green. In typical Trent Jones fashion, the design of the course calls for golfers to seriously think about every shot and placement.

Sitting at 2'100m above sea level, the rarefied atmosphere gives extra distance on each correctly struck shot. On most afternoons, gusting westerly winds tend to blow directly on the steeply sloping Lake Course, making play more challenging. Missing a fairway will often necessitate in another ball having to be played.

After check-out, we drive to the Stone Forest - a massive collection of gray lime stone pillars. It is composed of closely knit outcrops of dark gray lime stone karst that have weathered into interesting shapes since their formation beneath a sea some 270 million years ago. In 2007, the Stone Forest was enlisted as World Natural Heritage by UNESCO. After the visit of the Stone Forest, transfer back to the Green Lake Hotel in Kunming.

DAY 12 KUNMING - LIJIANG (B)

After breakfast at the hotel, we drive to the airport and fly to Lijiang (1 hour). You meet your guide upon your arrival at Lijiang Airport, transfer to your hotel, visit the Ancient Town of Lijiang, Black Dragon Pool and Dongba Museum after lunch and spend some time at your own disposal in the Ancient Town of Lijiang. The ancient town - once the center of Lijiang - was enlisted in the UNESCO World Heritage in 1997 and is set amid beautiful scenery and continues to maintain the original flavor of the local lifestyle and its cultural heritage. The Black Dragon Pool is a quite small park to stroll around and a good place to take photos of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Later in the day you visit the Dongba Museum where numerous exhibitions of Naxi and Dongba culture are displayed.

DAY 13 LIJIANG (B)

In the morning, play golf at Lijiang Jade Dragon Snow Mountain Golf Club. This golf course is the highest golf club in the northern hemisphere and its 15th hole has an elevation of over 3'100m. The golf course is designed by internationally renowned designer Neil Haworth. With a fairway of over 8'548 yards, it is considered as the longest fairway in the world.

On the way back to Lijiang you will have the chance to explore the surroundings. Especially Baisha and its wall frescoes are the masterpieces of Naxi, Bai, Tibetan and Han cultures, while the frescoes in Dabaoji Temple represent the harmony between the different religions Taoism, Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. You will then visit Shuhe village, where the Dongba culture originated from and enjoy a falcon show performed by local Naxi people.

DAY 14 LIJIANG (B)

Today is another excursion day where we take you to the famous Tiger Leaping Gorge. With 16km in length, after making its first turn at Shigu, the mighty Yangzi river surges between Haba Snow Mountain and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain through one of the deepest gorges in the world, and it's a steep 3900m from the waters to the snowcapped mountain tops.

DAY 15 LIJIANG - KUNMING (B)

In the morning you take the flight back to Kunming, meet your local guide, transfer to the hotel and visit the Western Hills and Bamboo Temple in the afternoon. Located approximately 15km from Kunming, the Western Hills spread out across a long wedge of parkland on the western side of Lake Dianchi. Dragon Gate, a network of narrow corridors, shrines and grottoes dug out of the hillside by Taoist monks between 1781- 1835, tremendous views open out across the lake from up here. Bamboo Temple dates back to the Tang Dynasty, burned down and rebuilt in the 15th century, these life-size clay figures are stunning, either very realistic and surrealistic, a sculptural tour de force.

DAY 16 KUNMING - SANYA (B)

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to Kunming Sunshine Golf Club. It is located in the north district, only 8km away from Kunming, adjacent to Expo Garden, Golden Temple Forest Park and Wild Animal Zoo; in the northwest it abuts on Kunming Vegetation Park and Black Dragon Pond Park. You can swing in this city mountain Pinehurst course the whole year round. The new airport is situated nearby the club and the new airport superhighway will be the fastest access to the club.

The Kunming Sunshine golf course is designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., the famous American golf course design company. The club is a 18-hole urban mountain golf course built according to international tournament standard.



The total length of the course is 7,217 yards and the pars amount to 72. The course and the facilities cover a total area of 2,419 mu (161.35 hectares). Reclining upon the mountain and situated beside the lake, the course demonstrates the remarkable charm of golf games in both dynamic and still sense. The layout of the course fully reflects the ancient Chinese ideology that human and nature integrate into a harmonious unity, the golf course combines not only the natural

topography and landscape, but also the natural cave, wild flower, pine woods, fruit trees and lake as well as the barrier zone of the course and dotted sceneries. Thus the player can enjoy the fun of tasting ripe fruits straight off the trees in the proper season while playing on this beautiful course, and its scenery changes with the seasons. The course pays high attention to maintenance of sound ecological environment. While you rest after swing, you can see wild hare or squirrel besides the course and in the pine woods. There are wild ducks clustered in the water. Furthermore, you can enjoy the special fun of wild geese chasing each other.

After your game, you drive to Kunming International Airport and take the flight to Sanya, where you will be picked up by the guide and transferred to the hotel. Overnight at Sheraton Sanya Resort, Deluxe Sea view room.

DAY 17 SANYA (B)

Today we transfer you to the Yalong Bay Golf Course, the most famous one in Sanya. This par 72, 7,189 yards from the black tees offers golfers the challenge of playing a golf course that is a regular



host golf course on the European and Asian Tours. With 98 bunkers and a snaking river that dissects the golf course and plays a major part at Yalong Bay Golf Club, the course is a true test for any standard of golfer.

The course, designed in the shape of a dragon's claw, is surrounded by stunning mountains and the South China Sea all make this a picture of tranquility. The Bermuda grass fairway gives a superb playing surface and

ensures playability is at its best for everyone's enjoyment. The greens are TifDwarf ensuring a quality roll on your putts and professional finish to the look of the greens.

The current course record is held by Chapchai Nirat from Thailand who shot a 61 on the first day of the TCL Classic; an event he finally won giving him his maiden tour victory. It's not only professional golfers who enjoy a degree of success but since its opening Yalong Bay Golf Club has awarded 67 golfers with a prize after scoring golf's ultimate achievement; a hole in one.

Robert Trent Jones Junior about Yalong Bay Golf Club: "The golf course concept for the initial 18 holes at Yalong Bay Golf Club is to create a Links Land Championship Resort Course. The gentle rolling terrain has been transformed by use



of native sands mimicking natural dunes of several hundred years ago, before the rice fields were built. A golf course carefully designed to incorporate native grasses and coastal vegetation appears to grow out of the spaces that nature formed. The lakes and wash marsh areas are created to catch and retain the rainfall run off and make a sizable contribution to building and maintaining the underground aquifer"

In the afternoon transfer back to the hotel and the rest of the day is at your own disposal.

DAY 18 SANYA (B)

Today you will be transferred to the Sun Valley Golf Course. With its longest hole of 828 yards and a par 7, a special challenge awaits you on the last day. In the afternoon return to the hotel and free time.

DAY 19 DEPARTURE FROM SANYA (B)

In the morning transfer to the airport for your departure flight. End of trip.

For inquiries and bookings please contact Mr. Roman Lange:

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RATES

Rates per golfer in standard twin rooms, single supplement on request

Rate per Golfer	Rate per Golfer	Rate per Golfer	Rate per Golfer
RMB	USD	EURO	CHF
52'000	7'600	5'200	7'800

Rates per non-golfer in standard twin rooms, single supplement on request

Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person
RMB	USD	EURO	CHF
45'100	6'650	4'500	6'800

Prices subject to change due to exchange rate fluctuations.

Prices based on the value of the Chinese Yuan CNY.

**INCLUDED**

- all green fees, caddies, golf carts and locker fees on the golf courses
- all flights and airport taxes in China mainland in Economy Class (Shenzhen - Guilin, Guilin - Kunming, Kunming - Lijiang, Lijiang - Kunming, Kunming - Sanya)
- accommodation in selected hotels as mentioned in the itinerary
- meals as mentioned in the itinerary (described as B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- transportation in 4-seater a/c car as mentioned in the itinerary
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary
- sightseeing and tour guides as mentioned in the itinerary (apart from Mission Hills, guides will help you to check-in at all hotels, confirm your tee times and introduce you to the golf resorts)

NOT INCLUDED

- China visa and international flight tickets
- departure flight from Sanya on day 19
- 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

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

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.