

# Plan an Exposure Trip to China

## People's Republic of China

China is the world's most populous country, with a continuous culture stretching back nearly 4,000 years. Many of the elements that make up the foundation of the modern world originated in China, including paper, gunpowder, credit banking, the compass, and paper money. China now has the world's fastest-growing economy and is undergoing what has been described as a second industrial revolution.

The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 after the Communist Party defeated the previously nationalist Kuomintang in a civil war. China remains a communist state and a heavily controlled society.

The economic disparity between urban China and the rural hinterlands is among the largest in the world. Discontent manifests itself in protests by farmers and workers. Other pressing problems include corruption, which affects every level of society, and the growing rate of HIV infection. A downside of the economic boom has been environmental degradation; China is home to many of the world's most-polluted cities.

Human rights campaigners continue to criticize China for executing hundreds of people every year and for failing to stop torture.

China's media are tightly controlled by the country's leadership. The industry has opened up in distribution and advertising, but not editorial content. The press reports on corruption and inefficiency among officials, but the media as a whole avoid criticism of the Communist Party's monopoly on power. Each city has its own newspaper, usually published by the local government, as well as a local Communist Party daily.

Mandarin and Cantonese are the most commonly spoken languages. English is not common, particularly outside major centres.

China is home to 38 UNESCO World Heritage sites. Millennia of rich and varied history, culture, and traditions provide a variety of unique tourist opportunities.

## General Comments about Travelling in China

In general tourism infrastructure (including accommodation and transportation) has grown in recent years. Be prepared for large numbers of people and structured itineraries.

### Visas

A valid Canadian passport is required. The passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected departure from the country. Canadians must apply for a visa to visit to China. The process can be time-consuming, so be sure to leave sufficient time before your departure. There is a visa fee. For more information you can visit the Chinese Embassy website ([www.chinaembassycanada.org/eng/lsw/Chinese%20Visa/t37727.htm](http://www.chinaembassycanada.org/eng/lsw/Chinese%20Visa/t37727.htm)).

### Currency

Currency Chinese money is called Renminbi (RMB), which means "the People's Currency." The popular unit of RMB is yuan. One yuan equals 10 jiao, one jiao equals 10 fen. There are parts of China where the *yuan* is also known as *Kuai* and *jiao* is known as *mao*. Chinese currency is issued in the following denominations: one, two, five, 10, 20, 50, and 100 yuan; one, two and five jiao; and one, two and five fen.

It is possible to use Interac and credit cards, but availability may be limited outside major city centres. Plan on paying cash if you will be travelling extensively outside city centres.

### Health and Safety

Check current inoculation requirements and recommendations by visiting International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT) ([www.iamat.org/country\\_profile.cfm?id=109](http://www.iamat.org/country_profile.cfm?id=109)).

China is a relatively safe country. Travellers should be conscious of pickpocketing and bag snatching.

## Organizations Welcoming Groups

### Amity Foundation

The Amity Foundation ([www.amityfoundation.org](http://www.amityfoundation.org)), with offices in Nanjing, China, and Hong Kong, is an independent Chinese voluntary organization. It was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote education, social services, health, and rural development from China's coastal provinces in the east to the minority areas of the west. The United Church of Canada and its predecessors have a long history of friendship in mission with the Chinese people and are involved in sending volunteer teachers to Amity on a yearly basis as well as providing core funding through the M&S Fund.

Abiding by the principle of mutual respect in faith, Amity builds friendship with people at home and abroad. Promoting holistic development and public welfare, Amity serves society, benefits the people, and strives to promote world peace. In this way, Amity

- contributes to China's social development and openness to the outside world
- makes Christian involvement and participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people
- serves as a channel for people-to-people contact and ecumenical sharing of resources

Amity implements church-initiated projects across China, especially in areas where there are active local Christian communities. These projects include medical clinics, homes for the elderly, kindergartens, animal husbandry, and farming. Amity's participation includes organizing workshops on church-initiated social service; providing personnel training, basic equipment, and facilities; and promoting development education for Christian communities.

### Education and Exposure Planning

The education and exposure program of the Amity Foundation is designed to help groups come to know the work of Amity and other Christian organizations in a specific province of China. Each year Amity hosts an Easter Tour, which highlights the work in a particular province. Based on the itineraries of those Easter Tours, Amity is able to offer a similar experience to a congregational group. Participants come away with a deeper appreciation of what it means to be a minority Christian as well as the ecumenical work of Chinese Christians. Teresa Carino ([amityhk@pacific.net.hk](mailto:amityhk@pacific.net.hk)) in the Hong Kong office will be happy to work with you to design the visit that will best meet your learning goals.

Sample itineraries give you a sense of what you can experience with Amity.

#### Henan Province

Day 1	Arrive in Beijing; program orientation and dinner
Day 2	Visit Beijing Christian Council Visit State Administration for Religious Affairs Visit Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy for Social Sciences See Palace Museum (also called the Forbidden City) Visit local church—youth fellowship
Day 3	Visit Yanjing Seminary in Beijing See Great Wall and Summer Palace
Day 4	Fly to Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province Visit with Provincial Council leaders for briefing on church in Henan Visit Henan Bible School Meet with Henan Religious Affairs Bureau officials
Day 5	Sightseeing (Longmen grottoes, Peony festival, Shaolin Temple)
Day 6	Travel to Zhou Kou Free afternoon
Day 7	Worship in rural church Visit church-run projects
Day 8	Amity projects Return to Zhengzhou
Day 9	Fly to Beijing Evaluation and recommendations
Day 10	Depart from Beijing for home

**Inner Mongolia**

- Days 1–3 *as in Henan Province itinerary*
- Day 4 Visit the Forbidden City  
Take flight to Hohhot
- Day 5 Worship in local church
- Day 6 Visit Inner Mongolia Christian Council  
Visit the church-run home for the elderly  
Visit the Training Centre for Lay Leaders
- Day 7 Visit Amity grassland management project in Dalate County
- Day 8 Visit the eco-tourism project in Abaga County
- Day 9 Visit the HIV/AIDS training program by the church
- Day 10 Morning: In Hohhot  
Afternoon: Leave for Beijing  
Debriefing
- Day 11 Departure from Beijing

**Accommodations, Meals and Transportation**

Accommodation varies depending on the province being visited, though generally the hotels are double-occupancy and three stars. Transportation, both domestic travel within China and buses for visits, are part of the package pricing.

**Fees**

Amity provides all services (hotels, meals, translation, and transportation), including domestic airfare, for a package price. Planners will need to include international airfare in participants' costs.

For more information contact the People in Mission program ([pip@united-church.ca](mailto:pip@united-church.ca)).