China 2009 Solar Eclipse Tour

- Full Solar Eclipse in Shanghai on July 22 2009
- UNESCO World Heritage Site Lijiang Old Town
- Jade Dragon Snow Mountain
- Bike riding to explore Naxi Minority villages around Lijiang
- Trek through Tiger-Leaping Gorge
- Shangri-La and Tibetan Buddhist Monastery Songzanlin
Solar Eclipse 2009

Solar Eclipse Tour in Shanghai and Yunnan 2009

On Wednesday, July 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2009, a solar eclipse will be visible in a small corridor through India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Central China. Among other Chinese cities such as Chengdu, Chongqing, Wuhan and Hangzhou, totality will be visible in Shanghai and will last for up to 6 minutes and 39 seconds. Thus this will be the longest total solar eclipse in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century and will only be surpassed in duration on 13\textsuperscript{th} June 2132.

- **Travel date:** 13. July - 23. July 2009
- **Destinations:** Lijiang, Jade Dragon Mountain, Tiger Leaping Gorge, Shangrila, Shanghai
- **Duration:** 11 days
- **Starting in:** Beijing / Shanghai
- **Ending in:** Shanghai
- **Group size:** min. 6 participants, max. 19 participants

Tour Introduction: Yunnan Province

In Chinese, Yunnan means “south of the clouds” and its capital Kunming is also known as “spring city”. China's most diversified province with its mild climate, offering more or less everything from rain forest to close to 7000 meter high peaks, boasts half of China’s animal and plant species. About one third of China's ethnological minorities call Yunnan their home.

Your trip begins in Lijiang with its picturesque Old Town (UNESCO World Heritage Site). You will explore the villages of Shuhe and Baisha by bicycle and gain an insight into the life of the local Naxi minority. Then you will drive to the glaciers of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (or Yulong Xueshan in Chinese), hike one and a half day through the Tiger Leaping Gorge and visit China's self-proclaimed Shangri-La (Zhongdian) - named after the famous novel “Lost Horizon” by James Hilton – with its famous Songzanlin Monastery, the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yunnan Province. From Shangrila we fly to Shanghai for the total solar eclipse on July 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2009.

Please visit our website [www.hiddenchina.net](http://www.hiddenchina.net) for more information.
DAY 1, 13\textsuperscript{th} JULY 2009    ARRIVAL IN CHINA    (D)

You arrive in Beijing or Shanghai and change planes for your connecting flight to Lijiang via Kunming. Upon arrival in Lijiang, you will be picked up at the airport by our guide and transferred to the hotel. In the evening we will have a welcome dinner.

Accommodation: 3 star courtyard hotel in old town of Lijiang

Please note: this itinerary can be tailor-made for your individual requirements. If you do not want to directly fly to Lijiang from Beijing but rather spend a few days in China's capital or want to extend your trip after the total solar eclipse in Shanghai, please contact us with your requests!

DAY 2, 14\textsuperscript{th} JULY 2009    LIJIANG    (B/L)

Today we explore the Old Town of Lijiang (UNESCO World Heritage Site), visit the governor's house and make an excursion onto Lion Hill with its beautiful views over the tiled roofs of the Lijiang old town and its quiet surrounding parks. We explore the Jade Spring Park (also known as Black Dragon Pool or Heilongtan in Chinese), which is the headwater of Yushui River flowing through Lijiang.

Then we visit a local Dongba paper making studio. The Dongba are believed to be the priests of the Bön religion and play a major role in the local Naxi culture. They have been making paper for over 1'000 years using wood from forests which only grow in this region at an altitude of about 2400m. This handmade paper is 100 percent natural and can be preserved for hundreds of years.

The evening is free; take a stroll through the ancient town, go shopping or just relax near the little streams that flow through picturesque Lijiang.

Accommodation: 3 star courtyard hotel in old town of Lijiang

DAY 3, 15\textsuperscript{th} JULY 2009    LIJIANG BICYCLE TOUR TO SHUHE AND BAISHA    (B/L)

Today we cycle along the ancient “Tea and Horse Caravan Road” (or Chamadao in Chinese), which is sometimes also referred to as the “Southern Silk Road of China”, although silk was actually not included in the goods transported over it.

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This caravan road in the southwest of China is far less known than its “big brother”: the famous Silk Road. Chamadao means “the tea and horse road” indicating its importance in the trade of tea and horses. Horse caravans transported goods like tea, sugar and salt from Yunnan and Sichuan to Tibet. The Tea and Horse Caravan Road also served as an important corridor for communication between the ethnic minority groups of the region as well as economic and cultural exchange between China and India.

On the way we will explore several Naxi villages, visit a Naxi family and cycle to two important stations along the ancient Tea and Horse Caravan Road: Shuhe and Baisha. We will have lunch in Baisha, the former capital of the Naxi Kingdom, located on the Lijiang plains, through which the Mongols led by Kublai Khan invaded the Nanzhao Kingdom and conquered the Chinese Imperial armies in the 13th century. Baisha’s old Taoist/Buddhist frescoes are some of the last of their kind in China and show a gathering of immortals and deities of both religions.

Accommodation: 3 star courtyard hotel in old town of Lijiang

DAY 4, 16th JULY 2009 JADE DRAGON MOUNTAIN - TIGER LEAPING GORGE (B/L/D)

Today we drive to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (Yulong Xueshan in Chinese), a mountain range near Lijiang (about 15km). The range consists of 13 peaks, the highest is Shanzidou (5'596m). The view of the mountain from Black Dragon Pool (see day 2 for more details) resembling a lying jade dragon is noted as one of the finest views in China. The Jade Dragon Snow Mountain is also home to a vast number of wild plants and rare animals.

We ascend by cable car to the summit station at an altitude of 4506m from where you will have a great view on the glaciers. Then we travel on to the Tiger Leaping Gorge (Hutiao Xia in Chinese), a canyon of the Yangtze River situated about 60km north of Lijiang. We will make a stop at Shigu Town, where the Yangtze takes its first turn to the north, forming the famous First Bend of the Yangtze River. Legend has it that in order to escape from a hunter, a tiger jumped across the Yangtze River at the narrowest point (approx. 25m), hence the name.

Accommodation: guest house

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**DAY 5, 17th JULY 2009  TIGER LEAPING GORGE HIKE DAY 1 (B/L/D)**

Today we start our hike through the Tiger Leaping Gorge at Qiaotou. The track is used by the Naxi as part of everyday life with breathtaking scenery, mountain views, a variety of micro ecosystems and waterfalls. We will stop for lunch on the way and reach the guest house at approximately 18:00.

**Accommodation:** guest house facing the gorge, room with private toilet and shower

**DAY 6, 18th JULY 2009  TIGER LEAPING GORGE DAY 2 (B/L/D)**

We continue our hike until we reach “Tina's” where we will have a late lunch. From Daju we will take a ferry boat to leave the gorge and then have to drive for another two hours to reach Shangri-La (Zhongdian). On the way you can clearly observe the difference in the scenery as we leave Naxi territory and enter the broader grasslands of the local Tibetan population. We will have an authentic Tibetan style hot-pot dinner.

**Accommodation:** 3 star courtyard hotel, old town of Shangri-La

**DAY 7, 19th JULY 2009  SHANGRILA (ZHONGDIAN) (B/L)**

Today we visit the old town of Shangrila as well as the Songsanlin Monastery, the biggest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yunnan and also one of the most famous monasteries in the Kang region.

Then we will drive to a small village where the people continue their tradition of pottery and handcraft. We will have lunch with local specialties (chicken stew) and you will be invited to visit a family workshop to gain insight into the local pottery production, the forming techniques and skills.

**Accommodation:** 3 star courtyard hotel in old town of Shangri-La

**DAY 8, 20th JULY 2009  SHANGRILA – KUNMING - SHANGHAI (B)**

You fly to Shanghai via Kunming. The afternoon is at your own disposal. In the evening, you might want to go on a cruise along the Bund to enjoy the night view on the city's impressive skyline.

**Accommodation:** 3 star hotel in Shanghai

**DAY 9, 21st JULY 2009  SHANGHAI (B/L)**

In the morning we visit one of the “water towns” near Shanghai, have a typical Shanghai-style lunch and explore the Yuyuan Garden as well as Nanjing Road in the afternoon.

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The Yuyuan Garden is located in the center of the Old City and is considered one of the most lavish Chinese gardens in the region. It was constructed in 1577 by Pan Yunduan, a government officer of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), who built the garden for his parents. During the late Ming Dynasty, the garden fell into disrepair until 1760 when some rich merchants bought it and spent more than 20 years reconstructing the buildings. In the 19th and 20th century, the garden again suffered extensive damage, especially during the Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion. The Yuyuan Garden was repaired for five years until 1961 when it was opened to the public.

Nanjing Road is the main shopping street of Shanghai and one of the world's busiest shopping streets. The city of Shanghai became a treaty port after the Opium War (1839-1842) and Nanjing Road was first the British Concession, then the International Settlement and therefore became the earliest shopping street in Shanghai importing a great amount of foreign goods.

**Accommodation:** 3 star hotel in Shanghai

**DAY 10, 22nd JULY 2009  SHANGHAI  (B)**

The total solar eclipse will take place at around 09:30, lasting approximately six minutes. A total solar eclipse is a spectacular natural phenomenon as the sun seems to disappear in the middle of the day and the sky darkens in a matter of minutes. We will take you to one of the best spots to observe this impressive sight (or you can discuss with your guide if you have a special place in mind). The rest of the day is at your own disposal.

Accommodation: 3 star hotel in Shanghai

**DAY 11, 23rd JULY 2009  SHANGHAI  (B)**

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

Rates in standard twin rooms, single supplement on request

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CANCELLATION POLICY

- 25% for more than 7 days notice
- 50% for less than 7 days notice
- 80% for less than 3 days notice

INCLUDED

- experienced tour guide for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- flights Shanghai-Lijiang, Shangri-La-Kunming, Kunming-Shanghai (all in economy class)
- accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- meals as mentioned in the itinerary (described as B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary
- all transfers (private transportation) and highway fees as mentioned in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED

- international flights
- 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

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BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS

SWITZERLAND
Hiddenchina.net GmbH
Unterloostr. 12
CH-8461 Oerlingen

Credit Suisse Winterthur
Account number 339538-61
Clearing Nr. 4835
BIC: CRESCHZZ84A
IBAN: CH77 0483 5033 9538 6100 0

PAYPAL ACCOUNT DETAILS

Click on a button to pay directly with money from your bank account or credit card (fees apply):

For inquiries and bookings please contact Mr. Roman Lange:

Mobile: +86 13681292401
Phone: +86 (0)10 58570190 (China)
       +41 (0)44 5866635 (Switzerland)
Fax: +86 (0)10 58570190
Email: rlange@hiddenchina.net
MSN: rlange@hiddenchina.net
Skype: rl.hiddenchina
Yahoo: rl.hiddenchina
AIM: rl hiddenchina
GoogleTalk: roman.lange
ICQ: 121-904-061

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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.

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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 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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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