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# **China & the Yangtze River**

## **CRUISE TOUR**

*Plus optional extension in*

**Tokyo, Japan; Bangkok, Thailand**

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**YZL/YZT 2013**

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# China & the Yangtze

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Passport Required .....	5
Visa Required—China (main program).....	6
Visa Not Required—Japan, Thailand (optional extensions).....	6
No U.S. Passport?.....	6
Backup Photocopies.....	6
Optional Tours— <i>Early Purchase Advised</i> .....	7
<b>2. YOUR HEALTH.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Keep Your Abilities In Mind.....	8
Health Check and Inoculations.....	9
Jet Lag Relief.....	10
<b>3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Size, Number and Weight Restrictions.....	11
Airport Security/TSA .....	12
<b>4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
GCT Air Travelers.....	13
<b>5. MONEY MATTERS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
How to Carry Your Money .....	14
By Destination .....	15
Shopping .....	16
By Destination .....	16
U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges.....	17
Problem with a Purchase?.....	18
To Tip or Not to Tip .....	18
<b>6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP.....</b>	<b>20</b>
In General .....	20
Luggage Suggestions.....	20
Packing Your Carry-On .....	21
Clothing Options.....	21
Travel Gear Suggestions.....	21
Consider .....	22
Medicines.....	22
Other Gear .....	22
<b>7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY .....</b>	<b>25</b>
In General .....	25
Regional Electricity .....	25
Japan .....	26
Thailand.....	26
Smartphones .....	26

Phone Calling Cards .....	27
Photo Gear .....	27
<b>9. YOUR YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE SHIP.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Tokyo in Brief—Optional Extension .....	30
City Layout and Details .....	31
Bangkok in Brief—Optional Extension.....	32
<b>11. DEMOGRAPHICS AND HISTORY .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Books, Maps, and Movies .....	42
Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites .....	46
Tourist Board Addresses .....	47
<b>13. THOUGHTS ON TRAVELING IN CHINA.....</b>	<b>48</b>

# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

We've gathered some introductory information that may prove helpful for this Grand Circle Travel itinerary. For detailed and timely information, it's wise to visit appropriate websites and confirm luggage regulations, weather conditions and other variable elements of your trip. If you expect to embark on personal exploration, or wish to discover more about the countries you visit, we suggest that you consult your choice of the many in-depth travel guidebooks devoted to your destinations. Refer to our additional resources section (at the end of the handbook) for other sources of information.

## ABOUT GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL

Grand Circle Travel, founded in 1958 to serve the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), is the leader in international travel, adventure and discovery for Americans aged 50 and over. Grand Circle vacations have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel+Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, among other publications. But our most impressive reviews come from the more than one million people who have traveled with us and from readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* who placed Grand Circle Cruise Lines, the cruise branch of Grand Circle, in the Top 10 of the World's Best Cruise Lines for eight years — in 2012 ranking Grand Circle Cruise Lines the #1 World's Best River Cruise Line. Grand Circle has earned a spot on the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List for seven consecutive years as well. For 2011 *Condé Nast Traveler* named seven Grand Circle Cruise Line river ships among the 20 best river ships in the world; for 2012 the Grand Circle Cruise Lines was named to their Platinum Circle of top cruise lines.

## YOUR RESIDENT GCT PROGRAM DIRECTORS

During your exclusive Grand Circle Travel Cruise Tour, you'll 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.

# 1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



## Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

### *Note*

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#### **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 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](http://www.travel.state.gov) for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You can renew your passport by mail if it is not damaged, you obtained it within the last fifteen years, and it’s in the name you want on your new passport. Many local post offices carry forms for renewing by mail or obtaining extra pages. Allow several weeks for processing your passport. 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.*

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## **Visa Required—China (main program)**

### **Visa Not Required—Japan, Thailand (optional extensions)**

For a U.S. citizen, a visa is required for entry into China. *Apply early: applying for your visa within 30 days of your departure will result in additional expenses and fees.*

- **China—visa required:** We will send you the necessary visa application form, instructions explaining how to fill it out, and the amount of the visa processing fee approximately 100 days before your departure. Note: If you plan to return to mainland China after your visit to Hong Kong at the end of your tour, you will require a multiple-entry visa for China. (This does not apply for layovers.)
- **Japan (optional pre-trip extension)—Visa not required.**
- **Thailand (optional post-trip 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**

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**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.**

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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**

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**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.**

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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

**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.**

China can be a demanding destination. Although you don't need to be an Olympic athlete to travel here, **you *do* need stamina and agility**. You will encounter steps – often without railings – everywhere, often where unexpected: in restaurants, hotels, airports, aboard your Victoria Cruise ship, and at popular sites – most of which are not equipped with ramps or elevators. Your Program Director and the Chinese guides will help you when possible, but you must be physically able to negotiate most steps unassisted. In addition, the terrain may be uneven, rocky or difficult to negotiate. You will need to adapt to life aboard ship during the cruise portion of your trip, with the potential for rocky moments, awkward docking sites and wet, slippery terrain. At some docks you may have to step from ship to ship before reaching shore. If you have difficulty walking in terms of balance or stamina, please consider a different Grand Circle Travel vacation.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. ***Please note that this trip is not wheelchair accessible; nor can Grand Circle Travel accommodate motorized scooters of any kind.*** If you have respiratory problems you should be prepared to high levels of pollution, congestion, cigarette smoke and pungent smells in the cities. Poverty, particularly in Beijing's *hutongs*, can be striking. In rural area, be prepared to receive overt attention as a Westerner.

Prepare yourself, too, for ***full*** days of sightseeing. There is so much to see in this enormous country that each day is filled with touring activities, many of which involve being outdoors and walking for extended periods of time. In some cities, particularly Beijing and Xian, you must be able to walk from two to three plus miles a day, including many stairs, to fully enjoy all aspects of your itinerary. For instance, your visit to Tian'anmen Square and the Forbidden Palace follows a 3 and 1/3 mile fixed route. You can, however, opt out of the Forbidden Palace visit and take a taxi to the meeting point after you visit Tian'anmen Square. The Forbidden Palace visit, however offers no exit opportunity until the end, and there are many stairs along the way.

You should also be prepared to eat Chinese-style cuisine at most meals. Special diets for those with dietary restrictions are impossible to provide on this trip. All told, you need to be able to endure a rigorous itinerary and should be in good to excellent health. If in doubt, consult your physician, describing the length and rigors you'll encounter, ***before*** you plan your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip.



## 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](http://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

It may seem early to discuss luggage and packing, but if you know current industry standards for international flights you can start to plan what type of luggage you'll use, how much clothing to bring, etc. The following information can help you in your trip preparations. We'll remind you to confirm your U.S./international luggage limits (and update regional limits, if applicable) in your final documents (arriving about two weeks before your departure).

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	
<b>Pieces per person</b>	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
<b>Weight restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>44lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>11 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .
<b>Size restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
<b>Luggage Type</b>	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><b>Penalty for excess baggage—payable in cash only:</b> 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. <b>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.</b> (This fee is subject to change without notice.)</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 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. <b>Expect the imposition of penalties and fines to be immediate, however,</b> 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.

## **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](http://www.tsa.gov/public).

**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.

**For flights that originate in the U.S:**

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, do not lock your bags when checking in for flights originating in the U.S. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is responsible for screening all checked luggage at commercial airports throughout the U.S. TSA baggage-handling agents may need access to your luggage and will break locks if required. TSA “accepted and recognized” locks are widely available: screeners can open and re-lock bags using these locks if a physical inspection is required.

**For flights originating outside the U.S.:**

On all flights outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend you lock your luggage. This is not a legal requirement but merely a precaution against theft. Have the keys handy, as you may need to open your luggage for a security screening or for customs in the U.S. or Europe.

## 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 (security permitting). Please note that we are unable to inform you in advance how many GCT travelers are in your departing group.

*Please note: If you are arriving at your international gateway city via a connecting domestic flight, the Grand Circle Travel 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.

**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.)

**Important Note on Name Tags:** Please remember to wear your Grand Circle Travel name tag when you exit Customs, upon arrival and when you return to the U.S., so that you are readily identifiable as a GCT traveler.

## 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.

#### **Currency**

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

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.

#### **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.

## 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).*

## Optional Tours

Included during your trip are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

## By Destination

### 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

It is Grand Circle Travel's goal to identify and provide you with shopping opportunities that highlight unique, locally produced products with good value from reliable vendors. For this reason there may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during these stops, 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.**

## By Destination

### 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**

### **Exemption Amounts**

Articles totaling \$800, at fair retail value where they were acquired, may be imported free of charge if you bring them with you. A flat rate of duty—usually a percentage—will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth (fair retail value) of merchandise. The U.S. Customs Inspector determines the value of your items when you enter, and is not bound by your bill of sale. In almost every case, however, a genuine bill of sale will be honored.

### **Fees on Items Shipped Home**

Items shipped home are *always* subject to duty when received in the U.S. There will also be charges for shipping. Although some shops abroad may offer to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the customs facility closest to you and payment of the *export* duties (the fee to remove an item from its country of origin) not door-to-door shipping or *import* duties (the fee the U.S. government charges to bring an item into the U.S.). All additional duties or shipping charges would be the responsibility of the purchaser—you.

Therefore unless the item is small enough to mail or to be sent by a global parcel service (like FedEx) you should be prepared to pay customs duties and for shipping or pick-up from the nearest customs facility. This is why the U.S. Customs & Border Protection service states: “The most cost-effective thing to do is to take your purchases with you if at all possible.”

### **Illegal Items**

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. For more information on what you may or may not bring back into the United States, you can obtain the publication “Know Before You Go” from the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection by phone, mail or from their website:

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20229  
Tel. 1-877-227-5511  
[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/](http://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. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer the question “**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)” is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

**Shipboard:** Shipboard gratuities to the cruise personnel are not included in the cost of your cruise. Beginning in 2011 Victoria Cruises has adopted ocean cruise line standard practices and implemented a flat service fee in lieu of discretionary tipping for common shipboard services. The fee of *RMB* 150 per person (about \$24.00 at time of writing) will be billed to your credit card upon check in. (This fee is currently less than past 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.

**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.

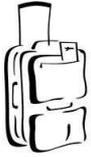
**Driver and Local Guides:** \$2 per person for each half-day tour/\$3 per person for each full-day tour.

**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.

**Leisure Activities:** When you have time to explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. For those activities, 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 (optional post-trip extension):** 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 (optional pre-trip extension):** 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.

### 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. Portage 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.

**Inner bags:** Packing is easier if you use inner bags to help organize your gear. Use plastic bags, nylon stuff sacks, or packing cubes to organize inside your suitcase. Isolate liquids, store camera gear and important papers in heavy-duty Ziploc style bags.

**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.



## 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.

**NOTE:** Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage change frequently. Consult the Transportation Security Administration website, [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov), for a current list of restricted items.



## Clothing Options

We've included information below on the weather you can expect for the regions you'll be visiting on your travels. Taking into account the climate you'll encounter and the general suggestions we offer above will enable you to create a flexible wardrobe that's light enough for sophisticated travel and will guarantee comfort in all the conditions you can expect to encounter. 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](http://www.gct.com) for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites ([www.wunderground.com](http://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.

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

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The rest of the world overwhelmingly uses 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you choose *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or a shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) as well as plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can be found at hardware or online stores. However, transformers can be unreliable and a broken one will leave you lugging a useless 110V appliance. Battery-operated alternatives are an option, but will need a supply of batteries.

China uses the Type A, and Type I plugs and the receptacles that accommodate these plugs are the most common types. You may also find Type G plugs. If you bring small American appliances, you will need standard international plug adapters and a transformer for the 220-240V current in order to operate them. In principle, the electric current

everywhere in China is 220 V AC, 50 cycles. In practice, the voltage rate lapses significantly from time to time.

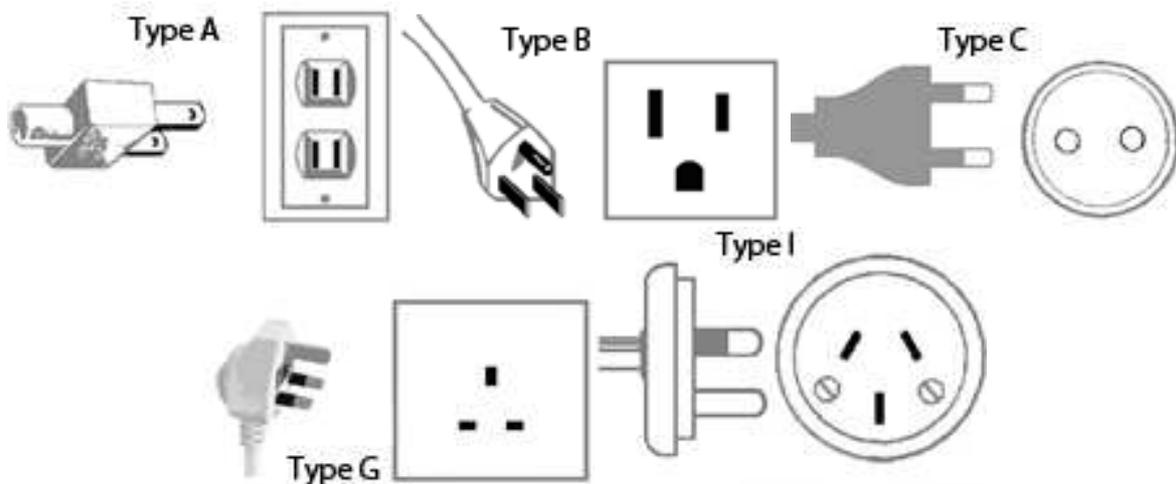
Sleep apnea (CPAC) devices are okay to bring on this trip, though an adapter and or converter may be needed. Some hotel rooms and bathrooms are fitted with two- or three-prong (flat or round prong) sockets; plug adapters can usually be borrowed from the hotel, but you may want to bring your own just in case. Other, older hotels may have sockets in which adapters won't work.

## Japan

The electricity across Japan is 100 V AC, but there are two different cycles in use: In Tokyo and in regions northeast of the capital, it's 50 Hz, while in all points to the southwest, it's 60 Hz. You can use many American appliances in Japan, because the American standard is 110 volts and 60 Hz, but they may run a little slowly. The flat, two-legged Type A prongs used in Japan are the same size and fit as in North America, but three-pronged appliances with Type B plugs — will not work.

## Thailand

Thailand operates on 220 V AC/50 Hz. Thailand uses Types A/B/C and G plugs. To operate small American appliances, you will need an electric-current transformer and a set of international plug adapters.



If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, MP3 player, etc. – it's handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressors and USB port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without carrying device-specific plugs.



## 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 your phone via any 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 added cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

App quality, availability and costs vary – as do platforms (iPhone, Android, Blackberry ...), so again you'll need to do some legwork. Apps come in all forms: packing lists, currency converters, language translators, maps, journals, Wi-Fi hotspot finders ... one problem is going to be searching through the vast array of available apps to uncover what works best and what you're likely to use most. Smartphones have a lot to offer, but their small size can be a drawback for some uses (maps, extended reading, etc.)

## 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](http://www.verizon.com), [www.t-mobile.com](http://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](http://www.travelcell.com) and [www.globalcellularrental.com](http://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 countries you might be charged for photography at specific sites, or banned from taking any photographs 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 wise 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 and are often weak in dim light. 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 (18-200mm) 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.

## 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.

**Robotayaki:** Robotayaki 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.



### Newspapers & Magazines

Five English-language newspapers are published daily in Japan: the *Japan Times*, the *Mainichi Daily News*, the *Daily Yomiuri*, the *Asahi Evening News*, and the *International Herald Tribune*. Hotels and major bookstores carry the international edition of such newsmagazines as *Time* and *Newsweek*.

## 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.



### **Newspapers & Magazines**

The English-language newspapers, the *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* have good information on current festivals, exhibitions, and nightlife. They are available at newsstands. The weekly *Where*, produced by TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand), also lists events.

## 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
02/09	Spring Festival
02/10	Chinese New Year
02/11	Spring Festival
04/04	Qing Ming Jie
05/01	Labor Day
05/02	Labor Day Holiday
06/12	Dragon Boat Festival
09/19	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
02/09	Chinese Lunar New Year's Day
02/11	Second day of Chinese Lunar New Year
02/12	Third day of Chinese Lunar New Year
03/29	Good Friday
03/30	Holy Saturday
04/01	Easter Monday
04/04	Ching Ming Festival
05/01	Labor Day
05/17	Buddha's Birthday
06/12	Dragon Boat Festival
07/01	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day
09/20	Day after Mid-Autumn Festival
10/01	National Day of the People's Republic of China
10/14	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 lead 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

01/14 Coming of Age Day

02/11 National Foundation Day

03/20 Spring Equinox

04/29 Shōwa Day

05/03 Constitution Memorial Day

05/04 Greenery Day

05/05	Children's Day (celebrated 05/06)
07/15	Sea Day
09/16	Respect for the Aged Day
09/22	Autumn Equinox (celebrated Sep 23)
10/14	Sports Day
11/03	Culture Day (celebrated Nov 4)
11/23	Labor Thanksgiving Day
12/23	Emperor's Birthday

### **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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 04/05)
04/13	Songkran
04/14	Songkran (observed 04/16)
04/15	Songkran (observed 04/17)
05/05	Coronation Day (observed 05/06)
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 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.

***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 (the People's Liberation Army), then denounced as a spy by the Communist government for her love of an American professor. Her seemingly impossible escape from China and later marriage make “one of the most absorbing books of the year.” —*The Journal*

***From Emperor to Citizen*** by Pu Yi (Biography)

The autobiography of China's last emperor, Pu Yi, whose fortunes paralleled the tumultuous history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century China. Pu Yi's account of his troubled life was made into a stunning Bernardo Bertolucci film that won the 1987 Academy Award.

***Hong Kong*** by Jan Morris (History)

A renowned travel writer traces the evolution of the British colony from the Opium Wars to the 1990s.

***Riding the Iron Rooster*** by Paul Theroux (Travel Writing)

Acclaimed travel writer Paul Theroux's vivid account of his journey through China by rail.

***The River at the Center of the World: A Journey Up the Yangtze and Back in Chinese Time***

by Simon Winchester (Travel Writing). A British scholar chronicles his 1995 journey up the entire length of the 3,964-mile Yangtze. “Compelling erudite account...essential reading for China buffs.” —*Booklist*

***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*** (Travel Writing)

edited by Madeleine Lynn. 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**

*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**

*Japan: A Short Cultural History* by George B. Sansom (Culture)

A standard work that examines Japan's cultural traditions.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 Tuvan 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 of 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, the film 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**

***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.

**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.

**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**

**In the Mood for Love** starring Tony Leung Chui Wai and Maggie Cheung (2001, color) Although this story of two spurned spouses finding comfort in each other is set in Hong Kong of the 1960s, most of the exteriors and street scenes are actually Bangkok, and the final sequence was filmed in Cambodia's Angkor Wat complex. In Cantonese with subtitles.

**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").



## 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](http://www.gct.com/community)

### **Government websites:**

**International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information**

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

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

[www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public)

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **General travel information websites:**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

#### **World weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

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

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe**

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com)

**Electric current and plug types**

[www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm)

**Foreign exchange rates**

[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

**ATM locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm) for **Cirrus ATMs**

[www.visa.com/pd/atm](http://www.visa.com/pd/atm) for **PLUS ATMs**

### **Country information:**

[www.cnto.org.au/](http://www.cnto.org.au/) **China**

[www.discoverhongkong.com](http://www.discoverhongkong.com) **Hong Kong**

[www.english.hongkong.com](http://www.english.hongkong.com) **Hong Kong**

[www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp) **Japan**

[www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org) **Thailand**

[www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html](http://www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html)



## Tourist Board Addresses

Tourist offices in the U.S. and abroad offer FREE brochures, maps, and pamphlets with information that pertains to many of your destinations. If these materials would enhance your vacation planning, you can write or call the following tourist board offices:

### **China National Tourist Office**

Empire State Building  
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 6413  
New York, NY 10118  
Telephone: 1-212-760-9700  
Fax: 1-212-760-8809

### **China National Tourist Office**

550 North Brand Boulevard, Suite 910  
Glendale, CA 91203  
Telephone: 1-818-545-7507  
Fax: 1-818-545-7506

### **Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb)**

115 East 54th Street, Second Floor  
New York, NY 10022-4512  
Telephone: 1-212-421-3382  
Brochures: 1-800-282-4582  
Fax: 1-212-421-8428

### **Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb)**

10940 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2050  
Los Angeles, CA 90024-3915  
Telephone: 1-310-208-4582  
Brochures: 1-800-282-4582  
Fax: 1-310-208-2398

## Optional Extensions

### **Japan National Tourist Organization**

One Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 1250  
New York, NY 10020  
Telephone: 1-212-757-5640  
Fax: 1-212-307-6754

### **The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)**

61 Broadway, Suite 2810  
New York, NY 10006  
Telephone: 1-800-THAILAND (1-800-842-4526)  
Telephone: 1-212-432-0433  
Fax: 1-212-269-2588

## 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.