
China & the Yangtze River

CRUISE TOUR

Plus optional extension in

Tokyo, Japan; Bangkok, Thailand

2014

China & the Yangtze

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1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable.

Recommended number of blank pages:

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this adventure, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** 3 blank “Visa” pages.
- **Optional pre-trip extension to Tokyo, Japan:** 1 additional page.
- **Optional post-trip extension to Bangkok, Thailand:** 1 additional page.
- **Base and both extensions:** A total of 5 pages.

Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense.**

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at www.travel.state.gov for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

***NOTE:** When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.*

Visa Required—China (main program)

Visa Not Required—Japan, Thailand (optional extensions)

We'll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we're providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. *This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.*

- **China—Visa required.** You must get your visa before departing; visas are not available on arrival.
- **Japan (optional extension)—Visa not required.**
- **Thailand (optional extension)—Visa not required.** A Thai visa is not required for stays of less than 30 days.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. Or contact PVS International, who can also assist non-U.S. citizens:

PVS International
Passport & Visa Services
1700 N Moore Street
Rosslyn Center, suite 310
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990

Backup Photocopies

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

Optional Tours—*Early Purchase Advised*

The Beijing Opera with dinner

To pre-book the Beijing Opera optional tour you must do so by 45 days prior to departure. This tour can also be booked onsite, but space is limited.

The Chinese opera is an ancient theatrical art, and the opera troupes in Beijing set the national standard for this highest expression of Chinese culture. This is not like the Western opera, full of arias and centered around singing. It's a beautiful and delicate blend of grand opera, ballet, song, drama, and comedy that spans the entire history of China, its folklore, mythology, literature, and culture. The cost of this optional tour is approximately \$65 per person and includes dinner.

Tang Dynasty Dinner & Show

To pre-book the Tang Dynasty Dinner and Show optional tour you must do so by 45 days prior to departure. This tour can also be booked onsite, but space is limited.

Relive the colorful and prosperous history of the Tang Dynasty with a dinner and cultural show. The beautiful costumes, enchanting dances, and ancient music of the Tang Dynasty—a period of peace and exceptional creativity from AD 618 to 907—have been carefully recreated for your enjoyment. This type of performance has been treasured in China as a national art that reflects the glory and richness of the Tang Dynasty. Dinner is served before the show. The cost of this excursion is about \$90 per person and includes dinner.

2. YOUR HEALTH



Keep Your Abilities In Mind

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

Pacing

- 20 days, with 4 nights aboard a Victoria Cruises river ship, and 5 hotel stays

Physical Requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 2 miles unassisted and participate in 2-4 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 51-91°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months
- December weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time

Terrain

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestone

Transportation

- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, train, 28- to 30-seat boat, 100-seat river boat, and 208- to 218-passenger Victoria cruise ship
- 5 internal flights of 1-2 hours each

Cuisine

- Most meals will be based on the local cuisine
- Meals onboard will feature a mix of local specialties and familiar American standards

Accommodations

- When touring, Asian-style toilets (squat-style, rather than with seats) may be only available facilities

This trip involves a *lot* of walking through sites and airports that do not have ramps and elevators. You will use more stairways than you usually encounter.



Health Check and Inoculations

Basic Illness Prevention

It's common for people traveling in contained spaces to be more susceptible to easily transmitted viral and bacterial illnesses such as flu, stomach and respiratory bugs, and colds. The single most effective way to prevent this is frequent hand washing. We ask all travelers to be extra diligent in their normal hand-washing hygiene, and to drink plenty of fluids for proper hydration. Simple steps like these will help ensure that everyone enjoys the comfortable, carefree vacation they looked forward to.

If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name and showing the basic chemical compositions.

Vaccinations

Check with the CDC: To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them at:

Online —Visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/travel, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

By phone—Call the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Consult your doctor: After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

Health Precautions

Traveler's diarrhea: Perhaps the greatest health risk in this region is traveler's diarrhea, caused by eating contaminated fruit or vegetables or drinking contaminated water. Despite your best efforts, you may get diarrhea at some point. When dining out on your own, watch what you eat. Stay away from ice, uncooked food, and non-pasteurized milk and milk products. Drink only bottled water, which is readily available. Mild cases of diarrhea may respond to Imodium or Pepto-Bismol (not as strong as Imodium); both can be purchased over the counter before you go. For more stubborn cases, you might want to bring along a prescription medication, such as Ciprofloxacin.

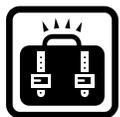


Jet Lag Relief

You will feel better on the first days of your trip if, shortly before you leave home, you start to adjust to the different time zone of your destination. Since you will cross several time zones to reach your destination, you may lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then will have to suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue—often compounded by insomnia and general restlessness—irritability, and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well rested. Try to begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying.
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane, and make an effort to get up and walk about the cabin a few times to keep your blood circulation normal.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS



Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

In addition to the international flights, you will also take domestic flights within the region on your main trip. The luggage limits on these flights are less than the average allowance for international flights. **This means that even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions, as indicated below.**

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 44lbs for checked bags and 11 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION LIMITS	
The extension has the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Penalty for excess baggage—payable in cash only: In China, when you check in for domestic flights, both your carry-on and suitcase will be weighed and measured. If your carry-on exceeds the weight or size restriction, you must check it. If your suitcase or carry-on exceeds the weight restriction, you will be charged a penalty fee of about \$2-\$3 for each pound over the limit, payable in Chinese RMB—cash only. (This fee is subject to change without notice.)</p> <p>Note: While the restrictions noted above are China’s official guidelines, we cannot guarantee how or if they will be enforced. Our luggage is sometimes weighed together as a group, in which case there might not be a penalty unless several group members are over the limit. Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy, may include spot checks and may not always be applied consistently. Expect the imposition of penalties and fines to be immediate, however, when and if restrictions are enforced. Before you choose to ignore published restrictions you should first ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> Even if you answer yes, you should ensure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit than the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage, even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your *Important Information* booklet.

Luggage Suggestions

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag. It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

***Tip:** Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*

Airport Security/TSA

Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change. To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at www.tsa.gov/public, which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.

Liquids and your carry on: Per the TSA's **3-1-1 rule**: Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure. Note that this rule is used increasingly in Europe, as well.

Locking your luggage:

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words "TSA" or "TSA-approved" on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE



GCT Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCT Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in and boarding of your flight (beginning your main trip or your optional pre-trip extension). Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time and at the gate one hour before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Asia Arrival: At the beginning of your main trip or your optional pre-trip extension, a GCT Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit Customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel.

***Important note:** Airport porters are NOT allowed in the Customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a complimentary cart, which you then will move through Customs. When you exit the airport building, your motorcoach driver will load your luggage onto your motorcoach.*

Delays Do Happen – Despite the Best of Plans. Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the GCT local contact in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff are not notified of flight rerouting, and our airport representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.

U.S. Return: At the end of your main trip or optional post-trip extension, you'll be transferred to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCT Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. (Again, it is our goal to have our GCT Representative waiting to assist your group. However, in rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.)

Please note: *If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/late date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price. Transfers must be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at 1-800-321-2835. For more information, please see your Important Information booklet.*

Flying with a Travel Companion

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

5. MONEY MATTERS



How to Carry Your Money

Traveler's checks—not recommended: We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. To cash a traveler's check, you usually must show your passport. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars have an advantage. Cash is more readily exchanged and accepted than traveler's checks, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate. You might also consider using a debit card, another reliable payment method.

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. You can change money at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

ATMs

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account, and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

***Note on ATM use:** Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.*

Credit Cards

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify the credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

***Please note:** Optional tour payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. For this reason we ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months following your trip. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "**OPT Boston**" (depending on your credit card company).*

Currency by Destination

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

China & Hong Kong

The currency in China is called the *renminbi* ("people's money"), abbreviated RMB. It is based on the *yuan*, which is divided into 100 *fen*. Ten *fen* make a *jiao* (pronounced as "mao"). Banknotes are issued in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 50, and 100 *yuan*; 1, 2, and 5 *jiao*, and 1, 2, and 5 *fen*.

Each time you change money, you will get a receipt. Keep these exchange slips. You can exchange any leftover yuan into Hong Kong dollars at the bank at the airport in Guilin before you depart from mainland China.

The currency in Hong Kong is the Hong Kong dollar. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 dollars
- Coins: 10, 20, and 50 cents and 1, 2, 5, and 10 dollars

Banking Hours

China's biggest bank, the Bank of China, is open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday, with no closing time during lunch hours. Smaller banks such as Commercial Bank, Construction Bank, and Agriculture Bank are open during weekends. The bank offices in the hotels, where you may exchange U.S. dollars or traveler's checks for local currency, have longer banking hours.

Japan

The *yen* is the official currency of Japan. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- banknotes: 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000 *yen*
- coins: 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, and 500 *yen*

Banking hours: Typical hours are 9 am to 3 pm; banks are closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Thailand

The basic unit of currency is the *baht*, easily distinguished by color and marked with both Thai and Arabic numerals. There are 100 *satang* to the *baht*. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 20 *baht* (green), 50 *baht* (blue), 100 *baht* (red), 500 *baht* (purple), and 1,000 *baht* (reddish brown)
- Coins: 25 *satang*, 50 *satang*, 1 *baht*, 2 *baht*, 5 *baht*, and 10 *baht*

Banking hours: Usually banks are open 8:30 am to 3:30 pm; they are closed on Saturdays and Sundays.



Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

China

An unforgettable part of any visit to China is the fabulous wealth of shopping you'll find—from delicate hand-painted scrolls to intricately woven Oriental rugs. To help prepare you for the riches that lie ahead, we've gathered some helpful hints from our experienced Program Directors.

First, here's a lay of the land. Regional specialties abound; following are some popular items and the best places to find them:

Cloisonné, jade—Beijing

Oriental silk rugs—Shanghai

Silk, embroidery—Suzhou

Tea leaves—Guilin

Jewelry—Hong Kong

Lacquerware, furniture—Xian

Throughout China, you'll discover wonderful buys (in a range of prices) on a variety of gifts like chopsticks (\$2 and up), signature seals—or chops (\$10 and up, depending on size and material), cloisonné earrings (from \$5), Mao hats (\$2-\$7), and pure silk kimonos (\$35 and up). You can pay with U.S. currency, traveler's checks, or credit cards. Bargaining is allowed at the small privately run shopping booths typically found at sightseeing spots; at these, you must pay with cash only. Credit cards and traveler's checks will not be taken.

Please note: When shopping in mainland China, beware of counterfeit RMB given by street vendors as change—by paying in exact change whenever possible, you'll avoid being cheated.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong is rightly called a shopper's paradise. Among the best buys are pearls, diamonds, gold, jewelry, watches, Chinese clothes and handicrafts. Your GCT Program Director will be pleased to offer you some shopping guidance. There are no set hours for shops but, generally speaking, they open as follows:

Hong Kong Island—Central District: 10 am-6 pm;

Causeway Bay and Wanchai: 10 am-9:30 pm.

Kowloon—Tsimshatsui, Yaumatei, and Mongkok commercial districts: 10 am-9 pm;

Tsimshatsui East: 10 am-7:30 pm. Most shops are open on Sundays.

If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

In Japan

Traditional Japanese crafts and souvenirs that make good buys include Japanese dolls, lacquer ware, bamboo baskets, ikebana accessories, ceramics, chopsticks, fans, masks, knives, scissors, sake, and silk or cotton kimonos. Handmade Japanese paper products, like umbrellas, lanterns, boxes, and stationery, are much less expensive here than they are outside the country. Japan is famous for its electronics, but you can probably find these products more cheaply in the U.S.

An enjoyable aspect of shopping in Tokyo is that specific areas are often devoted to certain goods, sold wholesale but also available to the individual shopper. Here's an overview:

Kappabashi Dori (station: Tawaramachi): kitchenware

Kanda (station: Jimbocho): bookstores

Akihabara (station: Akihabara): electronics

Ginza (station: Ginza): fashion and art galleries

Shibuya (station: Shibuya): designer boutiques

Sales tax refund: If your purchases in one store exceed 10,000 yen (about \$90), you can get an immediate refund for the 5% consumption tax. Ask the sales clerk for details and be prepared to present your passport at the tax-exemption counter. Refunds are not given for food, drinks, tobacco, cosmetics, film, and batteries.

In Thailand

Fabric is possibly the best all-around buy in Thailand. Thai silk, renowned for its lush colors and pleasantly rough texture, is considered some of the best silk in the world and can be purchased in Bangkok. Thailand is also renowned as one of the world's largest exporters of gems and gold ornaments, rivaled only by India and Sri Lanka. If you know what you're doing, you can find some very good buys in both unset gems and finished jewelry. The best bargains in gems are jade, rubies, and sapphires. Be sure to shop around before you make a purchase. Other good buys in Thailand include hand-woven cottons, decorative items made of silver, Thai bronze ware, lacquer ware, hill-tribe crafts, and teakwood carvings.

Bangkok is famous the world over for its street markets—Pratunam, Chatuchak Park, Khlong Toey, Sampheng (Chinatown), Banglamphu, and many more. Even if you don't want to spend any money, they're great places to wander around. And by all means, bargain, especially at outdoor stalls. The price tag is a hint as to what they hope to get, but they'll often settle for less.

For top-end shopping, the two main centers in Bangkok are the area around the Oriental Hotel off Charoen Krung (New) Road and the relatively new River City shopping complex on the river next to the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel. You can also visit the impressive Siam Paragon and Central World shopping complexes, and two big department store chains, Robinson and Central, have branches in various parts of Bangkok.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. **1-877-277-5511**
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.



To Tip or Not to Tip

Sometimes *that* is the question. Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Listed below are our recommendations for the tips that are not included in your tour price. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

- **GCT Program Director:** It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Travel Program Director, especially if he or she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated.
- **Shipboard:** Shipboard gratuities to the cruise personnel are not included in the cost of your cruise. Victoria Cruises has adopted standard ocean cruise line practices and implemented a flat service fee in lieu of discretionary tipping for common shipboard services. A general tipping charge for the ship’s crew in the amount of RMB 150 (about \$24.00 at time of writing) per traveler will be charged to your credit card upon embarkation. This fee is currently less than prior suggested tipping levels.
- **For services outside common shipboard duties:** For the river guide, who is with you throughout your cruise, we recommend \$2-3 per person per day. For your shore excursions with local guides, we recommend tipping \$1-\$2 per person to the guide and \$1 per person to the driver or boatman. *Note: You may receive tipping guidelines directly from the cruise line, which may vary from these. However, the above are the guidelines recommended by Grand Circle Travel.*
- **Driver and Local Guides during the land portion of your tour:** \$2 per person for each half-day tour/\$3 per person for each full-day tour.
- **Hotel Housekeepers:** A tip equivalent to \$1 dollar per person, per day.
- **Leisure Activities:** When you have time to explore independently, we offer the following suggestions:
 - **China:** Even though restaurants and bars will automatically add a 10% service charge to your bill, you’re still expected to leave small change for the waiter (about 5-10%). However, in small, neighborhood restaurants you do not need to tip. You are expected to tip taxi drivers; simply round up your bill to the nearest dollar, or add a one-dollar tip. Tip barbers and beauticians 5% or 10% of the bill. If you use a public restroom with an attendant, you may be expected to leave a small gratuity—about the equivalent of 25-50 U.S. cents is fine.
 - **Thailand:** Tips are generally given for good service, except when a price has been negotiated in advance. In taxis where you have to bargain the fare, tipping isn’t necessary. A 10% gratuity is appreciated at a restaurant when no service charge has been added to the bill.
 - **Japan:** Tipping is not generally expected in Japan.

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



In General

Travel light. You'll only require a few changes of clothing—laundry and dry cleaning services are excellent at most of your hotels, and are often performed overnight. But be forewarned: the faster the service, the steeper the fee.

A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.

Pack casual clothes. Comfortable, low-key apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations and aboard ship. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes are recommended. At dinner, you will not need dressy clothing; men don't need a tie or jacket, and women do not require a fancy dress or high-heels. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's up to you.

Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions. Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season. In March or November, evenings may even fall into the 30s. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended. Evenings call for a warm outfit and a heavy sweater or jacket. A sturdy windproof shell over a heavy sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece top is ideal for being out on deck at night. On land excursions, dress in layers. You can then easily adjust to any temperature shifts by removing or adding a layer. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat. A waterproof jacket with a hood is ideal.

Good walking shoes are critical. China's ancient landmarks, great cities, fascinating museums, and historic temples invite exploration by foot. But negotiating the country's uneven sidewalks and steep public stairways can be a challenge, even for the surefooted. Supportive walking or sports shoes are essential. Those with rubber soles will provide the best traction aboard ship.

In Thailand: Thai culture is somewhat conservative, so avoid sleeveless shirts, tank tops, or short shorts—especially at Buddhist temples, where shorts and knee-baring skirts are. Trousers or a long skirt are a must for temple visits. It is common to remove your shoes inside the temple, so easily removed shoes and a couple of extra pairs of socks makes sense.



Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, should your checked bags go astray. Keep camera gear and important papers in plastic bags for protection. With a daypack you can remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear for walking tours and excursions.



Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting /outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.



Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

What not to pack: Do *not* pack aerosol cans. The Chinese Customs Authorities do not allow aerosol cans in your carry-on bag and will confiscate any they find. (Aerosol cans in your checked luggage tend to leak during air travel.) Also avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

Illegal items: *It is illegal to bring photographs, films, cassette tapes, tape recordings, video tapes, etc., that are in any way detrimental to Chinese political, economic, cultural, or moral interests into China.* Hotels and your ship are usually stocked with basic soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, and hair dryers (but aboard ship these items will be supplied to you only if you request them). We have still mentioned these items in the checklists below, in case you prefer to bring your own.

Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET, especially for the Bangkok optional extension
- Travel money bag/money belt
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial waterless hand cleanser
- Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- Compact umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards (as well as the originals)
- Extra passport-sized photos

Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta/Lomotil
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids; Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Other Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Hair dryer
- Washcloth
- Handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (*Woolite*), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” below
- Travel journal/note pad/phrase book
- Tea bags (tea in China is typically green or jasmine)
- Instant coffee (Chinese coffee differs from U.S. brands)
- Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or a whirlpool
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Water bottle for land excursions
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- Reading materials
- Home address book



7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict the weather you'll have on your travels – our local weathermen are lucky to get tomorrow right! So, as your departure nears, it's a great idea to visit the *My Account* feature of www.gct.com for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) for those forecasts and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's even more important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

China: Like the U.S., China encompasses a huge area, with temperatures and climates that vary across a wide spectrum of extremes. Similarly, China has a primarily temperate climate, with four distinct seasons in most regions.

Central region: Shanghai is a coastal city with long, warm, humid summers; even hotter are Wuhan and Chongqing, located in the area known as “China’s oven.” Autumn is typically cooler with some rain; heavier showers fall in spring. Suzhou, located in the Yangtze basin about 50 miles west of Shanghai, has similar weather.

North-Central region: Beijing and Xian lie in this region, where spring and autumn are pleasantly warm, and summer hot and humid. Rain falls year-round.

Southeast region: This region encompasses the lower Yangtze River Valley and includes the city of Guilin. The climate here is semitropical, comparable to the Gulf Coast of Florida. Summers are very warm and humid. In fall temperatures are a bit lower, and usually the humidity has diminished significantly.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong’s climate is subtropical, with hot temperatures and high humidity much of the year. Damp spells can occur year-round. The winter months are slightly cooler than those of the spring and fall, when the weather is typically comfortably warm and sunny.

Tokyo (optional pre-trip extension): Tokyo, like most of Japan, has four seasons that are similar to those of the east coast of the United States. Spring is comfortably warm and sunny, with fresh, dry air. Summer begins in June and is heralded by the rainy season, which lasts from about mid-June to mid-July. Although it doesn’t rain every day, it does rain a lot. After the rain stops, it can turn very hot (in the 80s) and humid, due to the moist maritime air.

From the end of August through September it is typhoon season, though the storms stay out at sea and only thunderstorms hit the land. Autumn, which lasts until about November, is pleasant and slightly cool, with lovely fall foliage.

Bangkok (optional post-trip extension): Bangkok is decidedly tropical, with three more or less distinct seasons: hot (March to May), rainy (June to October), and cooler and dry (November to February). But anytime of the year, a heat wave or a tropical shower can occur. Spurts of high humidity can make the air dense and sticky as well.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?										
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>										
	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Tokyo, Japan (optional pre-trip extension)										
High	54	64	72	76	82	86	79	69	61	53
Low	41	50	58	66	71	75	69	58	49	40
Beijing, China										
High	52	67	78	85	86	85	78	66	49	37
Low	33	47	57	66	72	69	59	47	32	22
Chongqing, China										
High	62	70	79	83	90	91	80	70	62	52
Low	52	59	67	72	77	77	71	62	54	47
Shanghai, China										
High	53	65	74	81	88	87	80	72	61	51
Low	42	52	61	69	77	77	69	59	48	37
Bangkok, Thailand (optional post-trip extension)										
High	92	94	92	91	90	90	89	89	88	87
Low	78	80	80	80	80	78	77	77	74	70

Please note: The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree *average* high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY



In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (*Tip: you can download **this** document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.*)

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.



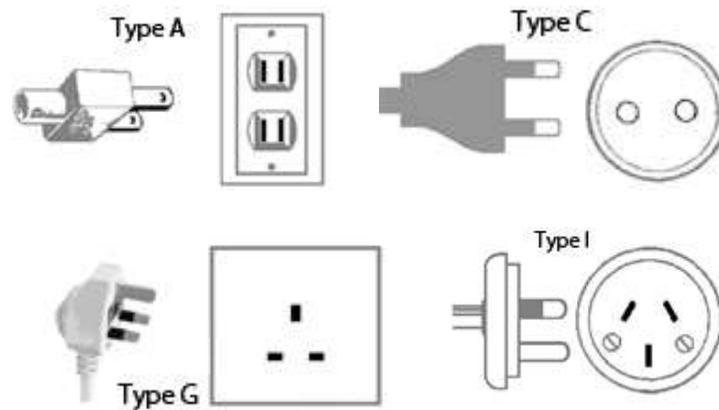
Regional Electricity

When traveling overseas, there are a few differences to keep in mind about electricity. First, the voltage is usually different. Second, the plugs might not be the same shape. Lastly, the availability of power can vary.

Voltage: Electricity in China (including Tibet and Hong Kong) and Thailand is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.) Electricity in Japan is 100 volts, so you can easily run U.S. appliances without a transformer, but they might be a little slower or may take a little longer to charge in Japan.

Plugs: The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet—Type A, Type B, and so on. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B (with a grounding pin). Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

- **Overall, A and C are by far the most common plugs in this region. Type G tends to found in Hong Kong only and Type I is not common in hotels.**
- China: A (same as the U.S.), G, or I
- Thailand: A or C
- Japan: A (same as the U.S.)



To plug something from the U.S. into a C, G, or I socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you *might* also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Availability: Barring the occasional power outage, electricity is readily available on this trip.



Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites www.travelcell.com and www.globalcellularrental.com have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

Phone Calling Cards

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.



Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are *not* permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim *or* bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. YOUR YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE SHIP



The Victoria Cruise Fleet: *Victoria Katarina, Victoria Lianna, Victoria Grace, Victoria Jenna and Victoria Selina*

During your Yangtze River cruise, you'll travel aboard the *Victoria Katarina, Victoria Lianna, Victoria Grace, Victoria Jenna and Victoria Selina*, each a First-Class Victoria Cruise China river ship. An exclusive cruise operator based in New York, Victoria Cruises began Yangtze cruising in 1994 with the inaugural sailing of Victoria I. Sister ships followed in subsequent years. All of the Victoria ships have modern navigation tools, and are designed for the unique conditions of the Yangtze. They exceed standard safety requirements, with full double hulls, and are fitted with the best equipment. Please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, are relatively small, and ship amenities and accommodations are more basic than you may be used to in the west. Attire onboard is strictly casual. All shore excursions are included, except those offered by the Victoria Cruise line itself.

Each Victoria Cruise ship is fully air conditioned, features Chinese food at meals, and offers some convenient services, including photocopying, mail services, and access to a fax machine. Internet services are currently offered onboard the ships.

Recreational activities include Tai Chi classes and dances in the lounge. Other amenities include a sun deck, massage facilities, and 24-hour room service. A physician is also onboard. For your convenience, all announcements are in English. A roster of daily activities and special events, such as lectures, will be distributed.

Your accommodations are in an outside cabin with individual air conditioning and heating controls, cabin to cabin phone, two lower berths, and private bath with stall shower. Cabins are basic, but comfortable, and on the small size (a double is 155 square feet).

Note on flashlights: Dock areas often have uneven surfaces and are poorly lit at night. A flashlight is highly recommended for use when you return to the ship after dark. Small but bright LED flashlights are ideal for travel use.

Your Resident GCT Program Directors

During your exclusive Grand Circle Travel Cruise Tour, your group of up to 42 travelers will have reliable assistance available at all times from an onsite Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is a resident of mainland China who is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Your Program Director is supported along the way by local Chinese tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Travel Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle Travel, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of the Program Director throughout your Cruise Tour. If you take our optional Bangkok land extension, you will have the services of a local guide who is a resident of Thailand. Our optional Tokyo land extension offers the guidance of a local guide who is a resident of Japan.

10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Cruise Tour. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an Internet search is the ideal way to get the most up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Travel Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.



Cuisine

In China, most hotels serve a substantial, Chinese/Western-style breakfast buffet. Chinese food will be served (family-style from a lazy susan) at lunch and dinner for most of your China travel. Chinese dishes may seem simple compared to your favorite entrees at home, yet they are not only nutritious and low-fat, they are also part of the Chinese culture which you have traveled so far to discover. Western-style dinners will be served on your program, but as in most foreign countries, the local cuisine is more readily available and more easily prepared. We ask for your recognition that the partaking of local cuisine is an integral, if not inevitable, part of any travel experience in non-Western countries.

Included beverages are local soft drinks, beer, and carbonated water. Coca-Cola or other soft drinks cost approximately \$1.50. If you choose not to eat with the group, you will receive no credit for the meal. Western-style meals cost approximately \$20. Chocolate, cookies, and candies are available at all hotels, airports, and Friendship Stores.



Drinking Water

Avoid drinking tap water. But you can safely drink the boiled water that hotels provide in thermos flasks for tea-making. It is made from purified water and is safe. Alternatively, the hotel might offer a water boiler so you can boil tap water for tea. Local beverages are also safe. Aboard ship in your cabin, the water in your thermos is further filtered through a boiler system and is safe to drink.



Laundry Service

Overnight laundry service and dry cleaning are available at most of your hotels for an additional fee. Aboard the Victoria Cruise river ship, laundry service is efficient and costs about the same as it would in your hotel, but dry cleaning is not available.

Tokyo in Brief—Optional Extension

To help you make the most of your extension in Tokyo, Japan, the following information provides you with practical travel details on the layout of the city, shopping areas, money matters, and more. Your local guide will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.



City Layout and Details

Tokyo is situated at one end of Tokyo Bay, where it spreads across the Kanto Plain. The city still retains some of its Edo Period structures. Most notable is the Imperial Palace, surrounded by lush park grounds and the original castle moat, situated right in the middle of the city. A bit farther out are the remnants of another circular moat, built by the Tokugawa shogun. The inner city is looped by the JR Yamanote Line (public transport). Most of Tokyo's major nightspots and attractions are near or inside this oblong loop.

For administrative purposes, Tokyo is divided into 23 wards, known as *ku*. Its business districts of Marunouchi and Hibiya, for example, are in Chiyoda-ku, while Ginza is part of Chuo-ku. These two *ku* are the historic hearts of Tokyo—it was here that the city had its first modest settlements.

There is no doubt about it, the city design, with its zigzagging streets (a layout left over from historic times), is very confusing. To make matters worse, Tokyo's address system is largely based on a complicated number scheme rather than street names. The only streets with names are those named after World War II at the insistence of the American occupation forces, plus a few that have been labeled in the past decade. The most important named streets include Meiji Dori, which follows the loop of the Yamanote Line; Yasukuni Dori and Shinjuku Dori, which cut across the heart of the city from Shinjuku to Chiyoda-ku; and Sotobori Dori, Chuo Dori, Harumi Dori, and Showa Dori, which pass through Ginza. *Dori* means avenue or street, as does *michi*.

If you're taking the subway or JR train, the first thing you should do upon reaching your destination is look for signs posted on every platform that tell which exit to take for particular buildings and attractions. These will at least get you pointed in the right direction once you emerge from the station. As you walk around Tokyo, you will also notice maps posted beside sidewalks giving a breakdown of the number system for the area.



Cuisine

There are more than a dozen types of Japanese cuisine, each of which is distinctly different. Generally, only one type of cuisine is served in a given restaurant—for example raw seafood is served in a sushi bar, while tempura is featured at a tempura counter. There are, of course, some exceptions. Fancier restaurants tend to offer more choice. Below are brief descriptions of some of the main cuisines.

- **Kushiage:** Kushiage foods are breaded and deep-fried on skewers and include chicken, beef, seafood, and lots of seasonal vegetables (snow peas, green pepper, ginkgo nuts, lotus root, and the like). They're served with a specialty sauce and slice of lemon.
- **Okonomiyaki:** This cooking style originated in Osaka after World War II. It is a sort of Japanese pizza. A pancake is topped with meat or fish, shredded cabbage, vegetables, and Worcestershire sauce.
- **Robatayaki:** Robatayaki refers to restaurants in which seafood and vegetables are cooked over an open charcoal grill. All types of food ingredients are on the menu; the cooking distinction is that all foods are grilled.
- **Sashimi & Sushi:** Sashimi is simply raw seafood, usually eaten alone (without rice), and dipped into a mixture of wasabi and soy sauce. Sushi is raw fish with vinegared rice. It comes in many varieties, and is also served with wasabi and dipped in soy sauce.
- **Soba & Udon Noodles:** Soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour; udon noodles are a thick white wheat noodle. Both can be eaten plain, in soups, or in combination with other foods.
- **Shabu-Shabu & Sukiyaki:** The latter is among Japan's best-known beef dishes; it is often stir-fried at the table. Shabu-shabu is also prepared at your table and consists of thinly sliced beef cooked in a broth with vegetables in a kind of fondue.
- **Tempura:** This well-known Japanese food is fish and vegetables coated in a batter of egg, water, and wheat flour, and then deep-fried.
- **Teppanyaki:** A teppanyaki restaurant is a Japanese steakhouse. The chef cooks your steak and vegetables on a smooth hot grill right in front of you.



Drinking Water

The water is safe to drink anywhere in Japan, although some people find it too highly chlorinated for their taste. Bottled water is also readily available.

Bangkok in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout and Detail

Bangkok is a very big city, but it was not developed according to an “urban plan”—it has no specific downtown area or city center. This can create confusion for the visitor, because no matter where you go, the streets, like the traffic, seem to veer off in every direction in no logical sequence. Learning your way around can be a challenge. It can be helpful if you orient yourself with the route of the Chao Phraya, which curves through the city like the letter “S.”

Roughly speaking, to the east of the place where the river makes its greatest bend is Bangkok proper—old Bangkok—where you’ll find most of the older temples and the original palace, as well as the Chinese and Indian districts. As you head farther east away from the river, you enter new Bangkok, which can be divided into the business and tourists districts that are wedged around Charoen Krung (New) Road and Rama IV Road.



Cuisine

Thai dishes can be pungent and spicy, with a lot of garlic and hot chilies. But there are just as many dishes that are mild to the palate, so don’t refrain from sampling the local specialties. Just inquire beforehand about their level of hotness.

Almost all Thai food is cooked with fresh ingredients, including vegetables, poultry, pork, and some beef. Plenty of lime juice, lemon grass, and fresh coriander leaf are added to give the food its characteristic tang. Other common seasonings include “laos” root (*khaa*), black pepper, ground peanuts (more often a condiment), tamarind juice (*nam makhaam*), ginger (*khing*), and coconut milk (*kati*). In general, lunch at a moderately priced restaurant runs about \$11; dinner at a similar restaurant is about \$19. If you’re not fond of Thai food, rest assured that you’ll still find plenty of satisfying food. Bangkok has all types of Western restaurants, from American fast food chains to seafood buffets and steakhouses.



Drinking Water

While in Bangkok, you should drink *only* bottled water or soda, without ice.



Golf

Golf is a growing game in Thailand. Bangkok has ten 18-hole courses—the city’s Rose Garden Golf Course (par 72) is considered one of Thailand’s most beautiful. Your Program Director can provide further information.



Laundry Service

Laundry services are available at your hotel for a fee.

11. DEMOGRAPHICS AND HISTORY

China

Area: 3,691,521 square miles

Capital: Beijing

Government: Communist state—under the leadership of the Communist Party

Languages: Chinese, Mandarin, also local dialects

Location: China's land border of 17,445 miles is shared with Korea, the Mongolian People's Republic, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, Macau, and Hong Kong. Along the seacoast, the major bodies of water are the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea.

Population (2007 estimate): 1,321,851,888

Agricultural Products: Rice, wheat, potatoes, sorghum, peanuts, tea, millet, barley, cotton

Industries: Iron and steel, coal, machine building, armaments, textiles and apparel, cement, petroleum, footwear, toys, chemical fertilizers, consumer electronics, food processing

Religion: Officially atheist, but the traditional religion contains elements of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Muslim 1%-2%, Christian 3%-4%.

Time zone: Although China extends across many longitudes, there is only one time zone in the whole country. China has no daylight saving time. It is 12 hours ahead of EDT when the US is on daylight savings time and 13 hours ahead of EST the rest of the year. When it is 7 am in New York, it is 7 pm or 8pm in China, depending on the time of year. Hong Kong is in the same time zone.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day
01/30 Spring Festival
01/31 Chinese New Year
02/01 Spring Festival
04/05 Qing Ming Jie
05/01 Labor Day
06/02 Dragon Boat Festival
09/08 Mid-Autumn Festival
10/01 National Day
10/02 National Day
10/03 National Day

Hong Kong

Area: 416 square miles

Status: Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

Government: Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China with a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign and defense affairs. This is known as a "one country, two systems" government.

Language: Chinese (Cantonese), English (both are official)

Location: Hong Kong is located at the southeastern tip of the People's Republic of China, some 1,240 miles south of Beijing. It lies just south of the Tropic of Cancer at about the same latitude as Mexico City, the Bahamas, and Hawaii.

Population (2009 estimate): 7,097,600

Agricultural Products: Vegetables

Industries: Textiles, clothing, toys, radios, watches, electronic components

Religion: eclectic mixture of local religions 90%, Christian 10%

Time zone: Hong Kong is in the same time zone as the rest of China.

Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/31	Chinese Lunar New Year's Day
02/01	Second day of Chinese Lunar New Year
02/03	Third day of Chinese Lunar New Year
04/05	Ching Ming Festival
04/18	Good Friday
04/19	Holy Saturday
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day
05/06	Buddha's Birthday
06/02	Dragon Boat Festival
07/01	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day
09/09	Day after Mid-Autumn Festival
10/01	National Day of the People's Republic of China
10/02	Chung Yeung Festival
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	Boxing Day

Overview

Early History (3000 B.C. – 500 B.C.)

Archaeological records of a highly developed civilization in the area now known as China date back to around 4000 B.C., suggesting that the Chinese people have shared a common culture longer than any other people on earth. China's first dynasty, the Shang, is thought to have been established around 1800 B.C. At that time, the country remained split into many feudal states. Although the King was recognized for his ritual role, power was dispersed among feudal lords, and warring between feudal states was common.

The Shang kings called themselves the "Sons of Heaven" and presided over a cult of animal and human sacrifices to ancestors and nature gods. Ancient writings tell of frequent invasions by nomads from the

north, often referred to as “Barbarians” (literally meaning anyone not of Chinese descent). However, the nomads always moved on after their conquests, and the dynastic rulers remained in power.

By 1500 B.C., the Chinese had already made great advancements in the areas of science and mathematics. They also were producing fine art, including jade and ceramic products and bronze castings. However, the majority of the Chinese people still made their living from a combination of hunting and agriculture. The peasants owned the land on which they farmed, but owed military service to the nobles. As in all agricultural societies, the family was the dominant social unit. Often, large extended families lived together under one roof, and groups of families living in the same geographical area sometimes adopted common surnames and formed clans.

The Classical Age (c. 500 B.C. - 202 B.C.)

Around 400 B.C., a new class of learned men began to form, giving rise to what is sometimes called the Classic Age of Chinese thought. The most famous of these men was Confucius. Confucius asserted that social harmony depends on each individual understanding and acting in accordance with his or her ‘station in life.’ Confucius’ teachings would have a greater influence on China’s development over the next 2,000 years than perhaps any other man, as Confucianism was the official state teaching from 202 B.C. to A.D. 1911. This strict ethical system, more than anything else, provided the basis for the long-standing unity of the Chinese people and the relative stability of the dynastic system of government for nearly 40 centuries.

Another philosophy also rose to prominence in China around this time. Taoism promoted the concepts of inner peace and harmony with nature. Practitioners sought mystical knowledge through meditation. While Taoism never became an official state teaching, it was embraced by millions of Chinese as an alternative to the rigid precepts of Confucianism.

Around the 1st century B.C., Buddhism, which originated in India, found its way to China. Whereas Confucianism and Taoism were more or less ethical guides, Buddhism was a proper religion. To the follower of Buddha, life goes on in a series of reincarnations; it is a cycle of rebirth and suffering. The goal of life is to escape this cycle—to stop being born as a suffering individual with selfish desires. To do this, Buddhists follow what is called the “Eightfold Path” —a series of steps that lead to the blissful state of Nirvana, or “no-self.” While Buddhism was not advanced as an official state teaching, it nevertheless flourished in China for centuries.

The Age of the Imperial Dynasties (221 B.C. – A.D. 1911)

In 221 B.C., China’s first empire was established. Called Qin, it differed from past dynasties in that one emperor ruled over a unified China. The first emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di, centralized political power and standardized language, laws, weights, measures, and coinage. Unfortunately, he also suppressed learning and tried to destroy most religious texts. His dynasty lasted less than 20 years. Although specific Imperial dynasties came in and out of power, the structure of the Imperial dynastic system, with its administrative divisions and central bureaucracies, remained intact until the early part of the 20th century.

In 202 B.C., the Han rose to power. The next four centuries of Han rule were a time of great historical significance to the Chinese. The Han instituted the “Mandarin bureaucracy,” a merit system by which local officials were selected based on their knowledge of the Confucian classics. They also advanced the teachings of Confucianism, with its strict adherence to the class system. Both of these measures remained in force for nearly 2,000 years. Also during this time, China’s first university was founded. A new emphasis on learning and education gave rise to an age of great scientific discovery and artistic accomplishment.

Over the next several centuries, life in China continued much as it had during the age of the Han. New dynasties rose to power, but the Imperial dynastic system, with its central bureaucracy and administrative divisions, remained intact. More importantly, foreign influences did not significantly alter the underlying culture. The people remained largely agricultural, and Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism remained the prevailing philosophical and ethical guides. However, a significant change occurred in the late 14th century, during the reign of the Mings. Trade with the west was introduced. At first, open trade with the west appeared to pose little threat to the Chinese way of life. But, over the next 300 years, a new commodity was introduced that would prove disastrous to Chinese culture: opium. By the late 19th century, opium addiction had severely damaged Chinese society and drained vast amounts of wealth overseas. This led to war with Britain, a chief source of the deadly drug. The Chinese, who had failed to keep pace with western arms technology, were soundly defeated and forced into a series of uneven treaties.

The Rise of the People's Republic

By the dawn of the 20th century, China was wracked with internal rebellion and economic stagnation. A Western-influenced political leader named Sun Yat-sen convinced the Chinese to adopt a republican form of government in 1911, touching off a prolonged period of civil war. Then, in 1949, bolstered by the success of Russia following World War II, Communists rose to power and took control of the government, establishing the People's Republic of China. The first 30 years of rule by the Communist Party were marked by cycles of failed economic policies, disunity, and political purges. In particular the 1960s and early 1970s saw a period of economic, political, and social change known as the Cultural Revolution.

Begun in 1966, the Cultural Revolution was described by Mao Zedong (the Chairman of the Communist Party) as a movement to counteract “liberal bourgeoisie” elements that wanted to return to capitalism. Through speeches and other propaganda, the Party leadership affiliated certain Chinese traditions with Western decadence; both were to be condemned and purged.

Two key elements of the Cultural Revolution that would affect China for years were the mass relocation of urban population to rural labor camps and the creation of the Red Guards. Most were students who were encouraged to actively challenge cultural institutions, their teachers, and even their parents. The term “the Four Olds” (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas) was introduced to sum up everything that a good revolutionary should avoid. Religious buildings were defaced, art smashed, intellectuals and teachers abused and imprisoned. Although the Cultural Revolution officially ended in 1969, most historians agree it continued until Mao's death in 1976.

After Mao's passing the backlash from the Cultural Revolution led to the arrest of four influential Party leaders, called the Gang of Four (one of whom was Mao's widow). The public began to turn away from the hard-line communism that had dominated China, and in the mid-1980s, the government adopted far-reaching economic reforms with market-oriented incentives. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s reforms were slowly introduced, and in 2003, the Party even changed its membership rules to include a new type of member—“red capitalists.” Nonetheless, modern China is still far from being an openly democratic or capitalist society; today they name their new political system “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

Japan—optional pre-trip extension

Area: 145,874 square miles

Capital: Tokyo

Government: Constitutional monarchy

Language: Japanese

Location: An archipelago extending in an arc more than 1,744 miles from northeast to southwest in the Pacific Ocean, Japan is separated from the east coast of Asia by the Sea of Japan.

Population (2012 estimate): 127,368,088

Agricultural Products: Rice, sugar beets, vegetables, fruit, pork, poultry, dairy products, eggs, fish

Industries: Motor vehicles and parts, electronic components, machine tools, steel, nonferrous metallurgy, heavy electrical equipment, construction and mining equipment

Religion: Observe both Shinto and Buddhist 84%, other 16% (including Christian 0.7%)

Time zone: Japan is 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Because Japan does not observe daylight savings time, when the U.S. is on daylight savings time, Japan is 13 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time. The time in Tokyo is one hour later than the time in Hong Kong.

Public Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/13	Coming of Age Day
02/11	National Foundation Day
03/21	Spring Equinox
04/29	Shōwa Day
05/03	Constitution Memorial Day
05/04	Greenery Day (observed 05/06)
05/05	Children's Day
07/21	Sea Day
09/15	Respect for the Aged Day
09/23	Autumn Equinox
10/13	Sports Day
11/03	Culture Day (celebrated Nov 4)
11/23	Labor Thanksgiving Day (observed 11/24)
12/23	Emperor's Birthday

In addition to the holidays listed above, banks may be closed on the days before or after New Year's.

Early History

Japan today is one of the world's most modern countries, but it retains parts of its ancient past in its customs and daily living habits. The natural drive and restlessness of the Japanese people manifested itself early on. Japan's recorded history begins in A.D. 400 with one group, the Yamato clan, controlling much of the central and western lands in the country. The Yamato clan conquered its rivals and also introduced the concept of an imperial court similar to China's court. Buddhism was introduced to Japan by way of neighboring Korea at about this time. Much of the country's early history prior to the Tokugawa period, which began in 1603, is a story of harsh warlords, each controlling his own small area and fighting frequently with neighbors or intruders.

Foreign Influence

Japan, like many of its Asian neighbors, was changed by the waves of foreigners who came seeking trade and riches. Before the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan was a closed and secretive society with the warlords struggling with each other. Foreign influences came first from China and Korea and then from Western nations.

In 1543 Portuguese ships brought traders and missionaries to Japan with Spanish, Dutch, and English traders soon following. The Tokugawa were a particularly successful family of warlords or shoguns who managed to take control over most of the country in the early 17th century. They became distrustful of the foreigners and banned Christianity and for the next 250 years (1603-1867) Tokugawa shoguns sealed off Japan from all outsiders. Only the Dutch were allowed to trade at the port of Nagasaki. During this period of isolation the shoguns controlled the country and divided the people into four classes: samurai (warriors), farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. A rigid system dictated how each class dressed, lived, and worked. The samurai were at the top of this class structure and were both feared and fearsome. The merchants were at the bottom and soon resented their status.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry sailed an American fleet into Tokyo Bay and forced the Japanese to open the country to trade. From that point, the country quickly developed into a modern power with a large imperial army.

Modern History

The Japanese through the ages have adopted the western influences that suited them and discarded the rest. The result has led to an interesting mix of modernity and tradition in Japan. The modern Japanese Constitution is modeled after the American Constitution. The emperor is a symbolic head of state only. Their education system is similar to many European systems.

Throughout the latter part of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, Japan was often at war with its neighbors China and Russia over territorial claims. A militaristic society dominated Japanese life. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and followed this with an invasion of China in 1936. On December 7, 1941 Japan launched a sneak attack on American forces at Pearl Harbor and initiated a war with the United States. By 1942, Japanese military successes in the Pacific were waning. Forced to retreat island by island back to Japan, the Japanese military finally surrendered after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet Union declared war on Japan in 1945.

After a post World War II occupation under United States general Douglas MacArthur, Japan regained full sovereignty in 1952. In 1972, the United States returned the Ryuku Island including Okinawa to Japan thus restoring Japan to its original boundaries. Japan became one of the world's great economic powers in the 1970s, dominating worldwide banking and industry, and having great success in the automotive business. Japan became the world's second largest economy after the United States.

Japan was criticized in 1991 for its failure to join the international coalition that fought in the Persian Gulf War. Its economy also took a downturn at this time. Throughout the 1990s Japan was plagued by banking and industrial scandals and had a succession of governments, none of which were able to return the country to the prosperity of previous decades. Today, Japan remains a strong country, but its economy has not regained the luster of past decades.

Tokyo (Edo)

Tokyo is one of the world's great cities and undoubtedly one of the most complex. The population of Metropolitan Tokyo is about 12.5 million. Founded as a small fishing village called Edo near the mouth of the Sumida River on the fertile Kanto Plain, Edo soon became a major city. A warlord built the first castle in 1457, the official beginning of the city. A Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, built a huge fortress on the site in 1590, from which he conquered the rest of the country. The shogunate fell in 1867 and the then emperor Meiji moved from Kyoto to Edo and renamed the city Tokyo. Over the decades the city and its population grew in a haphazard manner with neighborhoods and villages expanding into small cities themselves. World War II brought the destruction of much of the city as Allied planes rained bombs upon Tokyo that set much of the city ablaze. Rebuilt after the war in the same rambling manner as before, Tokyo has boomed into labyrinths of small villages and cultural centers. The Koban, police substations in each village, are the most dependable way to find good directions in Tokyo. The city itself retains its old divisions with two major areas: Shitamachi and Yamanote, both really cities in themselves.

Thailand—optional post-trip extension

Area: 198,455 square miles

Capital: Bangkok

Government: Constitutional monarchy

Languages: Thai, Chinese, English

Location: Thailand occupies the western half of the Indochinese peninsula and the northern two-thirds of the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia. Its neighbors are Myanmar (formerly Burma) on the north and west, Laos on the north and northeast, Cambodia on the east, and Malaysia on the south.

Population (2005 estimate): 65,068,149

Religions: Buddhist 94.6%, Muslim 4.6%, Christian 0.7%, other 0.1%

Agricultural Products: Rice (world's largest exporter), corn, cassava, sugarcane

Industries: Textiles, rubber, seafood (world's largest exporter of farmed shrimp), tourism

Time zone: Thailand is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Because Thailand does not observe daylight savings time, when the U.S. is on daylight savings time, Thailand is 11 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time. The time in Bangkok is one hour earlier than the time in Hong Kong.

Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
04/06	Chakri Day (observed 04/07)
04/13	Songkran
04/14	Songkran
04/15	Songkran (observed 04/16)
05/05	Coronation Day
08/12	Mother's Day
08/12	The Queen's Birthday
10/23	Chulalongkorn Day
12/05	The King's Birthday
12/05	Father's Day
12/10	Constitution Day
12/31	New Year's Eve

Overview

Early History

The Thai people originated in what is now Yunan, China. After Mongols invaded the state of Nanchao, the Thai migrated down the Mekong River into what is now known as Thailand. They separated into several distinct groups, including the Siamese, the Lao and the Shan, but remained in close contact. Through wars and diplomacy, the Thai quickly flooded across the great plain of the Chao Phraya River, and the first unified Thai kingdom, called Sukhotai, was formed in the 13th century.

A distinct Thai culture developed as the kingdom expanded. A dominant aspect of this culture was the importance of Buddhism in daily life. Every Village had a Buddhist *wat*, or temple complex, where festivals and social events took place. These temples also served as schools, orphanages, and hospitals—the monks who lived there were often skilled at local medicine.

The Chakri Dynasty

The Burmese invaded Ayudthaya in 1767, driving the Thai into the center of the country. A large portion of the population settled in the fertile valley of the central plain, giving rise to a new capital in Bangkok. Shielded by heavily forested mountains to the north, and secure from attack by neighboring states, the city flourished. The new Thai kingdom that grew up around Bangkok became known as Siam, a reference to the Siamese people of the central plains, where Bangkok is located.

Around 1800, Siam's great Chakri dynasty rose to power and created the groundwork for the modern nation-state of Thailand. The Chakri instituted a central bureaucracy, asserted authority over numerous tribes that had previously been ruled by local chieftains, and initiated a program of military conquest throughout the region. Over the next century, the Siamese Empire grew to include parts of modern-day Burma, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Perhaps even more importantly, the Chakri kings managed to keep Siam free from western colonial domination. Despite the prestige Siam had attained on the world stage, life for the average Thai was little better than slavery, as Chakri kings demanded military service, labor, and heavy taxes from every subject.

The Birth of a Nation

By the turn of the century, modernization had increased the number and types of jobs available, especially in government and the military. The prevailing policy was to fill these jobs based largely on education. Many Thai began sending their children overseas to be educated. When the children returned home, they brought with them western views on the scope and purpose of government. This new generation of educated Thai saw the Siamese political system as antiquated and began demanding a larger share of power.

In 1932, the situation came to a head. The monarchy was overthrown in a bloodless revolution and the country's name was changed to *Muang Thai*, "Land of the Free." However, most peasants and farmers continued to view the king as the moral leader of the nation, and the king was eventually invited to return as a constitutional monarch. He lacks political power, but serves as the head of state—a unifying symbol of Thai culture.

During World War II, Thailand was allied with Japan. Despite protest from the British and French, the United States never recognized Thailand's declaration of war. The decision paid off, as the close relationship between the two countries proved to be a pivotal component of the United States' post-war policy in Southeast Asia. In the decades directly following the end of the war, Thailand saw a number of different political regimes, mostly military dictatorships. Change began to manifest itself in the early 1970s with the student-led October 14 uprising in 1973.

For the next few decades, the government would vacillate between civilian democracies and military regimes. The most recent political reversals have included the 2006 dissolution of parliament and a bloodless coup, which was resolved by a 2007 national referendum approving a new constitution. The subsequent general election in 2007 gave a majority to the People's Power Party, but in 2008 the party was forced to disband amidst a storm of controversy over charges of election fraud. Although this controversy continues to mark Thai politics, the resulting demonstrations from both sides have been largely peaceful and often mediated by the royal family, for whom both sides have shown great respect. (As a constitutional monarch the power of the king is limited to a symbolic figurehead, however the institution elicits huge amount of respect and reverence from the Thai people.)

12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Books, Maps, and Movies

If your local store or library doesn't stock the books or movies below, the Internet offers a wide variety of options for finding older or rare stock – try AbeBooks (abebooks.com), Alibris (alibris.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (bn.com) — or any of the smaller websites. Of course, this selection is not meant to be comprehensive, and is offered as a starting point for your research.

China

Riding the Iron Rooster by Paul Theroux (Travel Narrative) Acclaimed travel writer Paul Theroux's vivid account of his journey through China by rail.

The Good Earth by Pearl Buck (Classic Fiction). A modern classic that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1931. Drawing heavily on her personal experience as a young newlywed in rural China, it is the plainly told story of a poor farmer and his stalwart wife. The book captures the daily life of China's poorest people.

The Great Wall, China Against the World, 1000 BC - 2000 AD by Julia Lovell (History) Everything you ever wanted to know about the Great Wall. And if you are interested in images of the Wall, consider ***The Great Wall, From Beginning to End*** by Michael Yamashita and William Lindesay (History/Photography) Lindesay's informative text accompanies 160 photographs by Yamashita, who spent a year photographing along the 4,000-mile expanse for National Geographic.

The River at the Center of the World by Simon Winchester (Travel Narrative) In this wide-ranging overview of the Yangtze veteran journalist Simon Winchester travels upstream into the heartland of China. An excellent introduction to the great river that is at the symbolic and literal heart of China.

Before the Deluge, The Vanishing World of the Yangtze's Three Gorges by Deirdre Chetham (Culture) Chetham offers a detailed glimpse into the daily life along the river, its spectacular natural beauty and checkered history. She also considers the efforts to tame the river, culminating with the massive Three Gorges dam. Although the book was written before the dam was completed, it is still considered one of the better books on the subject.

China Road by Rob Gifford (Travel Narrative) On the road from Shanghai west to the Gobi and China's distant border with Kazakhstan, Gifford writes with warmth and affection of his many encounters along fabled Route 312 with fellow travelers, truckers, and ordinary folk

Daughter of China: A True Story of Love and Betrayal by Meihong Xu and Larry Engelmann (Biography). The true account of a Chinese woman trained as an elite member of the PLA, denounced as a spy by the Communist government for her love of an American professor.

Death of a Red Heroine by Qui Xiaolong (Mystery) Marvelously evocative of Shanghai and China's transition towards a market economy in the 1990's, this award-winning debut of Inspector Chen of the Shanghai police is also a real page-turner.

Empress Orchid by Anchee Min (Fiction) A novel of the glorious, decadent last days of 19th-Century Imperial China. Min combines her tale of a young girl from the provinces who marries an emperor with a lovingly re-created portrait of life in the Forbidden City. Pearl Buck told a much more romanticized tale of the same remarkable woman in ***Imperial Woman***.

From Emperor to Citizen by Pu Yi (Biography) The autobiography of China's last emperor, Pu Yi, whose fortunes paralleled the tumultuous history of 20th-century China. Pu Yi's account of his troubled life was made into the stunning Bernardo Bertolucci film *The Last Emperor*.

Mao Zedong by Jonathan Spence (Biography) A masterful short biography in the "Penguin Lives" series, this text by Chinese historian Jonathan Spence tracks the life of the enigmatic Chinese ruler from his provincial upbringing to his powerful reign.

The Haunted Monastery by Robert Van Gulik (Mystery) One of a series of historical mysteries, featuring a Tang-era Chinese magistrate that are taken from the tradition of Chinese suspense novels. Apart from the pleasure of the elaborate plots, the books are rich in details of court and daily life in ancient China.

Wild Swans, Three Daughters of China by Jung Chang (Biography) A riveting tale of three generations spanning the end of Old China, Mao's regime and the Japanese occupation. Chang chronicles the enormous changes in China since 1929 through her family's story, which includes arrest during the Cultural Revolution, exile to the Sichuan wilderness and coming to terms with the bewildering state of China today.

China in Ten Words by Yu Hua (Culture) Ten essays on wide-ranging aspects of Chinese culture, such as economics, history, and politics, each summed up by one word or phrase like "leader" or "revolution".

Postcards from Tomorrow Square: Reports from China by James Fallows (Culture) Originally a series of articles for *Atlantic Monthly*, each chapter can be read as a stand-alone piece or as part of a whole. The same author has also written *China Airborne*, which focuses on China's aviation industry as a way of understanding the modernization of China.

Midnight in Peking by Paul French (True Crime) When a pretty Englishwoman is murdered on the eve of war in 1937, will the detectives on the case be able to solve the crime before the Japanese invade? It sounds like a mystery novel, but in fact is a historical case.

Leaving Mother Lake by Yang Erche Namu and Christine Mathieu (Biography/Memoir) In this international bestseller Namu recounts her childhood among the Mosuo people, a matriarchal tribe that lives in southwestern China. Recognized early for her singing ability, Namu left the tribe for the big city and a possible musical career, but not without experiencing homesickness and culture shock—in her own country. An interesting insider's look at a little-known ethnic minority in China.

China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (History and Politics). Two Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* reporters take readers into the richly textured, often paradoxical world of modern China, as the country transforms itself from a peasant empire into an economic and political superpower.

Hong Kong by Jan Morris (History) A renowned travel writer traces the evolution of the British colony from the Opium Wars to the 1990s.

The River Dragon Has Come! by Dai Qing (Politics) A Chinese journalist presents a collection of essays that set off alarms about the Three Gorges Dam.

The Search for Modern China by Jonathan D. Spence (History) A noted historian chronicles the many wars and rebellions of the past 400 years, up to the 1989 Tiananmen Square revolt. If you want to understand the People's Republic, this is the book to read. It is considered the definitive work and is often used in college courses.

A Traveler's History of China by Stephen Haw (History) Part of a series aimed at travelers, not scholars, this 320-page volume summarizes China's 3,000-year-old past from its earliest beginnings up to the 1990s. A chronology of major events and a systematic breakdown of the dynasties and rulers add clarity. Includes an introduction to the Chinese language.

Yangtze River: The Wildest, Wickedest River on Earth—An Anthology edited by Madeleine Lynn (Travel). This collection of diverse writings about the Yangtze River draws from 13 centuries of authors to provide a literary history of China's mightiest river.

Bangkok—optional post-trip extension

Anna and the King of Siam by Margaret Landon (Biography) Some say the tale is more fanciful than true, but it certainly has endured. This is the classic account of a governess in mid-19th century Siam that inspired the musical, *The King and I*. The book has seen a surge in popularity with both a revival of the musical and a newer Hollywood movie, *Anna and the King*.

Bangkok 8, A Novel by John Burdett (Mystery) In some ways this book is reminiscent of an old-fashioned film noir—gritty, suspenseful, and sometimes darkly funny—it explores the underside of Thailand's capital through a series of mysterious deaths by snakebite. The detective, who is a member of the Royal Thai police, also stars in the two sequels: ***Bangkok Tattoo*** and ***Bangkok Haunts***.

Bangkok, A Cultural History by Maryvelma O'Neil (History) Art historian O'Neil's scholarly book details the city's art, history, royal ceremony, and tradition in such depth that it is sometimes used as a college textbook, despite coming in at less than 300 pages.

Sightseeing by Rattawut Lapcharoensap (Short Stories) The author's debut work is a collection of short stories set in present-day Thailand. Inspired in part by Lapcharoensap own Thai-American heritage; critically well received.

Traveler's Tales Thailand edited by Larry Habegger and James O'Reilly (Culture) A collection of useful and memorable stories that show a spectrum of experiences to be had (or to be avoided) in Thailand. The authors come from many walks of life: some are teachers, writers, scientists—all of them have tales to tell that will help to deepen and enrich your experience in Thailand.

Culture Shock: Thailand by Robert Cooper and Nanthapa Cooper (Culture) A delightfully humorous paperback that concisely explains the Thai people, their customs, and hidden rules for social etiquette; filled with great insight and charm, especially the discussion on Thai smiles.

Tokyo—optional post-trip extension

Dave Barry Does Japan by Dave Barry (Humor) Humorous and sometimes outrageous observations about Japanese culture by the famous columnist.

Flags of Our Fathers by James Bradley (History) The personal story of the six soldiers who raised the flag at Iwo Jima, as told by the son of one of the six.

Geisha, A Life by Mineko Iwasaki (Memoir) The memoir of a celebrated geisha, rich in details, culture and traditions of Kyoto's Gion Kobu district. Iwasaki, now in her 50s, was also the chief source of information for Arthur Golden's best-selling *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

Introduction to Japanese Culture edited by Daniel Sosnoski (Culture) Offers lots of background information on Japanese society. Some topics covered include the tea ceremony, geisha, sumo, Buddhism, and Kabuki. Significant festivals are also presented.

Japan: A Short Cultural History by George B. Sansom (Culture) A standard work that examines Japan's cultural traditions.

Memoirs of a Geisha, A Novel by Arthur Golden (Literature) The runaway bestseller about Sayuri, a formidable geisha in the celebrated Gion district of Kyoto in the years before WWII. The author, who is a male American academic, writes very convincingly as a female Japanese geisha.

Rashomon Gate by I. J. Parker and ***Shinjū*** by Laura Joh Rowland (Mysteries) Parker writes the popular Sugawara Akitada series, set in eleventh-century Japan. Rowland's series of page-turners are set in 17th century Japan, and feature samurai Sano Ichiro as the detective. There are multiple books in each series—the titles we suggest here are good starting places.

The Inland Sea by Donald Richie (Travel Narrative) Considered one of the masterpieces of travel writing. Richie's book, on its surface a travel account, is a beautiful reflection on all things Japanese by one of the country's most acute observers.

Maps:

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

Guidebooks:

Your Program Director will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

Culture Smart! – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

DK Eyewitness – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

Fodor's – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

Frommer's – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

Insight – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

Lonely Planet – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

National Geographic – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

Rough Guides –For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

Suggested Movies

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be harder to find, but they are usually available online.

China

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon starring Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, and Zhang Ziyi (2000, color) A worldwide sensation, this movie pays tribute to the Kung Fu genre but also updates it for a new audience. The central question of what it means to be faithful is wrapped up in an exciting plot about the theft of a famed sword.

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman directed by Ang Lee (1994, color) A gentle comedy about finding romance and purpose. The plot centers on a famous chef, now retired and widowed, who expresses his love for his three daughters through the elaborate meals that he creates.

Farewell My Concubine starring Leslie Chung, Zhang Fengyi, and Gong Li (1993, color). Two stars of the Peking Opera deal with complex issues ranging from personal to political.

Genghis Blues directed by Roko Belic (1999, color) A documentary on the intersection between American blues music and Tibetan throatsinging.

Mulan with the voices of Ming-Na, Eddie Murphy, and B.D. Wong (1998, color) Have kids or grandkids who are curious about where you're going? This Disney animated movie is a great way to introduce them to a classic Chinese legend.

Raise the Red Lantern starring Gong Li (1992, color) A beautifully shot period piece that follows the tragic intrigues between the four wives of a wealthy business man in 1920s China, as told from the point of view of his youngest wife.

Seven Years in Tibet starring Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, and Danny Denzongpa (1997, color) Based on the experiences of the German tutor of the Dalai Lama from the end of WWII to the start of the Chinese control of Tibet.

The Good Earth starring Paul Muni and Luise Rainer (1937, black and white). An adaptation of the novel by the same name, this is the sweeping story a farming couple struggling with class differences, poverty, and nature. Luise Rainer won an Oscar for her performance as the self-sacrificing O-Lan.

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness starring Ingrid Bergman and Curt Jurgens (1958, black and white) Based on the life of English missionary Gladys Aylward, *Inn* follows her struggles to integrate into Chinese society while simultaneously changing that society.

The Last Emperor directed by Bernardo Bertolucci (1987, color) A biopic about the romantic yet sad life of China's last emperor who was finally dethroned in 1917. Beautiful camera work, gorgeous colors, and full of pageantry.

The Painted Veil starring Naomi Watts and Edward Norton (2006, color) Love, betrayal, and possible redemption between two missionaries in rural China during the 1930s. Was filmed on location in the area surrounding Guilin.

Japan

Abduction: The Megumi Yokota Story directed by Patty Kim and Chris Sheridan (2006, color) An emotionally powerful documentary about Megumi Yokota, a young Japanese girl who disappeared in 1977 and was rumored to have been kidnapped by a North Korean spy. The film centers on her parents, who spent the next 30 years trying to discover what happened to her. The film aired on PBS as part of their *Independent Lens* series.

Flags of Our Fathers and ***Letters from Iwo Jima*** written and directed by Clint Eastwood (2006, color) Based on the book by the same name, *Flags* tells the story of the six soldiers who raised the U.S. flag at Iwo Jima. The companion movie, *Letters*, depicts the battle for Iwo Jima from the Japanese point of view.

Godzilla (many versions, beginning in 1956) The original Japanese monster film maybe campy and silly, but it spawned a serious business (over 28 sequels and versions, including American remakes). And created a serious icon of Japanese pop culture—Godzilla even has his own star on the Hollywood walk of fame.

Jiro Dreams of Sushi directed by David Gelb (2011, color) A loving documentary about Jiro Ono, the first sushi chef to win the coveted three-star rating from Michelin. Now in his eighties, the strict-but-spry Jiro meditates on the value of family, hard work, and quality food. A good choice for both foodies and the sushi novice.

Lost in Translation starring Scarlett Johansson and Bill Murray (2003, color) Two lost souls—a bored former movie star and the listless wife of a photographer—connect as they wander around Tokyo.

Living Treasures of Japan produced by National Geographic (2010, color) Meet the traditional artists and craftsmen who have been honored with the title of “Living Treasure” by the Japanese government.

Memoirs of a Geisha starring Ziyi Zhang and Ken Watanabe (2005, color) Movie adaptation of the novel by the same name. A romantic and sweeping story that won Oscars for cinematography, art direction, and costumes.

Seven Samurai directed by Akira Kurosawa (1956, black and white). Fifty years later and this is still one of the best-known Japanese movies. A classic tale of seven heroes hired by farmers to defend them against bandits. If the plot sounds a bit like a western, you're not wrong—it was remade in the U.S. as *The Magnificent Seven*. In Japanese with subtitles.

Shall We Dance? starring Koji Yakusho and Tamiyo Kusakari (1996, color). Yakusho stars as a dissatisfied office worker in a rut who is searching for something special. Inspired by a chance glimpse of a beautiful woman, he takes up ballroom dancing. But what will his wife and coworkers think? In Japanese with subtitles. An American remake was released in 2004, starring Richard Gere, Jennifer Lopez, and Susan Sarandon.

Shogun starring Richard Chamberlain and Toshiro Mifune (1980, color) A popular TV miniseries that was shot entirely in Japan, it follows the drama of an English navigator shipwrecked in feudal Japan.

Thailand

The Beach starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Virginie Ledoyen (2000, color) An American backpacker in Thailand searches for an idyllic secret beach community described by a fellow traveler. But if and when he finds it, will it be a paradise or a purgatory?

The Bridge on the River Kwai starring William Holden and Alec Guinness (1957, color) The dramatic story of the dangerous construction of a railway bridge by British POWs under the control of the Japanese army during WWII. At the time of its release, the movie was unique among WWII films in showing how some POWs came to identify with their captors (a psychological condition known today as “Stockholm Syndrome”).

The Impossible starring Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor (2012, color) A family on vacation in Thailand struggles to first survive and then find each other in the immediate aftermath of the 2004 tsunami.

The King and I starring Deborah Kerr and Yul Brynner (1956, color) A colorful and fun production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that is loosely based on the life of Anna Leonowens, the British governess to the King of Siam (modern-day Thailand). The same story also inspired two other (non-musical) movies: ***Anna and the King of Siam*** starring Irene Dunne and Rex Harrison (1946, B&W) and ***Anna and the King*** starring Jodie Foster and Chow Yun-Fat (1999, color).



Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

Visit the Grand Circle Community website for a world of travel news and information:
www.gct.com/community

Government websites:

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information

www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.

www.tsa.gov/public

National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information

www.travel.state.gov

General travel information websites:

Travel books

www.amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

World weather

www.intellicast.com

www.weather.com

Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages

www.travlang.com/languages

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

www.travelite.org

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

www.cybercafes.com

Electric current and plug types

www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

Foreign exchange rates

www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM locators

www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**

www.visa.com/pd/atm for **PLUS ATMs**

Country information:

www.cnto.org.au/ **China**

www.discoverhongkong.com **Hong Kong**

www.english.hongkong.com **Hong Kong**

www.jnto.go.jp **Japan**

www.tourismthailand.org **Thailand**

www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html

13. THOUGHTS ON TRAVELING IN CHINA

While you should look forward to exploring this fascinating country and meeting its friendly people, you should also keep in mind several very important points about this part of the world. We call these facts to your attention only to help you understand certain aspects of life in the areas you will be visiting, and because we do not want you to be disappointed by expecting more than what actually exists.

First, standards of service, food, and lodgings in China are not the same as Western standards. Grand Circle Travel uses the best tourist facilities available, and in most cities, you'll stay in new joint-venture hotels. Arrangements for Chinese meals are those provided as first-class by China's regional tour operators. Though we've arranged for you to stay in the *finest hotels available* in China, we ask your patience if a hotel or restaurant doesn't live up to the luxury you expect.

Secondly, airline and motorcoach service within China is very basic. You may have to walk from the airport terminal building to the plane, or ride in a standing-room-only shuttle bus. Flights are frequently late; snacks on planes are hastily served; and planes are designed not for comfort but to carry as many people as possible. Additionally, motorcoaches usually do not have adequate air conditioning or heating. While Grand Circle Travel uses the best motorcoaches available, please be aware that the quality of equipment on hand is limited.

Also, in some of the areas you'll visit during your days of touring, you may find classic Asian-style toilet facilities. These can be a culture shock for many Americans—particularly women—as they generally are not sitting-style toilets. All of our overnight accommodations have familiar Western-style toilet facilities.

You should also be prepared for an occasional slip in service in restaurants and hotels. Let us assure you: These occasional slips amount to only momentary inconveniences. What you'll remember, years after you return home, are the smiling faces of children welcoming you to *their* homeland, the thrill of seeing the Great Wall for the first time and the total immersion in a culture so different from our own!

To that end, perhaps most important to any visit to the Orient is an open mind—a willingness to accept radically different cultures and lifestyle customs. The sightseeing treasures you'll experience will far outweigh any slight inconvenience you may encounter. You are traveling to enjoy new and different experiences; things are not the same on tour as they are at home.

A successful trip requires that you be able to adapt to conditions in foreign countries and realize that people, traditions, accommodations, and services often differ from what you are used to. Tolerance, good humor, and a relaxed attitude are prime requisites for a truly memorable Orient adventure. If you have any questions about your trip, please feel free to call. Throughout your vacation, your Program Director will provide you with the unparalleled service Grand Circle Travel is known for. We are confident that you will thoroughly enjoy your trip and find it to be an educational and rewarding cultural experience.

China's Regional Tour Operators: On our trips to China, regional tour operators within the country make almost all of Grand Circle Travel's travel and meal arrangements. Only in Hong Kong does Grand Circle Travel oversee such services. Rest assured, these capable local operators have gone to extreme efforts to make our China tours happy and unforgettable experiences. If your flight schedule, sightseeing itineraries, or other arrangements are changed during your trip, it's due to a good reason and the judgment of the Chinese authorities, and is beyond the control of Grand Circle Travel.