

# THE GREAT WALL CHALLENGE

organised by  
**DIFFERENT TRAVEL**

## About China

The People's Republic of China, more commonly known as China, is the largest country in East Asia and is home to over 1.3 billion people, approximately one-fifth of the world's population. China is so large it stretches across four time zones, although 'Beijing time' is standard throughout the country. Because of the sheer size of the country, covering 9.6 million square kilometers, China is fortunate to have a hugely contrasting landscape. From the rugged west, with the Himalayan and Tian Shan mountain ranges, and the dry desert north bordering Mongolia and Siberia to the steamy subtropical south bordering Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos and the stunning 14,500km coastline of the low-lying east. China is a socialist republic, ruled by the Communist Party of China. Its jurisdiction covers 22 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities and two highly autonomous special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau. Since the market-based reforms in the 1970s, China has become one of the world's fastest growing economies, and as a result poverty has reduced from 53% in 1981 to 8% in 2001.



## The Great Wall



The Great Wall of China is a series of fortifications, built, rebuilt, and maintained between the 5th century BC and the 16th century to protect the northern borders of the Chinese Empire during the rule of successive dynasties. Several walls were built since the 5th century BC, the most famous of which was built between 220 BC and 200 BC by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China.

The Great Wall of China is the world's longest man-made structure, approximately 6,700 km (4,160 miles) from east to west, along an arc that roughly relates to the southern edge of Inner Mongolia. It is also the largest human-made structure ever built in terms of surface area and mass. At its peak the Ming Wall was guarded by more than one million men. It has been estimated that somewhere in the range of 2 to 3 million Chinese died over the centuries spent building the wall.

## Itinerary

**Day 1:** Fly to Beijing.

**Day 2:** Arrive and transfer to your hotel for dinner and overnight stay.

**Day 3-7:** Our trek begins in Simitai, a wilder area of the Great Wall, and we hike to the Gubeiko Pass. We'll spend the next 5 nights under canvas in villages close to the wall as we trek both on and off the wall, exploring rural villages, ascending Mt. Simitai, admiring stunning scenery as the Great Wall winds its way through areas of mountains, pine trees, farmland and cornfields. On the way we'll meet local people and observe daily life as we go.

**Days 8-10:** 3 days hiking near to Mutianya and then Huangyaguan, more great scenery, and we'll stay in hotels overnight.

**Day 11-12:** Drive back to Beijing, and then enjoy time at leisure in this immense city as well as enjoying a city tour visiting the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. We also intend to spend some time at a community centre for mentally disabled children and adults.

**Day 13:** Transfer to the airport for the flight back to London, arriving the following day.

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## BEFORE YOU GO: AN A - Z OF INFORMATION ON CHINA

**A is for Arrival.** British passport holders require a visa to enter Mainland China (exc. Hong Kong and Macau). Please see <http://www.visaforchina.org.uk/visaen/visaView.html?method=index> for more information about fees and application procedures.

**B is for Begging.** Begging is not very common in China, but in the large cities, such as Beijing, you may find people begging for money or food. Quite often these people have deformities or are young children. We do not generally recommend giving to beggars as it encourages reliance on tourists, however if you choose to do so, please do so appropriately.

**C is also for Camping.** For the nights during the trek we will be staying in tents (two persons per tent) in villages near the wall. A qualified guide, porters and Different Travel tour leader will be with the group for the duration of the trek. You should bring your own sleeping bag and mat; tents are provided.

**C is also for Clothing:** People in China are very smartly dressed and presentable, often wearing designer fashion and other 'Westernised' styles. It will be appreciated to dress well and respectfully. However, it is important to dress modestly particularly in rural areas where the locals may not be accustomed to Westerners. Short shorts and skirts and very tight or low cut tops should be avoided to avoid attention from the opposite sex. You should bring appropriate trekking clothes for the trek itself, such as breathable t-shirts and zip-off trousers as it can get very hot during the day. Please note that t-shirts with dates of political significance (such as 1976) are not tolerated and being detained by the police and having the offending clothing confiscated and given an alternative is a very real possibility.

**D is for Dehydration.** Day time temperatures can rise to 30C so it is wise to consume at least 2l of bottled water to avoid the risk of dehydration. Oral rehydration salts are also essential to keep with you at all times to replace lost salts from sweating.

**D is also for Drink.** Green tea (绿茶 *lǜchá*) is provided free in many restaurants and there are hundreds of varieties of tea (茶 *chá*) available for the enthusiast. Bottled water (水 *shuǐ*) is widely available and is very cheap (around 1 Yuan). Fruit juices, soft drinks, beer, wines and spirits are also widely available. It is best to avoid ice in drinks as it is not always safe. Coffee is increasing in popularity and establishments like Starbucks are popping up all over large cities in China.

**D is also for Day pack.** Whilst trekking you should have your own day pack containing the following items: sun hat and sun cream, bottled water (minimum 2 litres), energy snacks and basic first aid kit.

**D is also for Dietary Requirements.** The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible.

**D is also for Departure Tax.** Any departure tax should be included in your flight ticket.

**E is for Electricity.** Two flat prong plug sockets are standard in China, so please take an appropriate adaptor. Electricity is 220V/50Hz so please ensure your electronics are suitable for this voltage, which is double that of US and other country voltages.

**E is also for Etiquette.** If visiting a Chinese person's home a small gift is appreciated. The Chinese find the concept of 'saving face' very important and as a result if you point out a mistake or a failing this may result in severe humiliation. However, if you do need to point something out it is important that you are very polite but firm about it to avoid the loss of face.

Talking about politics and past wars is not ideal conversation in China. If you are involved in a discussion about this, please be respectful of the views of those involved and do not attempt to debate or change a person's opinions as this will be considered very rude.

**F is for Food.** Chinese food is very varied depending on the area of the country in which you are visiting. They range from all kinds of meat, seafood and vegetables served with hundreds of varieties of noodles and rice. The spiciness varies depending on the region and can range from intensely spicy to very mild. Some fantastic snacks include dumplings - jiaozi (饺子) dim sum (点心) and barbecued sticks of meat, dumplings, seafood or vegetables from street vendors - yang rou chuan (羊肉串). Vegetarian choices are easy to come by. Fast food restaurants such as McDonalds, Burger King, KFC etc are becoming very popular and are easy to find in large cities.

**F is also for Food Etiquette.** The use of chopsticks is standard throughout China and there is some important etiquette related

to their use. You must not put chopsticks upright into your rice bowl. This is indicative of incense for the dead and is considered a wish for death of those around you.

Diners must use their own chopsticks to take food from communal bowls as there are no serving utensils provided. If requested, it is acceptable to ask for communal utensils.

You should not play with your chopsticks, hit them together to make noise, or gesticulate with them.

Slurping is considered uncivilised and not expected when drinking soup or tea.

When eating rice, you should bring the bowl to your bottom lip, and using the chopsticks, scoop the rice into your mouth to avoid spilling it over the table.

Talking during mealtimes is very common as this is a time that Chinese people socialise.

**F is also for Fitness.** This tour is classified as challenging and a very good general level of fitness is required. You should start a programme of body conditioning before your departure including walking, cardiovascular workouts and work to improve both your stamina and your ability to walk up and down gradients. The Great Wall is made up of hundreds of thousands of stairs, some of which have begun to crumble and are more like steep gravel slopes. A simple but effective method of preparing for the Great Wall trek is climbing and descending your stairs at home or work for periods of 5 minutes throughout the day, increasing weekly.

**H is for Haggling.** When shopping for gifts in market places where there are no price tags on items it is expected that you will haggle. The first price is sometimes up to 10 times more than the value of the item, but remember that you should pay what you think is a good price for the item, not trying to get the price as low as possible.

**H is also for Health.** You are advised to seek medical advice before travelling and to ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For further information, visit your GP or <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>.

**I is for Insurance.** Different Travel will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognised by participants. Thus, we highly recommend the purchase of short-term travel insurance for our expeditions. Travel Insurance is a cost effective way to protect yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to cancelled trips, delays, medical problems, baggage loss or damage.

**I is also for Internet.** Internet cafes are abundant in China and very cheap. However, due to the Government restrictions, some websites may not be accessible in China, such as social networking websites like Facebook and video websites such as YouTube. Websites containing political propaganda, opinions and anti-governmental campaigns are also blocked, and it would be best not to search for anything political during your stay. Browsing is sometimes monitored at internet cafes so it is not secure and you should be aware of this while using the Internet.

**L is for Language.** Putonghua (普通话) meaning 'Common Speech' is the national language of mainland China. Also known as Mandarin, this is spoken by 837 million people worldwide. Mandarin is a very tonal language and uses Chinese characters for written text. Pinyin is the Romanised version of Chinese words which can make understanding the language simpler for non-Chinese. Please see the information below for useful Chinese phrases.

**L is also for Laowai.** Anyone who does not look Chinese will find that calls and whispers of "hello laowai" are common. *Lǎowài* (老外) literally means "old (and thus respected) outsider", a colloquial term for "foreigner". Calls of "laowai" will come from just about anyone, of any age, but are more likely from the very young and can occur many times in any given day. It is not a word intended to cause offence and should not be taken as disrespect, no matter how many times you hear it.

**M is for Money.** The currency of China is Renminbi (人民币), the People's Money and is abbreviated to RMB. The basic unit for this money is the Yuan ¥ or 元 which is also referred to colloquially as Kuai. At the time of writing (January 2010), ¥1 was £0.09. £1 = ¥11.05. ATMs are widespread in large cities but not all will accept foreign cards, and those that do may incur a charge (contact your bank for information about ATM fees for your account).

**P is for Phone.** China's international dialing code is +86. If you have a GSM900/1800 mobile phone you should be able to use it in China without any problems (subject to your mobile phone provider terms and conditions). Calls may be very expensive.

**P is for Photography.** When taking photographs of the local people, it would be wisest to ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission – especially in rural areas can cause offence. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome, and often groups of Chinese people will ask you to pose for a photograph with them, particularly those people with blonde hair or very tall people.

**R is for Religion.** Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism are the main religions of China. The government does not actively encourage religion being atheist but people are free to choose their own faith. Spirituality plays an

important part of the lives of Chinese people, particularly in regards to ancestor worship, which is an ancient Chinese belief and original Chinese religion.

**S is for Safety.** Incidences of petty theft such as pick-pocketing and bag snatching do occur in the larger cities and tourist areas.

**S is also for Spitting.** Spitting is very common in China and completely acceptable because Chinese people consider it unhealthy to swallow phlegm. It is very likely that you will see (and hear) people spitting but remember that this is normal behaviour and you should avoid confronting anyone about it. The government is beginning a campaign to reduce spitting but it remains a common part of Chinese lifestyle. However, it is not considered proper for a Westerner to spit in public, and we do not recommend that you spit.

**T is for Tipping.** Tipping is not common in China and considered unnecessary. Taxi drivers will often refuse tips and if you leave money on the table after a meal, you are more likely to find the staff running after you to give it back than accepting it. If you wish to tip your guide, this is 100% discretionary.

**T is also for Toilet Facilities.** Toilet facilities in China vary from clean to absolutely shocking. The Asian squat variety of toilet is commonplace and toilet paper is rarely provided. Sometimes you will find a toilet paper dispenser outside the bathroom, or a vendor will sell you some at the doorway, otherwise, always carry toilet paper with you. You should always put toilet paper into the bucket provided as flushing paper will clog the system. Generally, restaurants such as McDonalds or KFC will have Western style toilets and fairly clean facilities. In public bathrooms, there is not always a cubicle door, although separate facilities are available for both males and females.

**W is for Weather.** The weather along the Great Wall varies from day to night depending on the time of day. The nights can get very cold and the days can get very hot. The best months to visit the Great Wall of China are May, September or early October. There is not much rain during these months and the brisk temperatures are refreshing and comfortable. Cooler temperatures in the city also mean less air-pollution to cloud the beautiful scenery around the Great Wall of China.

## Useful Chinese Phrases

### Tones

1. First tone ( ā )  
Flat, high pitch — more sung instead of spoken
2. Second tone ( á )  
Low to middle, rising — pronounced like the end of a question phrase (*What?*)
3. Third tone ( ǎ )  
Middle to low to high, dipping — **Note:** For two consecutive words in the 3rd tone, the first word is pronounced as if it is in the 2nd tone. For example, 打扰 *dǎrǎo* is pronounced as *dárǎo*.
4. Fourth tone ( à )  
High to low, rapidly falling — pronounced like a command (*Stop!*)
5. A fifth tone  
This is a neutral tone, which is rarely used by itself (mostly for phrase particles), but frequently occurs as the second part of a phrase.

### Basics

Hello.

你好。 Nǐ hǎo.

How are you?

你好吗？ Nǐ hǎo ma?

Fine, thank you.

很好, 谢谢。 Hěn hǎo, xièxie.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ .

我叫 \_\_\_\_\_ 。 Wǒ jiào \_\_\_\_\_ .

Nice to meet you.

很高兴认识你。 Hěn gāoxìng rènshì nǐ.

Please.

请。 Qǐng.

Thank you.

谢谢。 Xièxiè.

You're welcome.

不客气。 Bú kèqi.

Excuse me. (*getting attention*)

请问 qǐng wèn

Excuse me. (*begging pardon*)

打扰一下。 Dǎrǎo yíxià ; 麻烦您了, Máfán nín le.

I'm sorry.

对不起。 Duìbùqǐ.

It's okay. (*polite response to "I'm sorry"*)

没关系 (méiguānxi).

Goodbye

再见。 Zàijiàn

I can't speak Chinese.

我不会说中文。 Wǒ bú huì shuō zhōngwén.

Do you speak English?

你会说英语吗? Nǐ huì shuō Yīngyǔ ma?

Is there someone here who speaks English?

这里有人会说英语吗? Zhèlǐ yǒu rén huì shuō Yīngyǔ ma?

Help! (*in emergencies*)

救命! Jiùmìng!

Good morning.

早安。 Zǎo'ān.

Good evening.

晚上好。 Wǎnshàng hǎo.

Good night.

晚安。 Wǎn'ān.

I don't understand.

我听不懂。 Wǒ tīng bù dǒng.

Where is the toilet?

厕所在哪里? Cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ?

## Problems

I don't want it! (*useful for people who come up trying to sell you something*)

我不要 (wǒ búyào!)

## Numbers

Chinese numbers are very regular. While Indo-Arabic (Western) numerals have become more common, the Chinese numerals shown below are still used, particularly in informal contexts like markets.

0 〇, 零

líng

1 一

yī

2 二

èr (两 liǎng is used when specifying quantities)

3 三

sān

4 四

sì

5 五

wǔ

6 六 liù  
7 七 qī  
8 八 bā  
9 九 jiǔ  
10 十 shí

# Packing List

## Essentials

Tickets (or e-tickets)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Passport & copy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Torch (plus spare bulb/batteries)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary/notebook and pen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Books/ pack of cards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sewing kit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adaptor (2 flat pins – US style)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daypack	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Eating and Drinking

2-litre water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy snacks (dried fruit/nuts/glucose sweets etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Powdered fruit juice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water purification	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Clothing

Trainers / comfortable shoes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking/hiking boots	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Long sleeved shirt/t-shirt x2	<input type="checkbox"/>
T-shirts/vests x 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fleece and sweater	<input type="checkbox"/>
Light-weight waterproof jacket	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knee-length shorts (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lightweight long (or convertible) trousers x2 (not jeans)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sun hat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cotton scarf	<input type="checkbox"/>
Underwear	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gloves and warm hat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing to relax in after trek	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Hygiene

Wash bag and washing kit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal toiletries	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toothbrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toothpaste	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multi-purpose travel wash	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand sanitizer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wet wipes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel towel	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sun block/ cream (high SPF) and aftersun (or Aloe Vera gel)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sanitary towels/tampons	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spare glasses/contact lenses	<input type="checkbox"/>

## First Aid Kit

Prescription medicine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Painkillers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plasters/blister spray	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anti-malarials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insect repellent (cont. 50% DEET)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anti-histamine cream/tablets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kaolin/Imodium (Loperamide)/lomotil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rehydration sachets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Antiseptic cream/powder	<input type="checkbox"/>
Antifungal cream/powder	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lip balm with SPF protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scissors/ Tweezers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calamine lotion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decongestant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Throat lozenges	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Sleeping

Sleeping mat (such as Thermarest)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleeping bag (comfort level of 0-15C)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleeping bag liner (cotton or silk)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eye mask	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ear plugs	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Optional

Camera	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video Camera	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chargers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film/batteries/memory stick	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile phone + charger	<input type="checkbox"/>
MP3 player/walkman	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking pole	<input type="checkbox"/>

If there are any questions or queries regarding the items on this list, please feel free to contact us on [info@different-travel.com](mailto:info@different-travel.com)

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