Knowledge Must, China and India.
www.knowledge-must.com

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Foreword

Welcome to this guide book for students, graduates, and professionals who are interested in working in China. With this publication Knowledge Must offers a complete resource on China’s challenging job market for foreigners. In addition to answering the most pressing questions, the guide features valuable insights ranging from logistics such as visa procedures and accommodation arrangements to cultural background information and inspiration for how to spend one’s leisure time.

“工欲善其事，必先利其器” (gōng yú shàn qì shì, bì xiān lì qí qì)
“If a workman wishes to do a good job, he must first sharpen his tools.”

- Confucius

In today’s world, globalisation affects everybody. Whether you are working for an international organisation, opening your company’s branch office in Mumbai, planning the acquisition of a plant in Shanghai, or travelling internationally for business, the ability to navigate successfully across cultures is imperative to your success. Since most international ventures fail due to cultural differences, intercultural expertise is now increasingly being recognised as a critical element in succeeding on the global stage.

To gather life experience and further their career, more and more people all over the world decide to learn other languages, study or work in other countries, and travel abroad. People from all over the world are continuously looking for new geographical directions to seek new opportunities. What many people find astonishing, however, is the sheer amount of young foreign students and seasoned professionals who come to China to find career fulfilment.

China has captivated the minds of people around the world for thousands of years. In recent decades, China has been widely acknowledged as a global powerhouse, from cultural exports to business prowess, from the fine arts to technology. Chinese organisations have long understood the value of foreign employees for enhancing the effectiveness of their work. With an increasing number of multinationals relocating to China, as well as successful and expanding domestic companies,
opportunities for work abound. China’s recent economic success and high potential for future growth make this an exciting time to become involved in this booming market.

The speed of development in China is faster than anywhere else in the world. China's rapid developments provide a continuous stream of new new opportunities – be it a business idea of your own or a well-paying position. There has never been a better time to come to China than right now. The country is experiencing a dramatic economic boom unlike anything else witnessed in world history and opportunities to travel, study, and work while enjoying yourself are simply outstanding.

We have structured this guide book using an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) format. We constantly strive to update our information in order to keep on satisfying all the information requirements people really have; please get in touch with us directly if you have additional questions in mind that are of general interest for people coming to China. We will consider all feedback we receive when publishing the next edition of this guide book.

The advantage of our FAQ approach is that the most common problems are identified and the solutions to these problems are offered in a direct fashion. We have ordered the FAQs according to importance and timeline. Questions concerning your decision-making process stand at the beginning. Those regarding issues you face when you already are in China can be found towards the end.

This publication “Work in China – A Guide by Knowledge Must” is part of a series of guide books Knowledge Must publishes to assist people from all over the world in crossing their cultural boundaries. You can download all our guide books for free from www.knowledge-must.com/guidebooks. We hope that you will find our guide books useful and will share them with others in your network!
This guide is presented to you by the intercultural solutions provider Knowledge Must. From our locations in India and China we assist students, professionals, and organisations to successfully cross cultural boundaries. Each of our five divisions specialises in a specific challenge you might face when moving from one culture to another. With our Integrated Solutions we combine all of our services to create customised packages that fit your individual requirements. From study, internship, volunteer, and work experiences to language immersion, intercultural trainings, and individualised travel arrangements, we fully equip you to make the most out of the diversity of Indian and Chinese cultures.

With our division Career Must, we at Knowledge Must assist students and professionals to build an international career. The unique chance to immerse yourself in the daily routine of another culture opens totally new professional and personal perspectives, and helps you to pursue your goals in life. At Career Must, we provide a great opportunity for applicants to identify and secure the best job opportunities all over China. We also can organise all of the logistics involved with working in China, such as visa support, arranging housing, and transportation.

Please visit our website www.knowledge-must.com for more information and contact us to learn how we can be of help to you.
Background Information

1. China – An Overview

“A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery.”

- Mao Zedong

China is situated in Eastern Asia bordering the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea, and has a total area size of 9,596,961 square kilometres. The very diverse climate and geography, from tropical in south to subarctic in north, from the Himalayan mountains, high plateaus, deserts in the west to plains, deltas, and hills in the east, make China one of the most amazing places to discover on our planet. Stretching from the desolate but water abounding Tibetan Plateau to the densely-populated eastern coastal cities, China is the most populous country in the world with more than 1.3 billion inhabitants.

The Chinese civilisation is one of the world’s earliest, with more than 3,000 years of documented history, and offers a huge variety of historical sites, ethnic groups, traditional arts and customs to explore. As of 2012, a staggering 41 Chinese sites were inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritages List.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official name</th>
<th>People’s Republic of China (PRC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital city</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land area</td>
<td>About 9.6 million square kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages used</td>
<td>Standard Chinese / Mandarin (Putonghua), Cantonese (Yueyu), Hokkien-Taiwanese (Minnanhua), and many others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
China is a country with striking geographic, economic and social contrasts. Huge gaps between lush tropical areas and deserts, rural and urban areas, overcrowded cities and unpopulated mountains, ancient and modern customs create a palpable tension in the air. The country has developed into a leading economy over the last few decades, outpacing the rest of the world as the fastest-growing major economy and is now often cited as a superpower thanks to its large population, rapid economic growth, and increasing prominence on the international scene.

The country offers work opportunities in all major fields. Be it the institutional, corporate, science, media or cultural sector, China welcomes talented career seekers that speak foreign languages, bring along new knowledge, and are equipped with skills to help spur on China’s development. From manager to engineer, English teacher to barmaid, looking for jobs in China is getting more and more popular, especially since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai International Fair. Nowadays China is considered as one of the best choices to develop one’s career or gain personal experience abroad, and is no longer the prerogative of expatriates working for big international corporations.

In the global economy, China was long considered a “hardship” posting, generally with a fat salary being the bait. Nowadays, a rapidly growing number of foreigners are moving to China for work by their own choice and are falling in love with Chinese culture, weather, food or maybe even someone special. Despite the bright prospects in China, foreigners often face various problems and obstacles, such as the complexities of Chinese language, society, and culture.
2. Demographic Composition

The People’s Republic of China is home to more than 1.3 billion people, the largest population of any country in the world. The Chinese government expects that population growth will stabilise at about 1.5 billion by 2025. Due to China’s huge population numbers, the less than one million foreigners who are residing in the country for longer periods account for a very small share of the total. Korean, Japanese, and American people constitute a large share of foreign residents in China. Chinese demographics have changed massively in recent years and are now characterised by relatively small share of children in the total population. The proportion of Chinese people aged 14 or younger is 16.60%, while the number aged 60 or older has grown to 13.26%. The median age of Chinese people is now 35.5 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>1,336,718,015</th>
<th>2011 estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population growth rate</td>
<td>0.493%</td>
<td>2011 estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>Total population: 74.68 years</td>
<td>2011 estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 72.68 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 76.94 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility rate</td>
<td>1.54 children born/woman</td>
<td>2011 estimate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIA World Factbook, 2011

One of the biggest demographic issues in China is the imbalanced ratio between men and women caused by a cultural preference for boys combined with the birth control policy. The sex ratio at birth is now 1.133 males per each female and leads to great imbalances that will affect the country for generations. China’s birth control policies have been increasingly relaxed for ethnic minorities, rural areas to some extent, and specific cities.
Contrary to popular conception in many countries, China is a diverse collection of cultures and traditions. The country has 56 officially recognised ethnic groups (and many more unrecognised ones); the most populous among them are the Han Chinese, who represent about 91.51% of the total population and outnumber the minority groups in every province except in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The idea that China is populated by people who are all pretty much alike could not be farther from the truth. In fact, even the Han ethnic group which on paper dominates China’s population figures is far from being a homogeneous group. Han people use dozens of different languages, maintain diverse traditions, and even differ widely in their physical appearance.

The main ethnic minorities with a population of above one million people are listed below:

- Zhuang: 16.2 million
- Manchu: 10.7 million
- Hui: 9.8 million
- Miao: 8.9 million
- Uyghur: 8.4 million
- Tujia: 8 million
- Yi: 7.8 million
- Mongol: 5.8 million
- Tibetan: 5.4 million
- Buyi: 3 million
- Dong: 3 million
- Yao: 2.6 million
- Korean: 2 million
- Bai: 1.9 million
- Hani: 1.4 million
- Kazakh: 1.4 million
- Li: 1.2 million
- Dai: 1.2 million

China’s south-western and north-western provinces, such as Guizhou, Sichuan, Yunnan, Xinjiang, and Tibet, offer many opportunities to explore the culture of these minority people. This diversity in ethnicity brings even more cultural richness to China.

The main religions in China are the “Three Teachings” (i.e. Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism), followed by Christianity and Islam. As China rapidly modernises, many Chinese are once again turning
to the temples and churches across the country to try and find answers. Purchasing “blessed” statues and amulets, lighting incense, and praying to the many deities in the temples are all popular activities. After state atheism was implemented in communist China, the Chinese government is now changing its policies and considers certain religious activities as contributing to building a “Harmonious Society”.

Remarkably, the Chinese Communist Party has jumped on the bandwagon and is even sponsoring certain religious institutions, teachers, and activities. As a rule of thumb, as long as religious activities do not threaten social stability from the government’s perspective, they are tolerated. However, decades of heavy-handed religious repression is not easily overcome and most people in China still visit temples for pragmatic reasons rather than searching for spiritual fulfilment.

Buddhism
Buddhism has a very long history of about 2,000 years in China, having entered the country via the ancient overland and maritime Silk Roads. Throughout different periods of time and according to location, Buddhism spread, flourished, and sometimes was persecuted in China. Many sects of Buddhism are popular in China, with the most notable being Chan Buddhism (better known around the world as Zen Buddhism).

Daoism
Daoism (or Taoism) are the ideas and ideologies attributed to the legendary figure Laozi (often Romanised as Lao-Tzu). Daoism’s primary source book is the Dao De Jing (Tao-te Ching), which in beautiful language describes the Dao (The Way) as the concept underlying and guiding all things. The central teaching is that one should let nature take its course and lead a life in harmony with Dao.

Confucianism
Confucianism is attributed to Kongzi (Confucius, 551-479 BCE), who was born in what is modern day Qufu, a small city in Shandong Province. Kongzi’s ideas are firmly based on the value of relationships and ethics. Ancestor worship, public obedience, and respect for relationships in society lie at the core of this philosophical system. When the Chinese communists took control over China, they quickly persecuted all Confucian practices. China after Mao, however, was quick to embrace many aspects of Confucianism in anything but name, and now Chinese society is once again firmly turning to Kongzi.
Christianity
After the “Three Teachings”, Christianity is the largest religion in present-day China. Though there are no reliable numbers, it can be estimated that anywhere between 40 and 60 million Chinese people profess to one of the Christian faiths, with Protestants strongly outnumbering Roman Catholics.

Islam
Though largely concentrated in China’s northwest, there are ten ethnic groups in China that almost exclusively profess to the Muslim faith: Hui, Uighur, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kirghiz, Tajik, Tatar, Dongxiang, Sala, and Bao’an. Since very few Chinese people outside of these minorities have converted to Islam, it is much easier to calculate their numbers and it can be stated that currently between 20 and 30 million Muslims live in the country.

The latest and most reliable statistical data available on religious beliefs until now was provided by Shanghai university professors, who found that 31.4% of people above the age of 16 in China considered themselves as religious, which means about 300 million people. Among 4,500 people surveyed, two-third declared themselves as Buddhists, Daoists or worshipers of Chinese religious deities. If pushed to limit their answer to one of the religions, there is a strong tendency among religious Chinese to declare that they are drawn to Buddhism.

3. The Chinese Economy

“China has really succeeded because of its stability. So my feeling is, how are they going to maintain this fantastic stability in a very fast changing economic situation. I think this is a challenge we face, how the global region will evolve in stability with such a fast growth. If they succeed to do that, no doubt, in the next generation it will be the major area of the world, economically.”

- Bernard Arnault

The Chinese economy is the second largest economy in the world with a nominal GDP of USD 5.9 trillion and also is the world’s fastest-growing major economy, with growth rates standing around 10% over recent decades. Since the 1970s, the Chinese economy has gradually been transformed from a completely planned economy (where government fixes prices and production levels) to a very market-driven economy. What has become very evident in the meantime is the economic gap between the leading coastal cities and rural areas deep in China’s interior.
Even though agriculture only constitutes about 10% of China’s GDP, it still accounts for nearly 40% of the labour force. China is the world’s largest producer and consumer of agricultural products and one of the world leaders for a wide range of commodities such as rice, wheat, potatoes, corn, peanuts, tea, millet, barley, apples, cotton, oilseed, pork, and fish.

The country’s industrial sector accounts for nearly half of the country’s GDP with an industrial output exceeding even that of the USA. China, also known as the “factory of the world”, is the world’s largest producer of concrete, steel, fertilizer, clothing, and toys. China has become a preferred destination as an export platform and relocation for manufacturing facilities, encouraged by government policies to make the country a major competitor to export-led economies such as the “Four Asian Tigers”.

The Chinese service industry ranks second in the world after the USA. The rapid growth in services such as IT and tourism ensure a high-growth trajectory for China’s tertiary sector.

China is already considered as a global economic superpower and its economic clout is still growing in numerous sectors. Export-driven growth along with stimulating foreign investments have been encouraged through national policies over the last 30 years and remain key components supporting China’s rapid economic rise. Foreign-invested enterprises today produce about half of China’s exports.
and for the first time in 2002, China became the number one destination for Foreign Direct Investments in the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy (as defined by the percentage of people age 15 and over who can read and write)</th>
<th>Total population: 92.2%</th>
<th>2008 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 88.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIA World Factbook, 2010

China can rely on its huge pool of human and natural resources to support its economic growth. With a literacy rate (defined as age 15 and over people that can read and write) of 92.2% of its total population, Chinese employers have a growing number of well-educated people at their disposal.

Still, the Chinese government faces numerous economic challenges such as raising per capita income (which is still below the world average) and reducing the economic development gap between coastal and interior provinces (from which rural labourers are rushing towards cities to find work). China will also have to deal with the environmental damage and social strife caused by such revolutionary economic transformations.

4. The Chinese Labour Market

Chinese labour market forecasts continue to be among the most optimistic in the world. Hiring intentions are very positive and employers indicate that this strong hiring trend will continue. As new businesses come up and existing businesses continue to grow, there is a large need of additional talent to sustain that growth and jobseekers have more and more choices.
Some facts about the Chinese labour market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average age at graduation</th>
<th>24 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average graduate starting salary</td>
<td>3,500 RMB per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average working week</td>
<td>Monday to Friday, 8-9 hours per day, 8.00am-5.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday entitlement</td>
<td>Many work places only offer a few days of annual leave (besides the national holidays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>4% in urban areas, 9% in rural areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While state-owned companies have downsized over the last two decades in China, private sector employment has been growing steadily thus resulting in a more market-oriented labour market. From a low-wage manufacturing economy, China keeps on moving toward a more skilled and higher wage labour market. In spite of rapid economic development, there is still a sizable surplus of labour in both rural areas as well as in state-owned companies. Hence, in coming years the Chinese private sector will face the challenge of absorbing this labour surplus.

China’s labour market continues to experience rapid structural change. With the increased mechanisation of China’s agricultural industry, farm workers continue to head to the cities. An estimated 130 million migrant workers are on the move in China and they typically leave their rural homes to find employment in urban factories where they sleep in dormitories and make meagre salaries often under difficult working conditions. However, this phenomenon has recently slowed down as rural incomes are rising and employment opportunities are improving in the rural areas. At the same time, education and vocational skill levels in China are rising, rapidly building up the country’s middle-class. Increasing labour costs, China's one-child policy, and higher aspirations among the Chinese youth lead in fact to a shortage of cheap, unskilled labour in many industries. Labour shortages may force China to lose its competitiveness in some industries.
FAQ Decision-Making Process

1. Why should I work, study or volunteer abroad?

Whether you are starting your career, want to add a key differentiator in your curriculum, or are simply looking for a radical change, working, studying, and volunteering among people of other cultures can offer you the opportunities that you are looking for. As a result of your immersion in the daily routine of another culture, you will be able to interface effectively with people of diverse backgrounds. Work, study, and volunteer experiences abroad awaken a tremendous potential in you!

What makes working, studying and volunteering abroad so exciting? It offers dynamic challenges and compelling rewards, such as:

- Developing skills for living in a culturally diverse and interdependent world
- Learning languages by immersion
- Gaining new personal insights
- Expanding your creativity and cultivating different approaches to problems
- Understanding developments taking place in other corners of the world
- Experiencing other cultures (and their architecture, art, history, music, etc.)
- Developing friendships for a lifetime
- Confronting you with different conceptions of life
- Gaining a unique and new appreciation for your native culture
- Getting a change of scenery from home
- Satisfying your desire for adventure, exploration, and fun
- Finding career fulfilment
- Living a fuller life
2. Why should I work in China?

Working in China is a once in a lifetime opportunity. The unique chance to immerse yourself in the daily routine of another culture’s work environment opens totally new professional and personal perspectives. Today China has become one of the most dynamic economies in the world. Globalisation has played an important role in the generation of employment in China. Since the economic liberalisation policies initiated in 1978, the employment scenario in the country has significantly improved. China’s booming economy urgently requires foreign knowledge and skills.

“知之者不如好之者，好之者不如乐之者” (zhì zhī zhě bù ru hào zhī zhě, hào zhī zhě bù ru lè zhī zhě)
"Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life."

Confucius

While working in China, you will develop skills for living in a culturally diverse and interdependent world, improve existing language skills or learn new languages, give your CV a boost, and develop lifelong friendships. And while you build a career in China, your work experience will also lead to personal growth. Difficult situations in everyday life or at work can be challenging but you will learn how to manage them and gain invaluable experience. When going to work in China it is always important to keep in mind you are going to gain more than just work experience. You will have an opportunity to dive into a different culture and every day will be an adventure.

China is developing so quickly that the demand for foreigners getting involved in new projects is immense. This means that your entry level of participation and accountability are likely to be a lot higher compared to those of other countries. Your efforts will be noticed and appreciated by your colleagues. Moreover, when joining the Chinese workforce you will find it is very simple to set up a professional network with Chinese as well as other foreigners. This can be very advantageous for your future career.

In addition to that, it is worth mentioning that a comparatively small amount of money is required for covering daily needs in China. It is not expensive to go travelling in China either. This makes China a very suitable location for anyone who likes exploring. Whether you are more interested in the cultural
manifestations such as the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors or prefer to enjoy the beautiful mountainous sceneries of Sichuan and Yunnan, the diversity of experiences awaiting you is simply overwhelming. No matter where you will go, you will be able to experience Chinese culture anytime and anywhere.

Some of the many good arguments that may apply to you:

• The importance of China’s role in the world continues to increase, economically, politically as well as culturally
• Fascination for the unique and diverse Chinese culture
• Work at a higher level of responsibility than your peers back home
• For the sheer adventure of it, enjoy the sights and sounds of China
• Obtain a clear and distinguishing factor on your CV – if you are successful in China it shows that you are adaptive and hard working
• The best way to learn the most spoken language in the world
• Favourable income / living cost ratio

3. What is the situation of foreign labour in China?

The labour market for foreigners in China has been growing continuously over the last decades. But while supply is growing, more and more foreigners are searching for job opportunities in the country and thus competition has been growing, too.

In terms of geographical distribution of jobs in China, Beijing, Shanghai, and the Pearl River Delta attract by far the most foreign workers. In both Beijing and Shanghai already more than 100,000 foreigners are registered there, usually meaning that they spend more than 6 months in the cities.

According to government statistics, about 600,000 foreigners lived on the Chinese Mainland in 2010, approximately 39% of which had work permits. However, the actual number of foreigners working in China goes far beyond the official statistics, since many work without having a proper visa. The authorities are becoming much stricter about enforcing laws that pertain to foreigners working in China – more and more foreigners are getting caught without work visas and are being sent out of the country (often not being allowed back for several years).

China’s fast growing economy coupled with its growing shortage of people across industries ensures manifold job opportunities. While most foreigners working in China are employed with international
companies and foreign language schools, local Chinese companies are also hiring an increasing amount of foreigners.

The term "expat" originally referred to those people with diplomatic passports or to senior foreign executives of multinational companies, for whom China generally was a "hardship posting", sweetened by fat paychecks and fabulous perks. While these expatriate positions continue to exist, foreigners are increasingly only offered what is referred to as "local contracts", but often supplemented by accommodation, air tickets, etc. At the same time, many classical expat positions are now filled with highly competent, multilingual local staff.

During the 1980s the first wave of multinational companies came to China. Companies like Coca Cola, Volkswagen and Phillips were received with open arms and enjoyed a lot of benefits specifically created to make foreign investment more attractive. By now the regulations for foreign companies in China have become almost harmonised with regulations for local Chinese companies. While government incentives for foreign investment are decreasing, China’s economic and institutional reforms also imply that it is a lot easier today to start your own company in China. Many entrepreneurs from all over the world come to China and start businesses, making the most of the huge Chinese marketplace.

4. What employment opportunities are promising for foreigners in China?

“八仙过海，各显神通” (ba xian guohai, ge xian shentong)
“Like the Eight Immortals crossing the sea, each one displaying a special feat.” Meaning: everybody has a special talent.

- Chinese Proverb

One of the biggest opportunities today is working in rapidly developing economies abroad. They offer lots of opportunity for people who want to work hard and in exchange benefit from a very steep learning curve that can widen one’s career opportunities considerably.
Among the rapidly developing industries offering opportunities to foreigners who are looking for employment in China are:

- **Architecture, construction, engineering, and real estate:** China’s building boom offers a huge range of options, including in infrastructure projects, residential as well as non-residential buildings, and urban planning.

- **Arts and beyond:** Musicians, dancers, painters, performers, practicing virtually any art could give you an employment opportunity in the country.

- **Business services and consulting:** Market entry consulting, management consulting, as well as tax and legal services offer many employment opportunities to skilled foreign staff.

- **Education and intercultural services:** Teaching, professional translation, and interpreting services are among the options in the rapidly developing education and intercultural sector.

- **Energy:** Renewable energies are growing at very rapid pace and China already today is counted among the leaders in the wind and solar power industries.

- **Financial services and insurance industry:** There are work opportunities, for example, for accountants, business analysts, claims managers, sales managers, and tax managers.

- **Healthcare products and services:** Pharmacists, biotechnologists, and skilled medical staff are highly sought after in the Chinese marketplace.

- **Hospitality and tourism:** Job positions in restaurants, hotels, catering providers, and tour operators are some of the many opportunities for foreigners in hospitality and tourism.

- **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry:** Like most countries, also China is experiencing a shortage of qualified information technology specialists, including in the ICT services industry.

- **International trade, sourcing, and logistics:** China is an export powerhouse and thus offers many choices for foreign staff in trade, sourcing, and logistics.

- **Knowledge-based industries:** The Chinese economy is in need of a highly skilled workforce to enable them to develop their knowledge-based industries.

- **Manufacturing:** Being the “factory of the world” China’s manufacturing industry provides huge opportunities in many industries and functions, e.g. planning, engineering, sales, and services.

Much sought after functions that foreign workers can satisfy in China:

- **Business development, especially developing international business**

- **Cultural interface function in virtually all industries**

- **Language experts for a wide range of languages and in many functions**

- **Management, especially foreign-trained mid-level to senior managers conversant in Chinese**

- **Marketing, in creative as well as executing functions**

- **Technical, skill-based functions**
An ever increasing amount of Chinese companies are eager to enter foreign markets and are searching for foreign employees with good market insights that can help them in their endeavours. Just to cite one example, Chinese software developers would like to adapt their products to overseas markets and increase sales abroad. There are countless other opportunities like this that promise to be challenging and interesting experiences for you.

What is more, China already today ranks among the nations spending the most resources on Research and Development anywhere in the world. Researchers, academics, post-graduates, and skilled professionals find many employment opportunities. Over recent years, the Chinese government has increased its funding of Research and Development programs, and areas that receive attention and support by the authorities offer excellent conditions for pursuing research projects.

China also offers considerable scope for travellers looking for work. Teaching English can be particularly lucrative, and there are opportunities for acting, modelling work, editing, freelance writing, and IT work. Even though you will be offered these kinds of jobs even while being on a tourist visa, please be aware that this is technically not legal and that the Chinese authorities are increasingly clamping down on these illegal practices.

At Knowledge Must we have an excellent overview on job opportunities for foreigners in China. Just get in touch with us to profit from our expertise.

5. How can I find job opportunities in China?

As a graduate looking for work in China, you should use a variety of strategies, including:

- Job adverts in newspapers and trade publications
- Using contacts of your educational institute where available
- Google search
- Online job portals
- Internet forums
- Internships with a potential future employer
- Networking (on-site as well as online)
- Placement agencies

Effective job search resources in China include local newspaper classifieds and specialised trade magazines. However, the job offers for foreigners you will find in these print media are mainly designed for executives.
Major newspapers publishing job advertisements in China include:

- China Daily (中国日报)
  http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzx/
- Gongren Ribao (工人日报)
  http://bxzx.workercn.cn/
- Renmin Ribao (人民日报)
  http://www.people.com.cn/
- Shanghai Daily (English-language newspaper)
  http://www.shanghaidaily.com
- Sichuan Daily (四川日报)
  http://www.sichuandaily.com.cn
- South China Morning Post (English-language newspaper)
  http://www.scmp.com

One great resource to identify potential foreign employers in the country, though very pricy, is the “China Foreign Enterprise Directory”, which is published by Sinomedia twice a year.

Also in China the Internet has become a very popular tool for finding job opportunities. Two Online Job Portals heavily dominate the online job market: 51job.com and Zhaopin.com. There are also many other platforms, such as ChinaHR.com (which formed an alliance with US-based Monster.com) and 104china.com (which is a Taiwan-based online portal).

Importantly, it has to be mentioned that only a fraction of potential job opportunities are advertised online or in newspapers. Therefore, the use of alternative sources, persistency, and well developed detection skills will help you to discover the hidden jobs. In fact, many potential jobs can be carved out by your own initiative: many Chinese companies would be exhilarated to have talented foreign staff on their team.

The most powerful tool for finding career opportunities in China is certainly networking. Employers rely very heavily on referrals for future employees and this is even truer for foreign applicants where uncertainty levels for Chinese employers can often be beyond their comfort zone. Chances for finding and securing employment are far better once you are in China and as soon as you are able to confidently use the Chinese language, employment opportunities for you will be excellent in a wide range of functions and industries.

If you are already in the country, it will be important to massively extend your local contact network. You will have many networking opportunities, such as events organised by embassies, chambers of commerce, cultural institutes, and local LinkedIn as well as Xing groups. Attending professional meetings and events is very important in China, where business is mainly based on personal contact.
and trust. Another great opportunity is attending job fairs, which are regularly organised in each Chinese city. Also, all your Chinese friends, teachers, business acquaintances, and even neighbours should know that you are searching for jobs.

Networking opportunities for you in China include:
- Current as well as former colleagues
- Professional associations
- Friends and family
- Former classmates
- Online networking (such as on Xing and LinkedIn)

Since networks can hardly be developed while still being abroad, a large share of the foreigners working in China come to the country with the assistance of charities, placements organisations, etc. This option can provide a softer landing and might very well improve your chances of finding suitable opportunities. In case you would like to discuss your career options in China, simply get in touch with our experts at Knowledge Must.

6. What about teaching in China?

“三人行，必有我师焉” (san ren xing, bi you wo shi yan)
“When three people walk together, one will always be able to teach something to the other two.”
- Confucius

Teaching in China can be both a stimulating longer term career option as well as a great way to finance a short-term visit to the country. When you are driven to teach and have experience, there are a lot of opportunities for you in China. Whether you join one of the many specialised language schools, teach at the corporate level or to high-school students, it is all possible.

More and more people in China realise the importance of being able to speak a foreign language and they are looking for talented language teachers. Most commonly, foreign teachers in China teach languages, with English dominating the market by far. Though far smaller in size, there is also a rising market for teaching other foreign languages, such as Korean, Japanese, French, Spanish, and German. Additionally, you will also find many opportunities for teaching specific subjects and a considerable number of foreigners even teach at university level in China.

Regulations governing foreign teachers in China are established by the State Administration for Foreign Expert Affairs (SAFEA). One regulation mentions that foreign “educational experts” should
hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree and have more than two years of work experience. However, provinces are free to interpret this regulation and consequently some places in China will allow foreign teachers that do not satisfy these requirements, while others are very strict about doing so.

As a further complication, regulations and their interpretation change frequently and often without any notice. Even though many foreigners do so, it is illegal to do paid teaching in China on a tourist or business visa and, disregarding official regulations, correct working visas are often not obtained by the schools. According to one study, about 40% of foreign English teachers in the country teach on a tourist visa.

Foreign English teachers in China earn an hourly average salary of about 80 RMB in the country, some making considerably more, while others are making somewhat less. Important variables include location (salaries are higher in Shanghai than in rural Henan, for example), educational level (a master’s degree will often offer a higher salary than a bachelor’s), teaching certificates, and work experience.

Important for teaching foreign languages in China is having a strong command of the language, an understanding of its grammar, and excellent verbal communication skills. You should also like to interact with people and have good patience to teach. Teaching younger students often means helping them develop and master basic communication skills. If you choose to teach high school and college students, you will be instrumental in helping them develop a life-long command over the foreign language.

Teaching in China often means coping with rather unresponsive students. Teacher-student dialogue is often limited in China and students are supposed to listen intently and memorise what their teachers tell them. Gradually introducing games and role-plays as well as stimulating discussion will make a big difference over time, but initially might be rather frustrating. Interestingly, when asking students in China about their foreign teachers, they in fact often mention that they dislike the casual approach and demeanour (including too informal dress). The level of authority of teachers in China is still almost sacred.
If you are looking at options for teaching English as a second language you will be able to find many offers online. Useful terms for finding opportunities include:

- ESL: English as a Second Language
- TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language
- TESOL: Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages

Most foreigners teaching in China enjoy a positive working environment. However, incidences of contract violation can and do occur. The most common problems arise from being faced with living or working conditions that do not meet expectations and complications over obtaining the correct visas and residence permits. One also frequently hears complaints about broken promises and withheld salaries.

However, from web-based research alone it is usually very difficult to thoroughly research the educational institutes and the working environment you will face. If you are interested in finding the most satisfying teaching positions across China, you can also consult with us at Knowledge Must.

7. What about employment opportunities as an artist coming to China?

A rapidly developing global economy with a growing middle-class, like in China, also comes with a growing interest in a variety of arts. More and more people in China are curious to explore and experience new art and art forms. Not least due to the huge events China hosted in recent years, like the Olympics in Beijing and the World Expo in Shanghai, many foreigners started to discover China’s art scene. As it turned out, it is a mutual exchange, with many Chinese people gaining a serious interest in foreign arts as well. In Beijing and Shanghai, for example, there are parts of town exclusively devoted to art exhibition spaces and artist workshops. These neighbourhoods get a lot of positive attention and more cities around China plan to do the same.

*The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.*

- Arnold J. Toynbee
Chinese have more free time on their hands than ever before, allowing them to devote more time to art exhibitions, music concerts, theatre plays, etc. The number of people with a serious interest and knowledge of art is also on the rise, and the Chinese people are welcoming and increasingly embracing arts and artists from other countries and cultures. Whether you are a professional dancer or a hobby magician, people in China appreciate quality entertainment and love to see foreigners perform.

As the arts industry is maturing in China with newer and better equipped venues as well as a greater interest by the rapidly growing Chinese middle class, opportunities for international artists are growing correspondingly. However, the Chinese arts scene is often unpredictable and unorganised, so working via a local specialist partner is often advisable.

Our organisation’s division Culture Must provides a platform for artists to exchange their ideas, styles, and influences, while motivating them to present their creative talents. We enjoy excellent relations with representatives of businesses, cultural organisations, foundations, associations, sponsors, philanthropists, and friends of the arts in China. These relationships ensure that Culture Must can provide artists with a breadth of continuous opportunities.

Artists of all cultural background are invited to get in touch with us (artists@culture-must.com) and learn how we can assist them in their intercultural endeavours, extend their network, find cooperation possibilities, secure sponsorships, set up tours, handle the media, and so on.
8. What about working independently or founding my own company?

China is a rapidly developing country with the world’s largest labour force and virtually unlimited business opportunities. No wonder that investment analysts consider China to be one of the best places for businesses to invest in the world. China can be a great place to offer your professional services as well as to start your own business.

“I know the price of success: dedication, hard work, and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen.”

- Frank Lloyd Wright

At the same time, China is also notorious for the bureaucratic and legal hurdles an entrepreneur must overcome to incorporate and register a new firm. Registering your company and completing the paperwork often takes a lot longer than you initially thought. Other factors that inhibit an otherwise “business-friendly” environment include China’s vast and still largely inadequate regulatory environment and discriminatory hurdles for foreign businesses.

When planning to start your own business in China you must be aware of the fact that as much as the Chinese government would like to attract foreign investment, it also is very protective of Chinese local companies. In more and more industries, Chinese companies are developing an economic edge, so do your homework and plan your investment very carefully.

Here are the most common options to start on your own in China:

**Representative Office in China**
One of the easiest options for a foreign company to explore the market and establish itself is through means of a Representative Office. This is often the first step for foreign businesses when entering China.

**Sino-Foreign Cooperative Joint Venture in China**
A Sino-Foreign Cooperative Joint Venture is a joint venture between a Chinese and a foreign company in China based on a cooperation contract, in which the terms of cooperation, the division of earnings, and so on, are laid out.
Sino-Foreign Equity Joint Venture in China
Sino-Foreign Equity Joint Ventures have been the most popular choice for foreign investment in China. Unlike the Sino-Foreign Cooperative Joint Venture, both parties invest in the JV entity, with the foreign party generally not investing less than 25% of the total investment.

Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise in China
A Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise allows your company to move to China without the need of a Chinese investor or partner. Therefore full control of the company stays with the foreign investor, making it the favourable choice for many companies establishing themselves in China.

With Knowledge Must you have a partner on your side that will help you to avoid many frustrations and delays. We also have many great business ideas for foreigners coming to China to establish their own company. Just get in touch with us to profit from our expertise.
FAQ Application Process

1. How do I apply for a job position in China?

This, of course, heavily depends on where you apply for a job, i.e. location, type of organisation, professional level, and specific industry. The application process in China is often not standardised. Hiring can be done via a short phone interview or could extend to a lengthy process of subsequent interviews and tests. However, there are some things to be said in general about applying for job positions in China.

The Chinese labour market is very competitive. Open vacancies face heavy competition where most applicants are already sorted out due to their inferior application documents; information about a small but very innovative local company might not always be readily available; and the geography is so vast that is difficult to decide where to start.

Characteristically, Chinese employers are looking for these qualities in applicants:

- A positive attitude
- An outstanding educational record
- Modesty
- Courtesy
- Loyalty and a sense of duty
- Strong communication and people skills

Due to the sheer endless number of qualified Chinese staff, many international companies in China, for example, limit their search to elitist first-tier universities, where they conduct direct campus recruitment. Employers in China invest considerable time and energy before recruiting in China – not least since it can be quite painful to dismiss an employee in China.

Job requirements are generally less clearly defined as in Western countries, for instance, but this also means that there is more flexibility. In China many companies, institutions, and other forms of organisations do not have updated websites that announce open vacancies or mention job application procedures. Those foreigners who have tried to apply online often never even receive a reply.

With their particular language skills, an understanding of other cultures, and a different education background as well as skill set, international applicants have much to offer to their prospective Chinese
employers. Note that in case you do not speak Chinese, you should at least be truly fluent in English to improve your job prospects and to be able to communicate on the job.

Since many Chinese organisations have little experience in employing foreigners, you often have to carve out your own job position where none has existed before, which also requires much resilience in the process.

Often internships can be the perfect entry ticket to paid employment in an organisation. This holds even more true in China, not least due to the concerns Chinese organisations have in employing foreigners (such as high salary demands, culture gaps, limited experience in managing foreigners, and so on). An alternative for mid-level professionals could be to collaborate on a project with the organisation of your choice as an independent, thus creating a great chance to get to know each other and explore further cooperation potential.

Try to think from your potential employer’s perspective and present your qualifications and skills clearly and concisely. What will be your exact value to the organisation you are applying to? What is your motivation for applying to exactly this particular organisation? How can you convince your potential employer that you are going to last in the Chinese market (since many foreigners end their contracts early due to problems of cultural adjustment and wrong expectations)?

You should make it a point to highlight your long-term commitment to China, for example, by talking about your appreciation for the local culture and indicating your willingness to build a career in China. To the hiring manager, local Chinese candidates represent low risk hires with native level language skills, China competitor experience, and an established network in their industry. Moreover, most Chinese companies do not have experience in dealing with foreign employees and are mostly unfamiliar with the bureaucratic processes involved.

When applying for positions in China, personal relationships are often paramount. Everybody interested in exploring longer term career opportunities in China, should come here, experience it, immerse themselves, stay focused, and job opportunities will emerge naturally. Whatever your specific
field of interest might be, you will definitely need patience, as things often take longer than expected, and resilience, since there might be major setbacks along the route.

If you are still abroad and applying for positions in China, you will most often not even receive an answer to your application. You are far more likely to be considered for a job in China if you are already in the country.

Do you have a niche skill set that is in scarce supply in China? Knowledge Must can consult you on what will be your USP in the Chinese labour market and how you can best position yourself.

2. What about application documents used in China?

If you are sending your application via email, write a concise application email with your application documents attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email. Try to get your application documents as “clean” and visually appealing as possible. Many companies in China are getting an incredible amount of applications and already sort out based on formalities.

A complete application document package includes:

- Cover letter
- CV/resume (it is especially valuable for jobseekers to provide their CV/resume in both English and Chinese)
- Many Chinese companies expect a recent photo along the application documents or on the CV itself
- Educational background is very highly regarded in China, so make it a point to send all your certificates, grade transcripts, etc. along
- It is also advisable to include a copy of your ID card or passport detail page

Even though in China application or cover letters are not customary, they have become increasingly popular in recent years. The Chinese word “zijianxin” (自荐信) literally means “letter of self-recommendation”, a concept that the Chinese are traditionally not so comfortable with. Therefore be modest in recommending yourself in the cover letter. Chinese people will appreciate this. Try to address your cover letter to a specific person that you have identified to be the person in charge of Human Resources.

Obviously, a well conceived CV (简历, jianli) is a must for sticking out from the high numbers of people applying at prestigious organisations. You should consider your CV as the entry ticket to the second
round of the selection process. In China people are often more familiar with the term “resume” than “CV”. A CV/resume in China should be one page in length or two maximum (especially if you do not have much to show for in terms of professional experience) and should include, at the top of the first page, personal information including the candidate's name, address, phone, email, gender, and marital status.

You should adapt your CV to Chinese standards and put additional emphasis on your qualifications and education (degrees are highly valued by employers in China) as well as on your English and Chinese language skills. Chinese resumes are usually set in a reverse-chronological order, so that employers see the most recent experiences first.

Cite your professional achievements with supporting data, but avoid exaggerations (facts are often going to be checked) and boasting language. Make it a point to list your educational background in detail, with emphasis on your college and university studies. Sections on extracurricular activities, such as volunteer work, and honours or awards are very common in China. In addition list special skills, such as foreign language skills and knowledge of software applications and computer languages.

Application documents need to be free of mistakes and adjusted to the particular profile of the organisation. To enlist the help of professional career counsellors aware of the specifics of job placements in China should be seriously considered, especially when taking into account the importance and great potential top-notch application documents hold.

Sending your applications to multinational companies in English as well as Chinese can make a real difference. Often local Chinese as well as foreigners (sometimes even in their parent organisations abroad) are included in the decision-making process. Not many international applicants do so yet and you will be sticking out from the rest of the applications.

3. What happens if I am invited to a job interview?

When you are invited to a job interview (招聘面谈, zhaopin miantan or 求职面试, qiuzhi mianshi), you should ask beforehand in what language your job interview in China will be conducted, as it may entirely or partly take place in Chinese if the position requires it. Otherwise, English is generally the
preferred language when the use of an interpreter is not needed.

Telephone or Internet-based interviews are often used when distance is a problem or for a first pre-screening. Otherwise face-to-face interviews are highly preferred in China and usually take place on the company’s local premises in front of one or more recruiters.

When preparing for job interviews:

- Find out as much as you can about the particular job profile and the required skill set
- Look into the industry’s and the organisation’s backgrounds
- Prepare for the type of questions that are usually asked during job interviews
- Prepare a list of your own questions to ask (not least to highlight your genuine interest)
- Prepare to describe what and where you will be bringing value to your potential employer

Be sure to be punctual for the meeting and be dressed in a more conservative fashion. A professional attitude and appearance are much appreciated by Chinese employers. For meeting etiquette, such as greeting procedures, it is always wise to follow the lead of the interviewer. While a regular handshake is commonly used in big cities, a slight nod of the head or bow can also be used as a greeting method. Business cards are exchanged at the beginning of the meeting and are offered and received with both hands.

During the meeting, try to be relaxed, while staying alert and keeping a good posture. Answer questions honestly (many facts will be questioned and checked) and do not hesitate to ask for clarification if in doubt. Express interest and show enthusiasm about the position, while maintaining a modest and respectful attitude. Be courteous and respectful to all, including secretaries and other staff members, and especially to older people.

Most of the time, the Chinese recruiter will start the meeting with general questions pertaining to your journey, the accommodations, the food or the country. Although these questions might not have any obvious connections to the job interview, they are an ideal opportunity to score points right from the start by showing your interest for China and your knowledge of the Chinese culture.

Being asked personal questions like your age or your marital status is not seen as rude or discriminatory in China. You can always circumvent the question by explaining that this information is considered to be of a private nature in your homeland.
Do:

- Bring pen and paper to take notes
- Ensure you speak fluent English and try to learn at least some Chinese
- Make sure you address people by their correct name: surnames come first in the Chinese language
- Realise that Chinese people allow little physical distance
- Be modest and still exhibit your confidence in your skills
- Respect moments of silence during the discussions
- Answering all questions about yourself as well as your education and work experience in a humble manner
- Inquire about responsibilities and development perspectives as it shows interest on your part

Don’t:

- Sit until invited to do so
- Oversell yourself and exaggerate as Chinese culture values modesty
- Be too direct in your contacts with your prospective Chinese employer
- Criticise former employers or colleagues

If the matter has not been addressed, do not hesitate to ask how much time they will need before a decision is taken. A concrete offer could also be made to you right on the spot. At the end of the job interview express your gratitude for the opportunity and thank all participants personally. Follow up on the status of the recruitment process after your interview if you do not hear back. But abstain from being pushy, since HR decision-making processes can be very lengthy in China.

4. In what kind of organisations should I apply for a job?

Take a deep breath and think about where you see yourself in some years from now; be it in a certain profession, sector or country. Ask yourself what skills you miss in your CV and what skills you can obtain in China. Make sure that you get the most out of it and evaluate the various options different employers in China hold for you. As far as possible, you might want to excuse yourself from many of the smaller firms, which often work on old-fashioned concepts that believe in all work and little play. While getting away with paying a pittance, these firms encourage daily overtime without extra pay. You may even be
Work Guide China

asked to show up on Sundays and other public holidays without adequate compensation. Employee bonding, constructive criticism, training programmes, refreshers, and motivational meetings are unheard of. The approach is strictly authoritative and training is generally a luxury that these firms do not provide.

In addition, there are differences between the government-owned companies (国营企业, guoying qiye), which are more often bureaucratic and hierarchical, compared to many of their private sector counterparts, especially organisations participating in the "New Economy", such as in IT or telecommunications, which tend to be far more egalitarian and flexible compared to the traditional manufacturing sector.

International organisations, multinationals, chambers of commerce, educational institutes or NGOs, when selecting the right employer also keep in mind that life is not only about your job. China offers endless choices to make new friends, travel around the country, celebrate local festivals, and master new skills, such as Kung Fu.

Knowledge Must also maintains a large human resource database specialising on intercultural skills. We try to bridge the gap between employers who want culturally fluent staff and individuals with outstanding intercultural capabilities who seek to apply and deepen their skills. Everybody with outstanding intercultural skills is invited to join our talent pool. Whether you are a student with specific language skills or a seasoned expert in intercultural facilitation, you will benefit from borderless career opportunities. In order to join our Career Platform just send your CV to platform@career-must.com. We will contact you once a relevant opportunity arises.

5. How can I position myself in the Chinese labour market?

“不管白猫, 黑猫, 逮住老鼠就是好猫” (buguan bai mao, hei mao, daizhu laoshu jiu shi hao mao)
“No matter if it is a white cat or a black cat; as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat.”
- Deng Xiaoping

There are endless cooperation opportunities, and people looking for a career in China should think about what their skills are, and how they could contribute to Chinese organisations. Notably, Mandarin speakers (or speakers of other Chinese languages) can rather easily convince employers in China to
consider taking them on, because it is a highly sought after skill and shows strong commitment from the applicant’s side.

Obtaining employment in China requires:
- Job competence
- Social competence
- Marketable skills
- Personal contacts
- Fluency in English
- Strong command of a Chinese language (usually Mandarin)
- China-related background is of advantage

The skills required for working in China obviously depend largely on the specific kind of work you would like to pursue. Generally speaking, however, enthusiasm to work hand-in-hand with the locals, curiosity to acquire new skills, keenness to learn from a different culture, and flexibility to adjust to different environments are key requirements – almost above anything else.

Having only a degree from a reputed university might not be enough to get the best jobs in China, not least due to the highly competitive nature of the Chinese labour market and other foreign graduates who increasingly come to China, too.

The specific skills asked for by employers in China differ according to sector, but there are also some almost universal factors:
- Languages are very important. Fluency in English is a must but good knowledge of Mandarin Chinese or other regional Chinese languages (such as Cantonese) are increasingly important, too.
• Affection for China, since one has to make many compromises in China’s often challenging environment.
• Intercultural competence is of utmost importance, especially since Chinese have a generally high cultural awareness, e.g. regarding what is culturally appropriate and what is not.
• And, of course, there are the soft skills such as team work, the ability to work independently, IT literacy, and so on.

You should learn what your unique selling point is. You need to find your niche, since you have to run against competition from increasingly well educated Chinese and other foreigners.

Niches could be:
• Cultural-bridge functions, with regards to helping Chinese to communicate across their cultural boundaries, for instance
• Much sought after specialisations, whether it be in social business or water management or something entirely different
• A better-rounded knowledge base as compared to local Chinese applicants
• Finally, and often most importantly, your linguistic abilities

6. How can I prepare myself for the Chinese labour market?

Chinese people are generally very welcoming of foreigners and like to work with them. But at the same time, China is also an extremely challenging country for foreigners to work in. Chinese organisations can be cautious about taking on the responsibility of employing foreigners, due to concerns about adaptability and communication issues.

“The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary.”
- Donald Kendall

What is more, due to the increasingly rapid globalisation and interconnectedness, everything tends to become more competitive, and so international professionals interested to work in China have to compete with an increasing number of excellently educated Chinese.
Some of the preparations beneficial for working in China are:

- **Language**: The single most important component will be being able to communicate with the locals, for which Mandarin Chinese will be the language of choice for most foreigners coming to China.
- **Experience**: Gather experience in working with Chinese and get familiar with their habits.
- **Flexibility**: Learn to adjust to situations that you cannot control and train your improvisation skills.
- **Skills**: Build up the skills that distinguish you from others and develop your core strengths.
- **Experiment**: Start with an exploratory trip to learn about Chinese culture and get a feel for the place.

Bureaucratic hassles might very well be the number one irritant for foreigners working in China. Your patience and resilience are the key qualities demanded here.

### 7. Where should I work in China?

The two largest cities in China are the main draw for foreigners coming to China for work: Beijing, the political capital, and Shanghai, the country’s financial centre. Both cities have about 20 million inhabitants and thus count among the largest metropolises in the world. In terms of convenience, accessibility, availability of interesting jobs, and existing expatriate networks these two cities are hard to beat. Since both cities are very internationally orientated, they are more accessible, logistically as well as culturally.

Another somewhat less daunting place to work, but nonetheless challenging, would be Hong Kong. Being one of the financial centres of the world, employment opportunities can be impressive. Some people consider Hong Kong to be the portal to Mainland China, and in some sense, they are right. While English and Cantonese were the primary languages in Hong Kong for most of the last century, English is gradually losing its status since the city’s gradual return to Mainland influence. In fact, Mandarin Chinese has become a very important language in the city as more and more people from the Mainland are visiting Hong Kong, for leisure as well as business.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for foreigners of all nationalities to obtain working permits for Hong Kong. In order to improve your chances of finding employment in the city, you should be able to highlight highly sought niche skills. One such opportunity is in IT, where there is a considerable undersupply of people skilled in various areas.
Next to Beijing and Shanghai, the region surrounding Hong Kong, referred to as the Pearl River Delta region, is home to many of the foreigners working in China. Shenzhen, Dongguan, Zhuhai, and especially Guangzhou are home to tens of thousands of foreign long-term residents in the country.

In terms of popularity, Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province has recently reached the fourth place among foreign long-term residents in Mainland China, with about 10,000 foreigners working and studying there at any given time. The city’s leisurely lifestyle, its very hospitable residents, the rapidly growing local economy, and the stunning travel opportunities surrounding the city make it a top choice for foreigners coming to China.

Though the major cities in China offer the most job opportunities, there are many locations in the countryside that are interesting to explore as well. It is a great way to gain work experience and absorb the local cultures, whether you are in mountainous Sichuan or in tropical Hainan – the cultural landscapes of China are truly stunning.

Ultimately your field of expertise might determine which place will be most suited for you. Since China is so big, it is still very likely you will have a range of places to choose from, even when having a specific profession. No matter where you are going to work in China, it will always be an interesting and enlightening experience you will never be able to forget.
Jesús from Madrid, Spain, is a true devotee of everything Chinese. When he, with the help of a government grant, finally went to experience life among the Chinese people in Taiwan, he got hooked to the culture and now plans to build his career there. From starting out as a language student to working for national radio and lecturing at universities, in the five years since he made the move he never regretted his decision. Not least due to the high demand of native language teachers in Taiwan his future looks very promising. The enthusiasm he expressed in our interview will be an inspiration for many.

KM: Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

Jesús Trapero: I was born in Madrid in 1979. After I finished school, I studied Fine Arts at Madrid Complutense University. In 2001 I was living in Dublin to improve my English language skills and there I made a Chinese friend who made me take my first step into Chinese culture. Two years later I started to learn Chinese in Madrid and in 2006 I finally moved to Taipei, Taiwan. I came here because I wanted to study Chinese for a year, but after that year I realized there are many things I still needed to learn and one year was not enough at all. So I decided to stay longer. After 5 years in Taiwan I took the decision to develop my future in this country.

KM: What did you particularly like about Chinese culture before moving to China?

Jesús Trapero: I like many aspects of Chinese culture. “A story speaks a thousand words”… When I was ten, I went with my family to a Chinese restaurant. That day my father taught me how to use
chopsticks and from that very day I started to use chopsticks instead of knife and fork whenever I could. I also like Chinese music, painting, literature, medicine, and philosophers like Kongzi, Mengzi, Zhuangzi or Laozi.

**KM:** Why did you decide to start studying Chinese?

**Jesús Trapero:** Actually it was not really a conscious decision. It was a direct result of my curiosity. In 2001 I wanted to get to know some Chinese girls, so I started to learn my first sentences. After the first lessons I loved to write Chinese characters – it felt like a big mystery that needed to be solved. This way I started to learn the language and now it’s just a part of my life.

**KM:** How many years have you been studying Chinese in Spain before moving to Taiwan?

**Jesús Trapero:** I studied three years in a governmental language school. In the fourth year I stopped taking classes but I continued teaching myself.

**KM:** And then you went on to Taipei University?

**Jesús Trapero:** Actually I never studied at Taipei University like a regular student. I participated in their special program for learning Mandarin Chinese.

**KM:** What do you like about Taiwan now that you have been living there for 5 years?

**Jesús Trapero:** I love to study their society, customs and I like discover things that even Taiwanese people don’t know about their own culture. By now I really enjoy reading Chinese classic literature, and watch TV programs and ask my students many questions on their ideas about life. I love to drink tea in the mountains and write calligraphy. Another passion of mine is to read books about self-help, psychology, and “how to be successful in life”. Those kinds of books are really popular in Asia. I use to call them “successful-maniac-addiction”, but find them really amazing.

**KM:** What did you feel when arriving for the very first time in Asia?
Jesús Trapero: When I came here I didn’t feel any culture shock. Actually I felt more comfortable here than in my own culture in many ways. After a while I started to discover some differences and had some problems, like Taiwanese people’s ideas about “the others”. Many people don't care about what happens to “other people”. I mean when you are in the street and somebody has an accident, most Taiwanese don’t seem to care. Now I understand why and I don’t judge them, but I still have problems with this attitude.

KM: What did you do to immerse yourself in the local community?

Jesús Trapero: Just being natural, trying to do everything I like to do with Taiwanese people, thoroughly studying their language, culture, and society, but especially trying to be flexible and understanding the reasons why they do things I don’t like myself personally.

KM: Where have you been working in Taipei?

Jesús Trapero: In Radio Taiwan International for 2 years and in a language gram school for more than 4 years. Now I’m also working for Spanish Official Exams, as evaluator, and guest-speaker in several Taiwanese Universities.

KM: Is it very different to teach Spanish in Taiwan than in other places of the world?

Jesús Trapero: I think so, because you should understand how they learn, which topics you should teach them and which you shouldn’t. Most manuals for teaching Spanish are not designed for Asians, but rather for European or American people and that is a big problem for us. But at the same time this makes us improve our teaching skills.

KM: How is your relationship with your students?

Jesús Trapero: Nice! They are very polite and try to work hard, but sometimes I need to spend a lot of time changing some of their preconceived ideas and attitudes about life. For them study is a very painful burden and it is often difficult to convince them otherwise.
KM: What about cultural similarities between Chinese culture and your native Spanish culture?

Jesús Trapero: Maybe the idea of “family” is similar. For both cultures “family” is really important. In both cultures children often live with their parents for many years and parents continue to pay for their children’s higher education. Curiously, our famous “Spanish Siesta” is in fact probably more common in Taiwan than in Spain. And the way we invite our friends for lunch and dinner is also very similar.

KM: Please also share some of the cultural differences between Chinese culture and Spanish culture that come to your mind.

Jesús Trapero: There are so many things to talk about. But just let me give you an example: the way to say “hello” in Chinese is completely different. When you come to Taiwan teachers tell you “ni hao” means “hello”. But that’s a big mistake. Why? We used to say “ni hao” to our neighbours in the elevator, but in Taiwan that is weird. In Spain we also say “hello” to our family when we have just arrived home, but in Chinese that is impossible. So they have a lot of different ways to say “hello” depending on circumstances. For example: “Mum, I have returned”, “Did you have your lunch?”, “Mr. Brown” (if you see Mr. Brown), but sometimes you should just smile, or don’t even say anything. These differences are very subtle and nobody told me, so it was very difficult to understand in the beginning.

8. Why pay for job placements?

Paying for job placements has many obvious and less obvious advantages. However, you might wonder, where exactly is your placement fee flowing to? The placement organisation acts as a middleman for employees and employers, providing the former with administrative and logistical support, while providing the latter with capable and motivated bodies and brains. These organisations cover their costs by the placement fees they charge foreign applicants.

Of course you can also organise your own job experience in China and take care of all the logistics by yourself. Going to China to build a career on your own is an option for those with experience living and working among people of other cultures. To independently find a job in China, do some research on reputed employers in your field of interest and optimally visit them to get a feel for whether they are suitable or not. Most importantly, start learning Chinese language and network like the Chinese do.
But keep in mind that without a partner, you have to independently locate suitable organisations, apply to the relevant authorities, arrange housing and transportation, etc. This often takes more time, energy, and in some cases money, than coming to China with the support of a placement organisation. Placement organisations provide a wide range of support to applicants including pre-departure support such as visa facilitation and on-site support. This support is what gives both you and your family peace of mind that your health and safety are ensured.

Knowledge Must’s division Career Must provides you with a total employment resource no matter where you are in your career. We not only help you find quality job opportunities, we also provide you with comprehensive assistance throughout the process, from legal and logistical requirements up to instilling the skills required for your new endeavour. Please get in touch with us to learn more about our career solutions.
1. What about Chinese visa regulations?

Foreign nationals planning to visit China should have a valid passport and an appropriate visa. All passengers arriving in China are subject to immigration checks on their arrival into and departure from the country. Visitors to China require a visa to enter the country, exceptions being nationals of Brunei, Japan, Singapore, and San Marino for short-term visits. Other foreigners arriving in China without a visa, bearing the correct validity dates and number of entries, are subject to immediate deportation.

As a first note of caution: the visa situation for China is under constant fluctuation, for instance, due to political reasons. So any of the information below can change, often without prior notification, and is also subject to interpretation. Please note that visa policies in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan vary widely from the Chinese Mainland information provided here.

The Chinese visa system is highly regimented and very elaborate. It may seem bureaucratic, but the rules on how to apply for different visas are clearly described. China has stricter regulations than it generally enforces. Nationals of certain countries associated with visa abuse as well as other issues such as terrorism or diplomatic difficulties face stricter requirements such as proof of adequate funds, official invitation letters, etc.

In China, there are many different types of visa, for example, for tourists, businessmen, journalists, and researchers. Foreigners coming to China for work generally require an Employment Visa. Please note that an Employment Visa is normally to be issued from your country of origin.

Most common types of Chinese visa:

- L (Lüxing) Visa: Tourist Visa, generally of a validity of 30 to 90 days
- F (Fangwen) Visa: Business Visa (also used for short-term study programs as well as internships of a length up to 6 months)
- X (LiuXue) Visa: Study Visa (used for programs lasting more than 6 months)
- Z (RenZhi) Visa: Work Visa
L Visa
Getting a Tourist Visa, L Visa, for China is fairly easy for visitors of most countries. The most common tourist single-entry visa is valid for a visit of 30 days and must be used within three months of the date of issue. Some nationals are easily able to secure Tourist Visa for visits up to 90 days.

F Visa
F Visas are for short-term studies, internships or business visits. To obtain an F Visa, you need an invitation from a Chinese institution or host company.

X Visa
X Visas are issued to foreigners coming to China for study, advanced studies or internships for a period of more than six months. For this type of visa you will require an official Foreign Student Visa Application Form (JW201 or JW202) issued by relevant Chinese government unit and the admission notice from the Chinese where you will be studying.

Z Visa
Z Visas are issued to those who come to China for employment, but actually only allow foreigners into the country for 30 days, during which they need to be changed into a Residence Permit, which are effectively long-term multiple-entry visas. To obtain a Z Visa, you need a letter of invitation from your employer and a work permit or foreign expert licence obtained by the company you will be working for.

Visa application documents typically include:
- Passport with at least 6 months validity
- Formal application form
- Passport photo
- Letter of invitation from your Chinese hosts
- Medical examination certificate (foreigners suffering from mental disorder, AIDS, and a few other infectious diseases are not officially granted visas to stay in the country)

The exact documentation depends on the type of visa you apply for; check beforehand what you need as exact requirements are subject to constant change. Please also take note that foreign language documents often need to be translated and even notarised.

Besides your documents, you will also have to pay a fee for your visa application. Visa fees vary greatly according to nationality, number of entries, visa length, the country you are applying in, and
whether you need an express service or not. Generally speaking, the visa fees are more expensive if the visa has more number of entries and is of a longer duration.

Granting of visa is highly dependant on what type of visa you are applying, the kind of organisation that sponsors your visits, whether you are originally of Chinese descent, and, of course, the visa officers themselves, since they have considerable leeway in implementing Chinese regulations. The same type of visa is then also issued to accompanying family members.

The best time to submit your visa application is about one to two months before your planned entry date as the validity of visas is mostly limited to three months counted from the date of application. If all your documents are in order, you will receive the visa within several working days. However, in case additional documentation is required this process might take considerably longer.

Never overstay your visa in China. Carefully check your visa validity as fines are levied for overstaying, usually 500 RMB a day up to a maximum of 5,000 RMB. The police will then issue you an Exit Visa. If you have overstayed your visa and would like to remain in the country, go to a Public Security Bureau as soon as possible, pay a fine and apologise for your error. Generally speaking, it is not a problem to re-enter China after you overstayed, but in some bad cases, you could be expelled from the country and prohibited re-entry for several years.

2. What visa do I need for working in China?

First of all, please take note that it is illegal to make a salary in China on an L (Tourist) or F (Business) Visa, so short-term students or tourists are not permitted to take up paid employment according to Chinese law. That being said, even some renowned multinational companies do not handle their
interns and employees in a completely legal fashion. They often have short-term employees on business visa, take on interns on tourist visa, do not pay all stipulated taxes for their employees, and so on.

F Visa is used for people who do not receive a salary in China, such as participating in business activities as an employee of an overseas organisation; investigating and establishing a business activity; lecturing, studying or pursuing internships for a period of no more than six month.

All remunerated activities in China, whatever their length, require an Employment Visa (Z Visa). The employer will send you a government issued Employment Permit or Foreign Expert Certificate, and the official letter of the local reception unit which you must submit with photocopies.

Not any company in China can just directly employ foreigners. First organisations need to register with the Foreign Expert Department (外国专家局, waiguo zhuanjiaju). An employer in China must then complete the application for an Employment Permit on behalf of the applicant. The Employment Permit is needed in order to apply for an Employment Visa (Z Visa) and in order to engage in work-related activities in China. This application is fairly detailed and must be completed for any personnel who will be working in China for either a China-based or foreign-based organisation.

Recommended documents to be handed in when applying for a Z visa:

- Valid passport that has at least six months validity left before expiration and one blank visa page
- Official Visa Application Form
- One recent half-length, bareheaded passport photo
- A government issued Employment Permit or Foreign Expert Certificate
- The official letter of the local reception unit

Spouses and children receive the same type of visa and residence permit as the person who will be coming to China, but they have to fill out an individual application form and pay the same visa fees.
Family members accompanying an applicant need to provide proof of their relationship, such as the marriage certificate or the birth certificate.

Registering Your Place of Residence

You must register your place of residence with the local Public Security Bureau generally within 24 hours of arrival. If you are staying in a hotel, registration is done on your behalf as part of the check-in process. Staff will usually request to see and photocopy your passport details and visa at check-in. If you are staying with friends or family, you are in theory required to register your stay with the local police. However, in practice hardly anybody ever does this and the law is generally not enforced as long as no trouble is caused. If you are renting your own place, you will need to visit the local Public Security Bureau with originals and copies of your passport (Photo ID and visa pages) and your rental contract. Sometimes the police will ask for your landlord to come to register at the station and might ask for a proof of tax payments (something that many Chinese landlords are uneasy to do). Once you have successfully registered with the Public Security Bureau, they will issue you a certificate called “Registration Form of Temporary Residence”.

Changing Your Visa to a Residence Permit

Registration for visa and getting a Temporary Residence Permit is required for all foreigners visiting China on a Z Visa. These visa types will be required to be registered as Temporal Residence Permit with the concerned Public Security Bureau’s Entry-Exit Administration (出入境管理局, churujing guanliju), within 30 days of arrival in the country, irrespective of the actual duration of stay.

A Temporary Residence Permit will give you the legal right to live in China, for the duration of your work, to a maximum of 12 months (24 months in case of legal representatives) and is renewable annually. This type of permit is in fact a visa under different name and normally is multiple-entry.

For obtaining a Temporary Residence Permit you will require a lot of paperwork. However, once you are registered, you will have secured your stay in China for the duration of your work up to a maximum of 12-24 months (after which you will generally easily be able to renew your permit).
For your changing your visa to a Residence Permit you will generally require:

- Passport
- Registration Form of Temporary Residence
- Appointment letter
- Labour contract
- Business License and Organization Code License of employer
- Foreign Expert Certificate (for which you will need your CV and university diploma)
- Health Certificate
- And plenty of passport photographs throughout

It is always advisable to consult the respective Embassy of China in your country. There you will find most of the information concerning your visa. Please also get in touch with us to learn more about the visa best suited for your particular purposes.

If you have difficulty obtaining your visa for China, it is possible to hire a professional visa agency. Visa agencies can smooth the process considerably and sometimes even get you a visa that you would not be able to secure otherwise. Knowledge Must will be very happy to refer you to an agency you can trust.

3. How can I extend or change my visa?

If you want to stay in China for longer than the validity period specified on your current visa, you can apply for a renewal of your visa at the Ministry of Public Security and its affiliates at the provincial or city level, which are collectively known as Public Security Bureaus (PSB). There are some types of renewals you might be able to choose from and there are also some restrictions you may need to know when you apply for the visa renewals.

For example, in case of Tourist Visa extensions you will require handing in the following documents: passport, visa extension application form including passport photograph, and a copy of the Registration Form of Temporary Residence from the local police station at your place of residence. Sometimes proof of sufficient funds for your remaining stay will also need to be furnished.

To renew an Employment Visa actually means renewing your Temporary Residence Permit. This process is easier compared to when you had to apply for your Temporary Residence Permit for the first time.
If you are visiting China on an F Visa, you will be able to extend it with the help of a local host unit. The times of F Visa renewals is not limited, but a continuous stay in China on an F Visa can generally not exceed 365 days.

Changing visa into an Employment Visa (Z Visa) usually requires leaving China. Many foreigners also make a quick trip to nearby Hong Kong (considered a “separate country” for visa purposes) or Korea for that purpose. Exceptions exist for legal representatives of company’s in China, for example, who will be able to change their visa easily inside the country.

Please note that extending or changing visa in China also heavily depends upon which office you are dealing with and on your employer’s connections.

4. Will I be granted permission to work in China?

During the last couple of years, the Chinese Government has taken steps to facilitate the free mobility of international labour, be it from an exchange control or social security or visa perspective. Chinese law does not place restrictions on the number of foreign nationals that can work or do business in China, but the entry, stay, movements, and departure of foreign nationals into China are regulated by various Chinese laws and rules framed by the Chinese Government.

Any person can come to China for work that satisfies the requirements for employment and has been granted a Z Visa. However, bearing in mind the abundant labour resources available in the country, the Government of China has imposed various eligibility criteria for granting Employment Visas with the intention of restricting the entry of foreign nationals for performing unskilled or semi-skilled work.

In fact, Employment Visas shall not be granted for jobs for which qualified Chinese are available and in general for any routine, ordinary, secretarial, or clerical jobs. For this purpose the Chinese government has established the “Foreign Expert” system and even a whole governmental department that is administering it, the Foreign Expert Department (外国专家局, waiguo zhuangjiaju).
5. What if I am married to a Chinese national or if I am of Chinese origin myself?

Foreigners who are married to Chinese nationals can obtain a special six- to twelve-month visa for visiting relatives (探亲, tanqin), which is in fact a Tourist Visa (L Visa) that permits spouses to remain in China continuously for the duration of their visa. This type of visa can also be easily renewed within the country. One can obtain a tanqin visa by going to the Public Security Bureau where you registered the marriage in China (usually your spouse’s hometown) and showing your marriage certificate, passport, and your spouse’s official ID (身份证, shenfenzheng).

It is important to know that, though this should allow you to stay in China for as long as you want, this visa does not allow you to officially work or study in the country. For those purposes you still have to apply for a work or study visa.

People of Chinese origin but other nationalities follow the same visa application requirements as anybody else. In some cases being of Chinese origin may make getting a visa easier or more difficult. This depends on the nationality the person concerned currently holds and also on the type of visa. For example, applying for a tourist visa if one visits one’s Chinese relatives should become easier. Another important issue to mention is that the Chinese government does not allow for dual nationalities.

6. What about taxes in China?

Due to the extensive tax reforms made in 1994 and the continued changes in subsequent years, China’s tax system has become very streamlined. Since you will be working in China the income tax will be most important for you to understand. In China, income tax is deducted at source by the employer who declares your income and pays for the contributions directly to the Chinese tax authorities.

The tax on an individual’s income depends on the actual income. Currently, an individual’s income is taxed progressively at 3% to 45%. In China, people benefit from a tax free base income of 4,800 RMB per month in case of foreigners and 3,500 RMB in case of Chinese nationals. For example, if you are a foreigner working in China and making a salary of 10,000 RMB per month, you will consequently be taxed on a monthly income of 10,000 RMB salary - 4,800 RMB tax credit = 5,200 RMB taxable income.
If your home country has signed agreements with China to avoid double taxation, you will be liable to pay your taxes in China on all your Chinese income if you have lived in the country for more than 183 days. After five years of residence in China, you will be taxed in the country on all your income, regardless of its origin.

Detailed overview on taxation of overseas income:
- An individual and company who are Chinese residents are also taxed on their income outside China and receive a credit for overseas taxes.
- Qualification for residence for an individual: Permanent residence in China while an individual who has no permanent residence in China but has lived in China for less than five years is taxed on his income in China or overseas income that has its origins in China.
- Individuals staying in China more than five tax years are taxed on their worldwide income, too.

7. What about salaries in China?

“一部分先富起来” (yibufen xian fuqilai)
“Some must get rich first”

-Deng Xiaoping

Chinese salaries are rising quickly, although they can vary among different types of jobs. The following table will give you a rough guideline of local monthly salaries in China.
Please take this data just as a general guideline as pay varies drastically from place to place for the same kind of work. The difference could be as much as three times for certain types of jobs. Though the salaries might seem low in Western eyes, for example, they also have to be seen in light of the actual cost of living in China. Furthermore, as China’s economy is rapidly developing, so are its salaries. Salaries in most industries are projected to increase 10 to 20 per cent per annum over the coming years.

Minimum wages in China are set locally according to guidelines laid out by the central government and may vary even from one city to another. Notably, of all the Mainland cities, Shenzhen guarantees the highest minimum wage of 1,320 RMB a month. Regarding minimum hourly salaries, the capital city Beijing offers the best compensation with 13 RMB. The rise in official minimum wages is in line with China’s efforts to boost domestic consumption. Labour costs in China keep rising and in 2011 alone official minimum wages have grown by more than 20%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Position</th>
<th>Monthly Salary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly worker</td>
<td>1,500 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter/waitress</td>
<td>2,000 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior secretary</td>
<td>2,500 – 3,500 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>2,500 – 4,000 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-school teacher</td>
<td>3,000 – 4,000 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry-level software programmer</td>
<td>5,000 – 9,000 RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>10,000 – 15,000+ RMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior engineer</td>
<td>14,000 – 25,000 RMB</td>
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</tbody>
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Foreign invested enterprises (FIE) pay the highest salaries, with an average of 2,040 RMB per month. Average salaries of governmental bureaus and state owned enterprises are only about 1,500 RMB per month, in comparison.

Also education and academic titles continue to play a decisive role when starting salary is determined:
- College degree: 1,300 RMB per month
- Bachelor degree: 1,500 RMB per month
- Master degree: 3,000 RMB per month

In addition, those graduates who come from the top universities earn several hundred RMB a month more on average than graduates from less prestigious universities.

8. How much can I expect to earn?

Expatriates usually earn significantly higher salaries than Chinese, though this depends on whether they were sent to China by their company or not. If you are appointed to China by your company from overseas, your income will mostly be comparable with what you make at home and you will also receive additional benefits to "sweeten" your international posting (such as special allowances for housing, paid vacations, healthcare coverage, air tickets, and so on).

If you find a job in China by yourself (often referred to as “local contracts”), the situation is totally different. Your salary will then be comparable with your Chinese counterparts and you will not receive as many special benefits. Even though you might still earn more than most of your Chinese colleagues, you will generally earn considerably less than in Western economies, for instance. Please be aware that foreigners often stand in direct competition to affordable yet highly skilled Chinese staff.

Generally speaking, you should cut down on your salary expectations. If you understand a huge salary to be the key ingredient for your career fulfilment, you might very well consider going to another country.
9. What about money and banks in China?

The Chinese currency is called Renminbi (RMB), which consists of yuan, jiao (10 jiao make up 1 yuan), and fen (100 fen make up 1 yuan). You can find out the exchange rate any time at www.xe.com.

China has strict regulations on foreign currency exchange, especially when converting domestic currency to foreign currencies. Keeping proof of salary payments as well as currency transaction receipts will help you converting RMB to foreign currency. In front of popular banks in the big cities you will also be offered to exchange money for a slightly better rate and without bureaucracy by touts. These transactions are illegal and you run the risk of being given fake currency.

In case you carry a debit card from your foreign bank account, you will be able to withdraw money from Chinese banks' ATMs that carry the “Cirrus” or “Plus” logos. In order to secure free or cheap withdrawals from your foreign bank account, shop around for the best banks while still being in your native place. Make sure to retain your receipts whenever you exchange any currency or traveller’s cheque to Chinese RMB or withdraw any money from the ATM. You will be asked to show this receipt when you want to exchange Chinese currency back to any other currency upon your departure.

You can also easily open a bank account in China nowadays. First select a bank, bring your passport and a residence proof (depending on the bank’s requirements), and make an initial deposit (amount also varying on the bank’s particular requirements). As most staff in Chinese banks do not speak English, try to get a Chinese speaker to support you in the process if required.

When selecting a bank it makes good sense to check with your domestic bank about their existing partnerships with Chinese banks in order to facilitate the transfer of funds between the two accounts.

Popular choices for banking services in China are:

- Agricultural Bank of China  
  [http://www.95599.cn/](http://www.95599.cn/)
- Bank of China  
  [http://www.boc.cn/](http://www.boc.cn/)
- HSBC – China  
- China Construction Bank  
- Industrial and Commercial Bank of China  
The local debit card that will be issued to you will generally allow you to withdraw funds from any ATM in China. Requirements for the issuance of a Chinese credit card are much tougher though. Just speak to your bank about their particular requirements. Using your international credit card is not a problem for major department stores, international hotels, and large restaurant chains, but otherwise you might often not be able to use them.

10. How much do I spend on living?

Although price levels in China are continuously rising, costs of living are still favourable compared to most other countries. The precise amount of money you will need to cover your expenses in China obviously depends largely on your way of life. If you live a very modest “local” lifestyle, sharing a cheap apartment, eating in small local restaurants, and taking public transport, you will be able to survive on as little as 3,000 RMB per month.

If you make salary of 6,000 to 10,000 RMB per month, you will either be able to put some money aside each month or you will be able to enjoy a lifestyle including travels around the country, having a part-time housekeeper, frequently inviting your friends for fancy dinners, and nights around town. If you have to support your whole family, you may need a considerably higher salary though. Top-quality education for your children is very costly in China, especially if you want to send them to the leading international schools. Tuition fees at international schools are often higher than 150,000 RMB per year.

Of course, you will need a place to stay for your time in China. There is a big range of prices, depending on the location and interior. You get a very simple room in a shared flat for around 500 RMB per month in most cities, but also a more luxurious, spacious flat of your own for around 3,000 RMB. A modern, fully furnished apartment in a fancy area of Beijing or Shanghai could easily cost in excess of 10,000 RMB. But keep in mind that these prices can only be considered as broad guidelines, because prices differ immensely from region to region.
Since food is cheap and tasty in China, most foreigners choose to eat out every day. You can already get a hearty plate or bowl of noodles at local street-side restaurants for 5 RMB and a nice restaurant meal starts at 10 RMB and up. A bottle of Chinese beer along with the food can come as cheap as 5 RMB. At the same time, you can expect to pay “international prices” at fancy bars and restaurants. Many items can be purchased in China for a lower rate than in most other countries. For example, to furnish your flat, you can cheaply purchase beautiful sheets, furniture, plants, posters, lamps, and many other items that will make your living environment comfortable and cosy.

Open air markets and privately run stores are best for bargaining. Larger chain stores have set prices, but as a general indication it is always wise to at least try to get prices down in China. When haggling for the best prices, the best strategy is to establish a friendly rapport with the seller. Instead of arguing, shouting, and rudeness, smiling, offering to come back in the future for purchases, and conveying a sense of friendship will often do the magic.

11. What about insurance?

As a foreigner living in China you can get coverage from many types of insurances. Most important might very well be medical insurance for you. It is often your Chinese employer that provides you with a health insurance package. If not, you are highly encouraged to get private health insurance by yourself.

There are, of course, insurance policies that you can book already in your home country. Some of them might give you additional coverage in case you are visiting home during your time employed in China. However, these insurance policies can often be very pricy, especially when compared to Chinese medical insurance policies.

While the cost of quality medical care in China is reasonably cheap compared to most countries, you should still make it a point to have proper coverage for major medical emergencies. Private insurance
companies in China offer a wide range of possible medical insurance packages. Anyone who is registered in China and can pay the premiums is eligible to purchase medical insurance from one of the many insurance companies. Most companies are domestic insurers (such as Ping An and China Life), but foreign insurance companies (e.g. AXA) are increasingly making inroads into the market.

- Ping An (中国平安)
  http://www.pingan.com/
- China Life (中国人寿)
  http://www.chinalife.com.cn/
- AXA
  http://www.axa-ins.com.cn

It is of paramount importance that you thoroughly compare the plans as they often appear similar on the surface but differ massively when you check the fine print. One factor to keep in mind is looking for “cash-free” insurance for major medical expenses that partner with the particular hospitals that you consider for treatment in the place you stay. Else you will have to pay up front and only get reimbursed later, which in case of large medical expenses might cause problems for you.

12. What if I get ill?

In China there are countless public as well as private hospitals. Important to understand is that healthcare costs vary greatly between different types of institutions and generally in terms of the quality of service that you can expect. Compared to many Western economies you will find the price-quality ratio of health service in China to be more favourable. Not least because of this China is emerging as an increasingly popular destination for “medical tourism”.

If you get ill, your first choice should be a modern hospital, which you can nowadays find in every major city in China. Usually any hotel, your landlord, colleagues, and friends will know the safest and best clinic in case of need. The healthcare sector has witnessed an enormous growth and due to this, some Chinese hospitals have high international standards and so you should generally be in good hands there.

In many bigger Chinese cities you will find clinics and hospitals that are at least partly run by foreigners and that might be more responsive to your particular needs of (regarding cultural issues, usage of English and other foreign languages, quality standards, and so on).
Chinese doctors generally get a percentage of the revenue they generate, so pay attention to what will be offered to you and the related charges. Foreigners are often unnecessarily paying higher prices than locals.

In case you need to be hospitalised, you usually need to pay several thousand RMB as a down payment before you will be admitted. Carrying sufficient funds is therefore absolutely essential, as your expenses for medical treatment are usually refunded by your insurance company only after the fact. To avoid delays or trouble with being refunded, make sure you receive a receipt from the doctor who treated you, along with an exact diagnosis. Due to recently changed laws, however, hospitals are now required to admit emergency cases even without advance payment.

If you suffer from a chronic illness, or are allergic to certain substances, you should have this information on you when you go out in Chinese language, plus a contact number of someone people can call – just in case.

Most Western medicines are available in China. Next to Western medicine, China is a treasure trove for systems of traditional medicine. These medical systems are based on thousands of years of experiential observation and for many ailments locals will rather employ a traditional remedy – they might also work well for you. Purists, however, should keep in mind that some of the herbal medicines in fact are mixtures of traditional Chinese herbs together with Western medicines.

13. What kind of healthcare do I need?

When you come to China it is recommended to buy health insurance, get immunised, and take along a medical kit. You can find out which items might be necessary for a personal medical kit by asking a chemist or doctor in your town. Please note that even if you currently have medical insurance, it most likely does not cover travel outside your homeland’s borders – no reason to despair as short- and long-term travel insurance is readily available and mostly affordable.
Visitors to China might experience medical problems like upset stomachs and diarrhea. If these persist, you should seek medical advice. We suggest that you pay any minor medical costs up-front and then file a claim with your insurance company to get your expenses reimbursed in your home country. For larger expenses, it may also be possible to arrange for your insurance company to pay the hospital or medical provider directly, but this often takes a considerable amount of time and many phone calls.

You may feel that you need to purchase all medicines at home to bring with you such as Paracetamol, Immodium, and other emergency products. This is not really a necessity as all the basic remedies you could possibly need are available at local pharmacies at a fraction of the cost. Medicine is very cheap in China but please have in mind that some medicines which might be essential for you are not easily available in more remote places.

These basic vaccinations for travellers to China are recommendable: diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, polio, and typhoid. Although yellow fever is not reported from China, the Chinese government requires travellers arriving from certain countries with high yellow fever risk to present proof of yellow fever vaccination.

Rabies is still surprisingly common in China (with an average of 2,400 fatalities per year China has the second highest incidence of rabies in the world), so being on the safe side and getting pre-travel vaccinations will be a sensible choice.

Japanese B Encephalitis immunisations are sometimes recommended for long-term travellers staying in rural areas. In any case it is important to seek medical advice.
1. What to bring to China?

Choosing what clothes you want to bring highly depends on the place you are going and on the season. While in the “Chinese Furnaces” (a term that refers to the especially hot and oppressively humid summer weather in several major cities along the Yangtze River, most notably Chongqing, Wuhan, Nanjing, Changsha, Hangzhou, and Shanghai) it is recommended to wear very light cotton clothes, in the mountainous areas you will spend your whole summer wrapped in your coat. Winters in most of China can be very cold and many places do not have very good heating, so it is a good idea to bring some warm woollens.

Otherwise, one is well advised to take just the most necessary pieces of clothing to China because clothing is particularly inexpensive. You can also get yourself a traditional Chinese dress tailor made, such as a Tangzhuang for men or a Qipao for women. From tailor-made clothes to most international brands, if you want to take advantage of the almost infinite shopping opportunities, you should have enough space in your bags.

All kinds of cosmetics and toiletries, including female hygiene articles, are easily available in small shops, convenience stores, and supermarkets all over the country. Generally, cosmetics and toiletry items are about the same price or cheaper as they are in Western countries, for example. Paying attention to hygiene is important when you come to China. However, do not be too paranoid about falling sick. Psychology plays a central role in your staying healthy.

Electricity in China is 50 cycles (Hz) and 220 V (Hong Kong is 200 V and Taiwan is 110 V). Some appliances you bring from home may need adaptors for the plugs, which are available in most supermarkets and hardware stores. Other essential items are: that book you really wanted to read, nail scissors, camera and all the cords, as well as cables and chargers you need for your electric devices. Also do not forget to bring: engagement, curiosity, love for adventure, and – most importantly – patience.
And do not worry too much about forgetting to bring something. Most items can be purchased locally and often at cheaper rates than in any other country – China is the “world’s factory” after all. China will offer you almost infinite shopping opportunities, from cheap local products to international brands in big malls. The country also offers countless local specialties, such as top-quality green tea just plucked from the fields and dried by hand.

However, please make sure that you pack all your key documents and papers: passport, copy of passport, transport tickets, credit/ATM cards, and optimally one additional form of ID. If you follow a regular medical treatment, to be on the safe side bring enough medicine along with your doctor’s prescription in order to avoid any problems at customs.

As you might spend a lot of time to move between places in China, you might like to bring books or magazines in your own language and your favourite music. The choice of foreign-language publications in China is still very limited.

If you intend to stay longer in China, you should register with and shop on the Internet platform Taobao.com. There you can find virtually everything, such as housewares, digital devices, cloths, and food (from chicken feet to imported cheeses), and get it delivered to your door, with the price often considerably cheaper than in any shop in the city where you will be living in China.

2. What about food in China?

Chinese culinary traditions are extremely diverse and justifiably famous throughout the world. Food is as diverse as the people of China and is a common passion throughout the country and among all communities. The fact that people often greet each other saying “Have you eaten yet?”, instead of saying “Hello” or “How are you?”, also somewhat reflects that fact.

You will most likely have tasted Chinese food in your country, but this will only be a tiny part of China’s extraordinary range of foods. Chinese cuisine is generally divided into the “Northern” and “Southern”
styles. Northern cooking styles, such as Beijing cuisine, are relatively oily, often use vinegar as well as garlic, and include wheat-based noodles, dumplings, and buns.

Southern styles are even more diverse than the styles in North China. The common factor among Southern cuisines is the heavy dominance of rice. The famed cuisines of Hunan and Sichuan are known for their liberal use of hot chilli peppers. The coastal cuisines such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Guangdong emphasise freshness and tenderness, dishes are sometimes sweet and seafood is very popular.

Chinese cuisine may very well constitute the most diverse of all cuisines in the world. Methods of preparation include stir frying, stewing, steaming, baking, roasting, deep frying, and pan frying. The visual appeal of Chinese dishes is also essential, combining the colours of all ingredients to design something pleasing to the eye. Chinese food often is a true feast for taste buds, nose, and eyes.

Nowhere in China is it advisable to drink tap water. You should only drink bottled water or boiled water (开水, kaishui) served hot, as Chinese people believe it is unhealthy to drink cold water. Do not pass street food or tiny family-run restaurants, though, for fear of getting sick – they often offer some of the freshest and tastiest food available.

Try to find the right balance in being cautious about what you eat and enjoying Chinese food at the same time. Prefer places that are heavily frequented and where food is prepared with fresh ingredients in front of your eyes. Because of the language barrier, what often happens in smaller places is that you are invited into the kitchen to point out what you would like to eat.

One of the most famous Chinese dishes remains Peking Duck (北京烤鸭, beijing kaoya). Initially it was reserved to emperors in the Forbidden City but a retired chef revealed the recipe outside of the walls and let it become famous all around the world. Roast duck remains relatively expensive but visitors must not worry; Beijing and many other cities will offer affordable opportunities to try out this world-famous dish.
You can also try Mao Zedong’s favourite dish, “hongshao rou” (红烧肉, braised pork belly), where the juiciest pieces of pork belly are marinated in caramelised sugar before being cooked very slowly. It is too fatty for some people’s tastes but it is a dish that most people find extremely delicious. You will find dumplings all across the country but the filling, the way of cooking and the name will change. Noodle soups, fried noodles, fried rice, and hot pot also count among the famous Chinese foods. It is important to take every opportunity to taste local specialties, including the unique foods of China’s minorities. For instance, do not miss the Uyghur lamb kebabs from Xinjiang province and do not leave the Tibetan areas without tasting yak meat, momos (Tibetan dumplings), tsampa (roasted barley flour), and butter tea.

You might also like to experiment with some of the more obscure foods that are locally available, such as duck tongue, pig intestines, chicken feet, goose guts, and the notorious Stinky Tofu (臭豆腐, chou doufu). Even better yet: learn how to prepare typical Chinese dishes from your local friends’ mothers. And most importantly, try not to gain too much weight during your stay!

With rising living standards and more critical thinking about environmental pollution, Chinese people are paying much more attention to green, healthy, and nutritious foods. In general, Chinese cuisine, with its emphasis on fresh vegetables and nutritious ingredients such as tofu, seems to be particularly amenable to vegetarians and vegans. Nevertheless, being a vegetarian in China can still be tough, since even vegetarian dishes often use a tiny bit of meat for flavour.

3. How about dining with Chinese people?

On average, Chinese people are accustomed to eating earlier than people of most other countries, whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Dishes are generally placed in the centre of the table for everybody to share and chopsticks (筷子, kuaizi) are the preferred tool for eating food. As you may have heard before, you should not use your chopsticks for pointing out people and refrain from sticking them into your rice bowl as this will remind people of the offerings they make to the dead.
Having food together, especially in a restaurant, is the most common way of socialising in China. Chinese people enjoy filling up each other’s rice bowls and also pouring each other drinks. Seating arrangements at formal dinners can be very complex and much time will be spent by the hosts arranging the order of seating for their guests. Hosts in China tend to over-order food for their guests as they find it embarrassing if somebody goes hungry. In more formal settings, your host will also make sure that you get the best pieces.

Chinese people would traditionally never even think about splitting the bill. On the contrary, being the one who pays is an honour and the discussion over who pays can get heated. Thus, according to Chinese customs, when comes the question over who pays, the most respected individual or the one who has extended an invitation is expected to have the honour to pay for everybody. If you are this person, you should not pay in front of your friends, but rather find an excuse (pretend that you are going to the bathroom) and pay the bill privately.

Being a foreigner in China you will generally face a tough time trying to pick up the bill after dinners as Chinese customarily want to play host to foreign visitors. In fact, many a host would become rather offended if you tried to insist on paying. The best way to express your sincere thanks would be to invite them back or give them gifts or favours in the future. China does not have a culture of tipping. Foreigners trying to tip waiters in restaurants will be often handed back the money right away.

4. How is the safety and security situation in China?

“个人不可太过自由, 国家要得到完全自由”

(geren bu ke tai guo ziyou, guojia yao dedao wanquan ziyou)

“An individual should not have too much freedom. A nation should have absolute freedom.”

- Sun Yat-Sen
The Chinese authorities place great emphasis on maintaining public order. China in general is a very safe country for foreigners. The most important safety precaution you can take in China is the same as in any country: awareness. Although petty crime is rising, the risk of being physically attacked remains very low.

Keep in mind that you are guest in a foreign country where your native country’s laws do not apply – you are subject to Chinese laws and legal procedures. If you are involved in unlawful activities, you can expect great difficulties if and when you apply for future visas to visit China. Also note that some parts of China are restricted for foreigners even today or accessible only if you travel with an official tour guide.

As theft is not uncommon in China, always make sure your valuables are well-protected. Never carry your passport/visa, credit cards, traveller’s schedules or other travel documents in your shoulder bag or backpack – try to always carry them on your person or store them safely away in your hotel or home.

Do not show off your valuable goods in public and only keep enough money for your immediate needs inside your wallet – hide the rest on your body or store it at a safe place. Be particularly cautious about your possessions in crowded areas such as local festivals, markets, tourist sites, railways, bus stations, or on trains and buses. If any of your belongings is stolen, report it immediately to the nearest police station and also to your country’s embassy if any official documents disappeared.

One aspect that you should be aware of while travelling in China is the risk of natural disasters such as earthquakes in China’s southwest and seasonal floods in areas bordering the Yangtze River. China’s south-eastern coast also is frequently hit by typhoons, so plan your travels carefully. Related to China’s mountainous geography, altitude sickness should be carefully taken into account, too, as most places in Tibet, Qinghai, parts of Xinjiang, Sichuan, and Yunnan are situated at very high altitudes. Always allow time for acclimatisation when visiting these regions.

Another major concern is air pollution, which is a significant problem in many cities throughout China. The pollution can be so serious as to cause respiratory problems, irritating coughs, and runny noses even for healthy people.
Violent unrest in the country often affects minority regions, such as those inhabited by Mongols, Tibetans, and Uyghurs. Besides, demonstrations in any locality have the potential to turn violent, with the local authorities struggling to keep a lid on every unauthorised mass activity. The Tibet issue is particularly sensitive in China. Authorities generally limit access to foreign visitors and any connection of foreigners with supporting Tibetan independence will usually be dealt with severely.

However, local unrests in China hardly, if ever, affect foreign visitors to the country. On the whole, China is one of the safest countries to travel in anywhere and by far the most visits to the country are completely incident free. Of the millions of travellers that visit China annually, very few require consular assistance (e.g. for stolen passports) and far less get in legal trouble with the authorities.

Areas bordering on Siberia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma are poorly policed and are notorious for drug smuggling and other crimes. Punishment for drug-related offences in China is often extremely severe and can potentially include the death penalty, especially if heroin is involved. Gambling is illegal in China though you will see people playing games such as majiang for money in many places.

In Beijing, Shanghai, and other popular destinations for foreign tourists there are established scams targeting your money. The scams are often modified, but are mostly related to pressuring you to pay grossly inflated prices. For example, under the pretence of practicing their English some scam artists will route you to teahouses, restaurants or art galleries where you will be heavily overcharged. Counterfeit money is another concern, so keep your eyes out. Ensure that you are aware of the values and appearances of different local banknotes to avoid being short-changed or handed counterfeit money.

Practicing your religion will not be much of a problem in China, with a very few exceptions, such as for the Falun Gong movement, which is banned in the country. However, there are clear restrictions in China on preaching and distributing religious materials.
The most likely danger to your physical well-being definitely comes from China’s traffic situation, so keep your guard when crossing the street. While travelling around by Chinese public or private means of transport, you should be really careful as traffic is chaotic and largely unregulated. Whether in cities or in mountains, some taxi and bus drivers are driving dangerously so do not hesitate to ask them to drive a bit slower and to wear the seat belt if there is one, even if the driver says it could bring misfortune.

If you ride by bike, be really cautious as road accidents involving two-wheelers are very frequent and often result in serious injuries. Visitors to China should also keep in mind that pedestrians never have the right of way. The rate of traffic accidents in China, including fatal accidents, is among the highest in the world and road accidents can sometimes turn violent, even involving bystanders. The safest way for you to settle disputes might be calling the police – though Chinese people rarely do so.

Once taken into account all these warnings, you can enjoy your stay in this fascinating and diverse country that welcomes more than 50 million visitors a year. Even if you are a woman, travelling alone in China is a reasonably safe option. That being said, for all countries there will always be some places where it is very safe and some where it is not. As in every other country in the world, savvy and caution are the best weapons against theft or worse.

5. How do I get from the airport into town?

Your employer may arrange an airport-pickup for you. If you will be staying in a hotel, you can ask there to be picked up from the airport as well. In case you want to try it on your own, one convenient way is to take a taxi which is usually quite inexpensive. Choose an “official” taxi and not a private car from a private person and always make sure that the meter is turned on or negotiate the price first.

In most of the main cities in China you will be able to find an airport shuttle that goes to the city centre for a really cheap price compared to the taxi. In some cities the airport is close to the city centre which
enables you to take a regular public bus from the airport but it can be inconvenient to carry heavy luggage in overcrowded buses during rush hours.

A Journey Crossing Two Continents: Riding the Trans-Sib
by Anne Rhebergen

From Moscow to Beijing via Ulan Bator in Mongolia. Crossing 7 time zones. If measured from start to end it accumulates to a vast total of 7622 km (4735 miles). You will have heard about it. It is the Trans Siberian Express. It is not just a train ride. It is one of the amazing experiences in the world! If you choose to not make any stops after departure from Moscow, the journey can be made in 6 days. However that’s not how I did it and I’m darn happy about that because otherwise I would have missed an amazing experience!

There are many different ways to travel with the Trans Siberian Railways and actually the way I did it does not include Siberia at all because I choose to go on the Transmongolian branch through Mongolia to Beijing instead of going to Vladivostok. Basically there are three different kinds of trains: Russian, Mongolian and Chinese. It sounds like not such a big deal but actually these factors change the whole atmosphere of the train. Not only the nationality of the staff changes but also the train designs are completely different. And most importantly: the people traveling on the train are completely different. Our train from Moscow to Ulan Bator turned out to be a Mongolian one, which in my opinion was the best we could have.

The fun part of traveling on the Mongolian train is that next to the tourists who are traveling with the train for the experience, there are also a lot of Mongolian traders traveling on it. They use the train as their means of transport to cheaply buy their products in Moscow and sell it with profit along the way. In general the trains are only stopping for 15 minutes at the stations or sometimes 30 minutes to get refuel. So only in that timeframe people have the opportunity to buy from the traders and it is very
entertaining indeed to see how people are selling their products from inside the train to the people outside.

During the train ride you will get the opportunity to socialize a lot with other travellers as well. If you would walk from the beginning of the train to the end it will take you quite some time because you just keep bumping into other people and next to that it is also a nice way to stretch your legs since you’re staying for quite some time inside the train. Do not think too much about being in the train for such a long time though because you are really totally free to make any stops in between the ride. You do have to book these stops in advance though because all places in the trains are designated and otherwise you will not have a spot on the train when you want to get back on.

On the train the compartments are divided per 4 berths in general, two lower berths and two upper berths. During the day time you can fold up the upper berths to have more space in the compartments. It is possible to lock the compartments so you have to worry less about your stuff when you take a stroll around the train. Next to the restaurant wagon they also provide free hot water which you can use for making tea or some soup if you want to. As for food it is possible to buy it on every station you stop because people will be selling a lot of local specialties there. It is nice to see the Russian ladies selling their home cooked food at the station and if you’re not a fan of Russian cuisine it is also possible to buy instant noodles or just simple plain potatoes and boiled eggs.

Along the way there are countless amazing spots to explore. First of all you have to experience Moscow of course before departing. One of the famous sights along the route is the world’s oldest and deepest lake, Lake Baikal. Even if you decide not to get off here, you can choose to have some nice fresh fish sold by locals during the stop. Normally I am not such a fish fan but this time even I liked it, so try it and broaden your horizon! After Lake Baikal you will finally cross the border to Mongolia and this is one stop I can certainly recommend. Get out of the capital city and use this opportunity to explore the Mongolian countryside. I myself went to Terelj National Park and it was astonishing.

The view you have in that country is unlike any other. It is quite normal that your closest neighbour is living 12 km away and that you can see him when you are standing on a hill. It is also possible to do some really nice trekking on horses here. Mongolia is the perfect place to do it since its people are horsemen by nature. It is recommended though to have some experience with horses before doing an intensive tour on horseback. After departing again from the Ulan Bator train station you will cross the Gobi desert, one of the world’s largest deserts, before entering China. During the border crossing there is something interesting which needs to be done though, the bogies of the trains will have to be changed because the rail gauge systems used in both countries are not the same. So they have
thought of a smart system to solve this problem. They simply lift the whole train with all the passengers in it and then roll the new bogies under it. I mean, why would you make it complicated?

While entering China you really start to realize the size of the journey because now the landscape dramatically is changing. One can’t deny it anymore. Suddenly instead of endless steppes there are misty hills and very different people at the stations. This is also one of the things I found very fascinating during my trip. Normally you have this sudden change in landscape and culture when you travel by plane. Traveling by train is completely different since the landscape is changing so ‘slowly’ so you have more time to observe the world changing around you.

For me the Trans Siberian Express was an unforgettable experience. The nice people we have met on our journey, the time I spent drawing with this small Mongolian boy, the train chef who always made sure that we would be back in time before the train would leave, the evenings we spent playing basketball with Mongolian kids, the food which was different on every station… But like all good things, this train journey also came to an end. However, arriving in Beijing does not mean that the traveling experience has to end for all of us. You can still go on traveling! I would say since you are already there: explore China – it has so much variety to offer!

6. How do I find an accommodation?

“有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎?” (you peng zi yuan fang lai, bu yi le hu?)
“Is it not delightful to have friends coming from afar?”

- Confucius

Hospitality is a long running tradition in China. From the ritzy 5-star hotels of China’s megacities, over beautiful beach and mountain resorts, to idyllic village homestays, China offers unique accommodation opportunities for every individual preference – whether for one night or for one year.

For short term accommodation, the diversity of possibilities is amazing and your choice is highly dependent on your budget and expectations. In major big cities you will find all kind of accommodation, ranging from grand luxury hotels to cosy family-operated inns, including leisure resorts and stylish boutique hotels in local architectural style. Please note that accommodation prices can be several times higher during peak seasons and that heavy discounts can be negotiated during off-season.
You are generally only allowed to stay in hotels, hostels or inns that are licensed to host foreign visitors. However, every place differs in how regulation is enforced. While in many cities you can easily stay in the cheapest local Chinese inns and guesthouses, other places (such as Hangzhou) are very particular about this rule.

You might also like to spend a night with nomadic people in their tent or in a Buddhist monastery to learn about local lifestyles. Many families in the countryside also offer homestays, which can give you the opportunity to discover the daily life of Chinese people from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds. Since Chinese people are very generous and hospitable, you could very well be invited to stay in their house as a family friend.

For working or studying in China renting a flat will be far more economical. Multinational companies as well as some local companies might provide accommodation for their foreign employees and their families.

If you are looking to share a flat or rent one on your own, there are several ways to find such accommodation in China. A first step could be to search the Internet. There are multiple Internet forums you can check out, where different people exchange their experiences and useful advice. Some embassies are also providing lists of people or agents who offer a place or at least assistance with finding an appropriate accommodation.

The most convenient method to find a place to rent in China might be to visit one of the countless real estate agencies that cater to the foreign expat community. You usually find English-speaking staff and a reasonable amount of professionalism. However, please be aware of their often vested interests (they are working on behalf of the landlords, too) and their often much higher prices and commissions as compared to local agencies.

You can also rent an apartment directly from the owner with no real estate agent in between, or through your expatriate “network”. Many websites in China are exclusively dedicated to matching landlords and tenants. You should stick to the Chinese websites though, since foreigners mostly pay highly inflated prices for their accommodation in China. Expat websites might be useful though for finding shared accommodation with other foreigners in China, in case that is your preference.
Newly built residences generally offer better quality equipments and more facilities and are often not priced too much higher. Take note that rent prices in China differ heavily among location (cities like Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai are very expensive even when compared internationally) and can usually be negotiated. Electricity, gas, heating, telephone, and water are generally separately paid by the tenant.

Rental agreements are written in Chinese, so if your reading skills are not sufficient, get the support of a Chinese friend to assist you with the contract. Leases in China are mostly one to three years in length, requiring a deposit of one to two months of rent, and a payment of three months’ rent at a time (but some landlords might insist on 6 months payment at a time).

If you rent a place, make sure that the landlord is willing to help you register at the local police station (which will also require them to pay taxes for the rental income, a fact that many landlords are blissfully oblivious about and often not very willing to do).

What sometimes happens is that landlords in China try to keep your deposit when you move out. Do not give in easily to their requests and negotiate for getting back your deposit. Having a good record of what problems were already present when you moved in and even having photographic evidence will also give you a good chance to get your deposit back at the end of your stay.

Knowledge Must can also assist you in finding a shared flat or an individual flat for yourself. Due to our large network it is also possible to arrange a stay with a Chinese family, which could help you to adapt more readily to an unfamiliar set of values, habits of thought, and patterns of behaviour. We help you to find accommodation that meets your requirements. Please get in touch with us via our website www.knowledge-must.com.
7. What about Internet access, phone and postal services?

With the exception of the most remote villages of China's vast rural areas, mobile phones and the Internet are everywhere. China leads the world in terms of mobile phone usage with around one billion users and already about half a billion of Chinese people are now making use of the Internet.

Important phone numbers in China (might be a good idea to enter them into your mobile phone to have them on record whenever you need them):

- Police: 110 (free)
- Domestic Long Distance Phone Number Information: 113
- Local Directory Assistance: 114
- Time Inquiry: 117
- Fire: 119 (free)
- Ambulance: 120 (free)
- Weather Forecast: 121
- Traffic Accidents: 122 (free)

If you want to bring your mobile from your home country, you will want to contact your provider to make sure that your phone will work while you are in China. There is nothing complicated about it – if it is not locked to your home network or home provider (net/simlock). However, roaming charges will apply if you continue to use your home SIM and these are generally highly expensive. To avoid them, we advise you to buy a local SIM card to use with your cell, even if you plan to come to China only for a few weeks. Simply take your GSM phone with you or purchase a new one in China.

Mobile phone service is dominated by two major providers: China Mobile and China Unicom. China Telecom (which controls the landline phone services) also has also recently entered the mobile phone market. Making an international call from your Chinese landline or cell phone will not be possible without applying for international calling facility. However, you can buy international phone cards in kiosks around town with which you can make calls directly.
If you have Internet access probably the best and cheapest way to call family and friends at home is software that allows users to make voice calls over the Internet such as Skype.com and Poivy.com. Calls to other users of the service are free, while calls to landlines and mobile phones can be made for a low fee after buying some credit.

Internet service providers in China include China Telecom and China Unicom as well as many local private companies, which in fact might offer the best prices or even the fastest connections depending on your specific location. Basic Internet connections can come as cheap as 50 RMB per month.

When you move into a shared flat, you usually will find an Internet connection there. Besides, you will not have problems finding an Internet cafe in even the smallest of towns in China, where most visitors either come for playing one of the incredibly popular online games in China or for chatting with friends (QQ being the platform of choice).

It has to be noted that Internet access in China is heavily firewalled and many sites that you are used to access at home, such as many blogging platforms, Facebook, and YouTube will not work for you. Often local alternatives exist, such as Weibo.com instead of Twitter.com and Youku.com instead of YouTube.com.

Contrary to what you might have heard or read before, the postal service in China is fairly reliable. For example, letters to and from Europe or the United States might take about 5 to 10 days. However, please be aware that packages sent to China from abroad are sometimes opened before they reach their destination and might get stuck in customs.
1. What about the conditions of employment?

Employment law in China is governed by a diverse set of laws that are becoming increasingly labour friendly (but still a far cry from many European welfare states). The most important laws are:

- Trade Union Law of the People’s Republic of China (1994)

The Labour Contract Law of the People’s Republic of China went into effect on January 1, 2008, following a series of labour disputes in local Chinese companies. Since then employers have become more serious and careful about employment contracts and the conditions of employment. According to this law, all employees must sign a written employment contract and it is very difficult to terminate employment without good reasons.

Chinese Labour Law stipulates that employees must sign a contract within one month of taking up their position. According to Chinese law, all labour contracts with the exception of part-time employment must be in writing and include the following terms:

- Name, address, and legal representative of the employer
- Name, address, and identification number of the employee
- Duration of labour contract
- Job description and place of work
- Working hours, rest, and vacation
- Salary
- Social insurance
- Working conditions
You should insist on a clearly outlined employment contract, which should detail the key terms and conditions of your employment, such as the number of holidays, responsibilities on the job, and remuneration.

Employment in China is divided into full-time and part-time work. According to the Labour Contract Law of the People’s Republic of China, part-time employment is defined as contracts under which the employee works no more than 4 hours per day on average and no more than the aggregate of 24 hours per week.

The standard working hours in China are eight hours a day, five days a week, for a maximum working period of 40 hours with two days of rest (which are typically Saturday and Sunday). Overtime and non-standard work hours must be compensated by employers in the following manner:

- Working days: 150% of regular salary
- Rest days: 200% of regular salary
- Public holidays: 300% of regular salary

That being said, many Chinese employees are expected to work considerable overtime without any additional compensation at all. Also enforcement of occupational safety and health regulations remains a problem in China. Industrial accidents, in the mining sector for instance, continue to occur at a frightening rate.

2. **What should I know about Chinese culture in general?**

   “入乡随俗” (ru xiang sui su)
   “When entering a village, follow its customs.”

   - Chinese Proverb

China is a culturally rich country, filled with traditions and customs, many dating back hundreds and thousands of years. Beyond often modern and cosmopolitan layers, you will find deep-rooted traditional customs and values.
Some foreign visitors might get the impression that Chinese people are rather crude and even rude, throwing trash onto the streets, taking a leak in the streets, spitting on the floor in restaurants, and disregarding queues. First of all, just because you see these phenomena does not mean that all Chinese people agree to these practices. Secondly, one has to accept that perceptions of what considers to be "good manners" and what not is much defined by one’s cultural background and perceptions. For example, Chinese people generally do not agree with the custom of many Western people blowing their nose into a handkerchief and then keeping the used handkerchief in their pocket.

Communication styles will also differ much from what you are used to from back in your native country. What may look like a verbal duel going on between Chinese people, may just be a normal day-to-day conversation. People from many countries find it striking that Chinese people often do not thank each other. In China the concept of “thanking” is not plain courtesy. Thanking people for something that is considered part of their duty will often baffle Chinese.

Some people from northern European countries, for example, find that the Chinese comfort zone regarding distance is a bit to close for their comfort. At the same time, Chinese will often feel uncomfortable with physical touch, e.g. by putting ones arm around their shoulders and patting acquaintances on the back.

The much referred to lack of creative thought and critical thinking among the Chinese is generally exaggerated, though the Chinese education system comparatively puts less emphasis on creativity and individuality. Still, in China you will meet some of the most interesting philosophically-inclined people anywhere including many creative writers, musicians, designers, and so on. If you make it a point to ask stimulating questions, you will find a people that have a lot to say.

Trying to see things from the Chinese angle will do wonders in appreciating the intricacies and beauty of Chinese culture. As soon as you understand the reason behind some actions that may seem odd, most things will actually make perfect sense.
Good Etiquette

Please observe the following principles while in China, in order not to offend Chinese people:

• Do not use your index finger to point at people. Rather use your open hand to indicate.
• Avoid displaying signs of affection in public (even though attitudes might be changing rapidly among China’s young generation).
• When dating in China, please be aware of the responsibilities that this brings along and the resulting expectations.
• Do not try to corner people too much and develop an eye for when you make feel people uncomfortable. Otherwise you will often face excuses, dishonesty, and sometimes even disregard when dealing with Chinese people.
• Many people in China are not very comfortable when you stare too intently at them. Lowering your eyes is considered a sign of paying respect to somebody.
• Chinese people do not like to be touched by strangers, so refrain from hugging, back-patting, and other behaviours that you might engage in when at home.

Do not be afraid of sticking out in China. Depending on your ethnic background, you might very well stick out anyway, so get over it and go for that run in the city streets that you always wanted to do. Many Chinese people are also very shy with foreigners, so try to engage them, break the ice, and the atmosphere will warm up immediately.

If you are well-mannered according to your native culture, there are good chances that the Chinese will consider you to be a good mannered person, too. Respect the locals and they will respect you. Chinese people do not expect foreigners to conform to their own cultural standards and will nevertheless go to great lengths to introduce their own traditions to foreign friends. When having insulted or upset someone due to misunderstanding, you can always explain that you were not aware of the cultural differences. Chances are people will forgive you for your mistake.

Chinese prefer to be formally introduced to someone new. People stand up when being introduced and remain standing throughout the introductions. Handshakes are very common, though sometimes people also simply nod to each other. Often business cards are exchanged right at the start. Both hands are used to present as well as receive a business card.
For foreigners (and many people dealing with foreigners in China), it is standard to have business cards printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other. Business cards will often be studied carefully and one will express one’s appreciation of personal as well as company names, ranks, and so on. Only then can a business card be stored away respectfully.

In China asking personal questions regarding age, family, marital status, personal income, and so on is very common even after meeting somebody for the first time. Try not to take offense to that as people are generally just trying to make conversation and are seeking common ground.

Compliments are not easily accepted in China and often directly denied as modesty is considered to be one of the highest virtues in Chinese culture. Chinese consider humility to be a key character trait and generally do not think highly of people that exaggerate their own abilities.

**Losing, Saving, and Giving Face**

Face (面子 “mianzi”) is a paramount cultural concept in China and Chinese people often will refrain from disagreeing or arguing with you, especially in public. They will try to avoid making others feel uncomfortable or embarrassed and will cover up their real feelings in order to avoid a loss of face for all involved parties. For people of other cultural backgrounds it is very important to understand that there may be a cultural reason behind certain actions, rather than just taking offence at perceived dishonesty.

Losing face, saving face and giving face are important concepts that Chinese people are aware of all the time. One can describe “face” as a complex system for measuring shame and stature. It is one of the most desirable things in Chinese culture to “have face”, while “losing face” is one of the most undesirable.
Keqihua (客气话), polite talk or flowery language, is often used in order to “give face” in China. If you “give face” to Chinese people, they will much appreciate it and get a good impression of you. Thereby, you can also often achieve your objectives, whether it is strengthened bonds of friendship or a more favourable business deal.

On the other hand, if you make a Chinese person “lose face”, there is hardly any room for further discussions on a subject. Therefore, trying to avoid creating situations where people lose face is necessary even if it is sometimes difficult for you. Public disagreement, verbal abuse and other behaviours considered to be demeaning can turn a bad situation far worse – best to smile and keep friendly in the face of difficulties.

Interestingly, often Chinese people are willing to suffer a lot from the subtle and complex culture concerning “face”. For example, they may pay an excessively expensive bill in order to “save face” in front of friends.

Famously, Chinese language does not have a direct concept of “yes” and “no”. However, often “shi” (是, "is") and “bu shi” (不是, "is not") are used in this context to express affirmation or denial. The Chinese are also considered to be ambiguous in their expression of denial. Talking indirectly or not offending somebody through direct denial is also often related to “saving face”. The extent of this depends highly on individual persons and also on the region of China. In some parts of China people are famously direct in their dealings, so generalisations that are often made by outsiders have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Guanxi (Relations / Connections)

“多个朋友多条路, 多个敌人多堵墙” (duo ge pengyou duo tiao lu, duo ge diren duo du qiang)

“More friends, more roads; more enemies, more walls”

- Chinese Proverb

China’s great sage Confucius is credited with establishing a system of ethics, morals, and behavior, defining the rules how people deal with others, and establishing each person’s place in society. The fundamental glue that holds Chinese society together is often referred to as guanxi (关系). Confucian ethics codified a range of rules that help to define guanxi, especially relations between friends, father and
son, husband and wife, brother and sister, and ruler and subject. Chinese people mostly honour these
defined relationships, take the resulting responsibilities seriously, and prefer to deal with people with
whom their relationship is defined. For example, business is often done with people with a clear
relationship has been established and strong preference is given to job applicants who are referred to
by people one is connected to.

There are mainly three levels of guanxi in Chinese culture, relations with relatives, with friends, and
with acquaintances. The closer your relationships are, the more opportunities as well as responsibilities
you have. For example, if two job applicants have the same or nearly same quality, the HR’s relation
will usually preferred.

Sons often inherit their father’s business stage when it comes to the time for the old man to retire.
However, friendship also weighs a lot when Chinese deal with others. There is a popular saying: “At
home one relies on one’s parents and outside on one’s friends”. Trying to make new friends in China
is a very important concept.

Addressing People

Addressing people in the proper way is of utmost significance in China. Family names come first (there
are about 3,000 of them around the country, though popular surnames like Li and Wang dominate
much of the other names), followed by a given name (of one or two Chinese characters) that often
has a very interesting story and meaning behind it. Chinese women use their maiden names even after
marriage, so Ms. Li might be married to Mr. Wang.

Never call people only by their family name. People in China respectfully address people by their
courtesy or professional title and last name. In Chinese the family name also precedes the title. For
example, Li Xiansheng for Mr. Li and Wang Laoshi for Teacher Wang.

If in doubt how to address somebody, rather opt for the full name than just referring to somebody by
their given name only. A good strategy is also asking people how they would like to be addressed –
many Chinese people do the same. Also do not hesitate to inquire about the correct pronunciation of
somebody’s name whenever in doubt.

Notably, Chinese frequently adopt a Western first name when interacting with foreigners. These
names might sometimes appear rather peculiar, such as Apple Wang or Struggle Li, but they were
likely chosen with good reason. They often derive from the literal translation of their given names, such
as Apple standing for the Chinese character Ping – or they just choose Apple because it is their
favourite fruit. Often much time has gone into choosing these names, so please treat them
respectfully.
Gift Giving

Gifts are an important way of creating and building as well as maintaining relations in China. The concept of reciprocity (礼尚往来, li shang wang lai) in relationships is considered of utmost importance in China. People are supposed to treat each other the way they would like to be treated themselves and if somebody receives a gift from somebody it goes without saying that a gift is expected in return.

People will often initially refuse to accept a gift, so just gently persist until the gift is accepted. Presents will usually not be opened at the time of receipt. Chocolates, fancy alcohols, and fruits make good gifts in China. Better even would be bringing small items from your country (such as famous sweets from your locality). Do not give anything in sets of four or gifts that carry the association of death or funerals such as clocks, cut flowers, or white objects (including wrapping gifts in white paper – red and gold will generally work best).

One important way of presenting gifts in China are the ubiquitous “hongbao” (红包, red packages), which are given away during Chinese festivals, birthdays, weddings, etc. as a token of appreciation. This is the way to offer cash presents in China and can also be an excellent substitute when not knowing what other present to get for somebody.

3. What about work culture in China?

“山不转路转” (shan bu zhuang lu zhuang)
“A mountain cannot turn, but a road can.” Meaning: there is always a workaround.

- Chinese Proverb
Chinese work culture has evolved at an amazing pace over recent decades. Because of its communist background, jobs in China used to be very secured with little chance of being laid off. In recent years however, the so-called “iron rice-bowl” (铁饭碗, tie fan wan), which guaranteed employment for life in China’s state-owned enterprises, has become an increasingly rare concept.

At the same time, the private sector has been flourishing thanks to economic liberalisation policies introduced under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership and continuously pursued by subsequent governments ever since. Making handsome profits was no longer “counter-revolutionary”, successful businessmen were not viewed as enemies of the people, and an increasing amount of entrepreneurial-minded Chinese people went “xia hai” (下海, descending into the sea), which refers to former government officials and state-employed company personnel who dared to start their own business ventures – taking a dip in the uncertain waters of the market sea, so to speak.

In China’s communist economy individuals were closely linked to their work group or “danwei” (单位), which guaranteed security throughout their lives. This “danwei mentality” still lingers on in Chinese work culture and workers often are uncomfortable leaving this security blanket just as companies are reluctant to lay off staff.

One should be careful to not fall into the trap of too broad generalisations about Chinese work culture. You need to pay attention to local cultures as well as the very diverse personalities you will be dealing with, for instance related to age, family background, education, social standing, work experience, and so on.

In China, the work culture also still depends on the particular type of business: state-owned enterprises, local family-owned businesses, Chinese stock-exchange-listed companies, joint ventures, foreign-invested companies, all have their differences in terms of management styles, corporate culture, etc.

In addition, work culture in China differs from one industry to the other, from one geographical region to the next. Generally speaking, operational structures, chains of command, and management style
are more hierarchical than matrix-oriented, which often leads to clashes of management culture when Western companies set up their operations in China.

The management style consisted mainly of ordinary tasks performed under “military” discipline and still has some influence at present except that results and achievements now also play an important role. General objectives are rather long-term oriented as Chinese people favour long-term commitment in business, so you should try to set long-term goals into your proposals when working in or with China.

Overall, work culture in China is more about human interaction than anything else. There must be a fair amount of socialisation in any business relationship: between business partners, employers and employees, suppliers and clients. It is important to consider age, seniority, party membership (especially as many business decisions are closely linked to the Chinese Communist Party influence), political sensitivities, the history and traditions of China, and show due respect to those. People will respect you in return and your business goals will be facilitated.

Right from a very young age Chinese are taught to respect authority figures, which carries on into their professional life. The manager, and the company itself, are seen as patriarchal figures which expect loyalty and obedience from employees. For the relationship to be two-way beneficial, the company is expected to take interest in the well-being of employees in return. Senior managers expect to be treated in a certain way by their subordinates, just as subordinates look to their superiors for guidance and protection. It thus becomes a mutually beneficial two-way relationship.

The explosion of jobs, technology, and the advent of multinationals keeps revolutionising the work culture in China. Many IT companies, for instance, have recognised that a happy employee is a productive employee and Western-inspired management techniques are gaining a stronger foothold.

4. What is the social safety net like in China?

The Chinese government is facing an arduous task to widen and deepen the country’s social security system. In light of the unbalanced development among different Chinese regions and between rural and urban areas this is by no means an easy task. Old-age insurance, health insurance coverage, laid-off workers entering reemployment service centres, unemployment insurance benefits, social welfare funds, all these programs play a key role in maintaining social stability and harmony in times of highly uneven economic developments.
On July 1, 2011, the Social Insurance Law, China’s first comprehensive law in this field, came into effect. The government is aiming to establish a comprehensive social security system for all people. This now also includes all foreigners employed in China, even those working in representative offices on employment contracts with employers outside of China.

In China, all employers are now obligated to provide benefits and social security payments to employees.

Employers alone contribute to:
- Maternity insurance
- Work-related injury insurance

Employees and employers jointly contribute to:
- Basic old age insurance
- Unemployment insurance
- Medical insurance

For example, in 2010, the number of people who received childcare support was around 123 million and more than 432 million people took out healthcare insurance. The precise contributions depend on the particular location within China, too.

5. What are common forms of discrimination found in the Chinese labour world?

While Chinese law prohibits any form of discrimination in the work place, the level to which these laws have been implemented varies greatly. For example, in hiring practices discrimination remains a serious problem. Discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, homosexuals, minorities, and immigrants is often a problem, and each group’s respective access to education and certain jobs can be limited.
Additionally, aesthetics are often heavily emphasised in hiring and appearance, gender, height, and skin colour can also play large roles. Furthermore health-checks are required by many companies as part of the hiring process and discrimination against those found to have AIDS or Hepatitis, for example, is also common. That being said, considering where China is coming from, discrimination is generally decreasing and people are developing a tolerance of different appearances and practices.

6. What about gender issues and working in China?

"使全部妇女劳动力，在同工同酬的原则下，一律参加到劳动战线上去”
(shi quanbu funv laodongli, zai tonggong tongchou de yuanze xia, yi lv canjia dao laodong zhanxian shang qu)

"Enable every woman who can work to take her place on the labour front, under the principle of equal pay for equal work."

- Mao Zedong

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (ERA), provides for equal remuneration to male and female employees. The ERA also states that no employer shall, while recruiting for the same work, discriminate against women except where the employment of women in such work is prohibited or restricted by or under any law.

However, it is still common in China to have discrimination against women, as seen for instance by the generally slower rate of promotion of women to managerial positions within businesses. The participation of women in the formal labour force is much lower than that of males and in both rural and urban areas, women tend to be paid less than men for the same job.
Women also experience some level of discrimination in terms of access to loans, which acts as an impediment to women owning businesses. In a positive development, state-supported microcredit programmes for women have begun to have an impact in many rural districts. Besides, sexual harassment at the workplace is fairly common, with a vast majority of cases going unreported to authorities. A 2004 report by the National Commission for Women (NCW) and the Press Institute of China found that a majority of women experienced gender discrimination at their workplaces.

7. How should I behave at the Chinese work place?

"si fueris Romae, Romano vivito more; si fueris alibi, vivito sicut ibi"

“If you were in Rome, live in the Roman way; if you are elsewhere, live as they do there”
- Attributed to St. Ambrose

In order to adapt faster and easier to the Chinese work place there are some suggestions you can find here to take in consideration:

- In addition to basic Mandarin, try to learn few words in the local dialect when you communicate with people at work. This will show your commitment, involvement, and respect towards the local cultural environment.
- People in China are highly family-oriented, so make it a point to inquire about your colleagues’ families.
- Do not take too much offence at seemingly too personal questions and comments – your colleagues will probably only try to make conversation and break the ice.
- Communicate unpleasant issues in a more indirect or gentle manner, for example, saying there is “scope for improvement” instead of “this will not work”.
- Lunchtime is a great platform to get to know your colleagues better.
- Saving face is very important in China. Do not hold back on complimenting someone whenever the opportunity arises and be sure to smile and keep a positive attitude at all times. This will give you face and will be crucial in building up your network and establishing business relationships.


- Develop some tolerance for distorted time-schedules. When you really need someone to finish a task by a strict timeline, then it is always advisable to explain the disadvantages of being late to the persons concerned in detail.
- Socialising over dinner and drinks can be essential for establishing business partnerships. Generally you should not talk too much about business over dinner and rather put the focus on sharing stories, interests, family insights, etc. and thus show how truehearted you are towards everybody present.

8. What are the guidelines for business dress in China?

It is very difficult to generalise about the most appropriate way to dress for business purposes that will be valid all over China. However, some generalisations can be made that will often hold true. Colours tend to be on the neutral side and rather conservative. As in the Western world, normal business dress for men is a suit and tie, but often just a full-sleeved shirt with or without a tie is also acceptable, depending on location and particular industry.

Women should wear rather conservative suits or dresses. Revealing clothing for women is considered very offensive in China. Skirts should cover the knees, and blouses as well as other tops should have high necklines.

In most companies, particularly in the IT sector, however, the dress code is getting increasingly casual. It is not unusual to find people wearing T-shirts and jeans with sneakers. On a general note, to be on the safe side as a foreign visitor, rather conservative dress is advisable.

9. What about Chinese office hours?

China officially has a five-day working week. Official and business work in China is run on the “Western” calendar, with the date writing convention following the system yy(yy)/mm/dd, e.g. (20)12/12/24 for Christmas Eve 2012.

Banks, offices, and government departments are usually open Monday to Friday, roughly from around 9 am (many closing for one or two hours during lunch) until 5 pm or 6 pm. Department stores and shops are often open from early in the morning to late at night, seven days a week.
Normal office hours in Chinese companies are mostly from 8 am or 9 am to 5 pm or 6 pm. Lunchtime is for half an hour to one hour. Some cities like Shanghai and Beijing do start earlier and/or end later due to the fast-paced work environment.

Though more and more companies compensate their employees accurately for the working times during the weekend, many companies make their employees work overtime on top of their normally assigned working days with little or no compensation.

One also has to bear in mind that even though China is an extremely big country, it only has one time zone. This means that the times to go to and get off work might be different in some parts of China, especially in the far western reaches, such as Xinjiang.

10. What about holidays in China?

China has a long list of holidays. Some of these such as New Year (January 1), Labour Day (May 1) and National Day (October 1) are observed according to the Western calendar. The majority however, such as Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival, are all following the lunar calendar. The dates for these festivals are not the same in terms of the Western calendar, and therefore, you can check with the local Chinese Embassy or google to find out the latest holiday list.

There are currently seven official national public holidays in Mainland China:
- New Year’s Day (January 1): 1 day
- Spring Festival (lunar new year, either in January or February): 3 days
- Qingming Festival (April 4 or 5): 1 day
- Labour Day (May 1): 1 day
- Dragon Boat Festival (5th day of 5th lunar month): 1 day
- Mid-Autumn Festival (15th day of the 8th lunar month): 1 day
- National Day (October 1 – 3): 3 days
A unique feature of Mainland Chinese holidays is that holidays that fall on weekends are compensated with free working days. Additionally, weekends are swapped with the weekdays next to the actual holiday to create seven-day holidays called “Golden Weeks”. Be careful when travelling during the Golden Weeks though, since not only half of China is on the move to visit their families, they have also developed into the peak seasons for tourism.

Chinese holidays offer you the opportunity to experience traditional Chinese culture at its best. During the Dragon Boat Festival (端午节, duanwujie) you can witness the colourful, elaborately carved dragon boats propelled upstream by competing teams to the rhythm of beating drums. On Yuanxiao Festival (元宵节, yuanxiaojie) many people light sky lanterns (孔明灯, kongmingdeng), which ascend to the sky after being lit. However, in terms of importance, one can hardly overemphasise the meaning of Chinese New Year (春节, chunjie) in China. You can also join a myriad of religious festivals of the various local communities, especially Buddhist, Daoist, Muslim, and Christian.
Around Mid-Autumn Festival there is an interesting custom occurring in China, especially among the younger generations: text greetings! The 15th day of the 8th month of the Chinese lunar calendar (12th of September in 2011) is one of the most important festivals in China, 中秋节, the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is a harvest festival dating back over 3,000 years, and it is celebrated by worshipping the moon. The particular date falls around the time of the autumn equinox, which is usually in September or early October. Traditionally, on this day Chinese families and friends will gather to admire the bright mid-autumn harvest moon and eat moon cakes, round or rectangular pastries with a thick filling. Even though many people are still upholding tradition, others are spending time doing other activities such as travelling or partying.

It is common to see many moon cakes sold in markets, department stores, and even on streets more than a month before the actual festival. In addition to the traditional bean paste filling with salted egg, there is a huge variety of other options, ranging from spicy meat to rose flavour. One box of quality moon cakes (8 to 12 pieces) are usually around 300 RMB (about 30 Euro) but can also cost more than 1,000 RMB (about 100 Euro), and they are usually given as presents to family, friends, and workmates.

The phenomenon of text greetings during Mid-Autumn Festival is especially used for friends that live far away, and the tradition is very similar to cards being sent for Christmas and New Years. But what I found most interesting about them is their creative content. They are humorous, cute, and often quite cheesy. Let’s have a look!
八月十五将至送你一只月饼，含量：100%关心，配料：甜蜜+快乐+开心+宽容+忠诚=幸福；保质期：一辈子。
For Mid-Autumn festival, I’ve sent a moon cake for you, contains: 100% affection, ingredients: sweetness + joy + tolerance + loyalty = happiness; expiry date: a lifetime.

月到中秋,分外想你。看到哪团中圆圆的月亮吗？哪就是我想你念你牵挂你的心！爱你吻你！晚安！
The moon has reached Mid-Autumn festival. I miss you a lot. Did you see the bright round moon? The moon is my heart; it misses and cares for you. Love you! Kiss you! Have a good night!

你是月饼我是馅，缠缠绵绵总见面；你是风筝我是线，追追逐逐把你牵；你是明月我是泉，美美满满一万年！
You are the moon cake, and I am the filling, forever together and never apart; you are the kite and I’m the string, always following my lead; you are the bright moon and I’m the spring, happy together forever.

月亮是诗，星空是画，愿所有的幸福伴随你，问候是春，关心是夏，愿所有的朋友真心待你，温柔是秋，浪漫是冬，愿所有快乐跟随你。祝你中秋节快乐。
The moonlight is a poem, the star-filled sky is a painting; I hope there is happiness wherever you go. Greeting is spring, caring is summer; I hope your friends hold affection for you. Gentleness is autumn, romance is winter; I hope every joy will follow you. Happy Mid-Autumn Festival!

Being in Chengdu for more than a year, I realised that generally young Chinese people love cheesy, cute, and poetic expressions. These are also commonly seen in Chinese TV dramas, films etc. They would say this texting is “好玩！”, which means “Good fun!”, and you will get similar texts also during other festivals or national holidays in China.

Texting funny sentences to your loved ones on your way to home, smiling at the cute texts you receive from good friends, having a nice dinner and a moon cake with family, or attending a party under the moon light till late, that is how it goes for young people now.
Due to China’s many minorities some regions also celebrate holidays for the local ethnic groups. These days are often calculated according to different calendars. The Tibetan festivals, for example, follow the Tibetan calendar while the Hui, Uyghur, and other Muslims follow the Islamic calendar. Apart from the holidays that are celebrated by all the people in China, there are some more specific holidays as well for certain groups or labour forces. Days like international Women’s Day, Youth Day, Children’s Day, and Army Day are all celebrated with at least half a day off by the particular groups.

11. How is business conducted in China?

“有钱能使鬼推磨” (you qian neng shi gui tuimo)
“If you have money you can even make the devil push your grind stone.”

- Chinese Proverb

Business opportunities in China for selling, buying, and offering services have never been more plentiful. At the same time, many of these opportunities are not as easily pursued as in the past due to rising competition levels. If you intend to sell your products to China, often your government back home will be very supportive and have systems in place to assist you in the process.

When evaluating business opportunities with China, exploratory visits to the country are crucial. Attending trade shows, for instance, provides you with an opportunity to understand the market, find products to source or buyers for your offerings and meet Chinese buyers, suppliers, distributors, and representatives. Finding an outstanding cultural facilitator cum interpreter will be very important if you are not fluent in Chinese language and Chinese culture yourself.

More than anything else, doing business in China involves building relationships and continuously nurturing them. Chinese prefer to conduct business with those they know and trust – often at the expense of seemingly more lucrative deals. It is vital that you develop a good personal relationship with
people that are important for your business. Trustworthiness, honour, and a general feeling of being comfortable with each other are central issues to build upon.

Whenever possible, Chinese people try to use established relationships, or an intermediary known by both sides, to make the first contact. Note that there is little or no distinction made between personal friendships and business relationships.

“Going by the back door” (走后门, zou houmen) means getting things done in China without going through the regular channels, often utilising one’s relationships. What is acceptable and what is not sometimes leads to confrontations between foreign and Chinese parties collaborating on business projects.

Chinese people are often very patient negotiators and to gain advantage might extend negotiations beyond established deadlines. If trust has not yet been established, then concentrate efforts on building a rapport. Decisions are always made at the highest level. If the owner or director of the company is not present, the chances are these are early-stage negotiations.

Anyone entering into a contract in China should take appropriate legal advice even though business disputes in China are rarely handled through the court system. If a business case goes to court, the Chinese government may prohibit foreigners involved to leave the country until the matter is resolved.

Please note that most tips on Chinese business values, etiquette, customs, and protocol should be taken with a pinch of salt. Most guide books offer advice without taking into account the diversity of Chinese cultures as well as the huge differences in individual behaviours. What is true in one business environment or geographical region often does not hold true somewhere else. Stereotypes anywhere
are often counterproductive – but especially so in China with its cultural diversity, complex traditions, and high flexibility in behaviour.

12. What about office protocols and hierarchies?

In the traditional Confucian perspective, all relationships are deemed to be unequal and these inequalities should be observed and respected – this also applies to work environments. The older colleague should receive respect from the younger one, the senior from the subordinate. This needs to be kept in mind in all office dealings. Notably, a lack of observance of hierarchical standards is seen as a typical foreign business problem in China, whereas concepts of empowerment or open access to information are considered alien by most Chinese people.

Decision-making in China usually works from the top down, with key decisions often coming from individuals in high positions of power. In Chinese offices, staff will generally be cautious to voice opinions before the opinions of their superiors are known. Chinese people generally feel more comfortable in working environments where job descriptions and lines of reporting are clear and relationships between superiors and subordinates are formalised. Employees are expected to follow their superiors lead and abstain from contradicting them, especially in front of colleagues.

At the same time, Chinese people are strongly consensus-oriented and the emphasis is rather put on the group, with individual desires sublimated to the greater good of all. This strong group orientation may appear as a lack of individual initiative, but for Chinese people it is important not to act unilaterally without involving other members of the group.

Another typical element of Chinese business culture that influences management and business relations is the fact that Chinese people hesitate to “say no”. Depending on situation, this might be due to preventing conflicts, embarrassment, and a loss of face or simply for keeping all options open at all times. In order to succeed in the Chinese workplace you should thus have a high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity.

Seniority, age, and authority are respected in China, both in business and in public life. In any case, you should stand up when senior persons enter the room. As far as language is concerned, honorific titles remain widely used by Chinese people, including in the office environment. The choice of title will depend on specific relationships between any two people, taking age, office hierarchies, gender, and
status into account, among other variables. You will need to develop a feel over time for how to address people at the work place.

If in doubt, you can address your colleagues by their surname combined with their official job title, e.g. Manager Wang (王经理, wang jingli) or Director Wang (王总, wang zong). Age and hierarchical differences are also often expressed with “Young” Wang (小王, xiao wang) or “Old” Wang (老王, lao wang). How to correctly address people also is determined by the type of working place. For example, in schools and research institutes concepts such as Teacher (老师, laoshi) and Doctor (博士, boshi) are mostly used.

13. What should I know about business meetings in China?

“无信不立” (wu xin bu li)
“If people do not trust somebody, this person will not have a good standing.”

- Chinese Proverb

In your preparation for doing business in China, the concepts of guanxi and face are of crucial importance. When doing business in China you should be prepared to invest a lot of time and effort in creating a good business relationship. The act of losing or giving face plays a very important role here. Therefore it is important to be aware of your own standing and your attitude towards others.

When having a business meeting in China it is crucial that you arrive on time, preferably a bit early. Being late could be considered disrespectful towards your business partner. Since the business relationship comes first, and the actual business second, Chinese people like to have a lot of meetings. Establishing a good level of trust is key for being successful. Business is rarely finalised in only one meeting. Therefore being patient when doing business with Chinese is a key
necessity. Chinese are also known for being very well prepared for meetings. They will do a lot of research on your company and you. This means that it is wise and somewhat expected of you that you do the same.

There are no firm rules regarding dining with business partners. Depending on the relationship and the individual persons, business may or may not be discussed over food. However, generally speaking, the importance of participating in dining and after-dinner entertainment can hardly be overemphasised for business success and broadening one’s network. Chinese people like to go outside of the office with their business partners in order to get to know them better. Restaurants, KTVs and bars are all common locations to continue developing your business relationship.

14. Where can I find more detailed information about work regulations and the labour market in China?

As a starting point you can visit the websites of relevant organisations in China as listed below. You are also most welcome to get in touch with Knowledge Must in case you require more specific information or need additional support.

**The Central People’s Government portal website in English:**
http://www.gov.cn/english/

**Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People’s Republic of China website in Chinese:**
http://www.mohrss.gov.cn/
FAQ Immersing Yourself

1. What about socialising in China?

“来而不往非礼也” (lai er bu wang fei li ye)
“To come and then not to go is not polite.” Meaning: good relationships are reciprocal; one should try to return as good as one receives.

- Book of Rites

Most people in China still have had very little contact to foreigners. As a consequence, each foreigner becomes a kind of informal “ambassador” of his/her own country and culture in China, especially in areas where foreigners are rather scarce. foreigners in China must bear in mind that individual behaviour affects how other foreigners will be regarded in the future.

The first conversation you will have with Chinese people will probably involve questions about your nationality, whether or not you like China, and polite enquiries concerning your family life. You will be repeating these answers to each person you meet. Being asked about your salary is also a typical Chinese question and is not considered indiscreet.

Topics which should be avoided include politics, especially as far as the Chinese government is concerned, and sex. Popular and safe topics include food, family, and Chinese culture – as long as you restrain from making negative remarks about it. The purpose of conversation in China is to establish a harmonious atmosphere.
Chinese tend to be less courteous, polite, and considerate in public places than in private environments. Be prepared to be stared at, shouted at loudly or openly discussed. This is another detail about Chinese habits concerning privacy: whatever you do, whatever you have, people around you are allowed to observe any of your belongings, documents, and gestures. You have privacy only if you specify it or if you are alone.

Chinese tend to divide people into two groups: those they have guanxi with and everybody else. Their behaviour can differ significantly depending on this essential division. Reciprocity in relationships is most important in China. Chinese will exert little effort for someone they do not know personally, but as soon as contact is established, they will help to the best of their ability.

In a guanxi relationship, each party is making demands on the other, who in turn must respond to these demands. Refusing could mean you do not have the face you were attributed at first or it could mean you would like to end the relationship. As a consequence it is very important to keep the network active by making demands on other persons, otherwise they cannot make demands on you. This can be difficult for people with a Western cultural background, for example, who may be reluctant to make demands on other people for fear of getting obligated in some way. Relationships with Chinese people often vanish after several non-granted demands.

Traditionally, the most common way for Chinese people to socialise is going to a restaurant. Inviting someone to lunch or dinner is a normal way of building relationship and friendship in Chinese culture. As a consequence, rejecting somebody’s invitation for a meal could be considered as “rejecting friendship”.

Having dinner at home is not so common, so consider it as a great honour if you find yourself invited and do not turn down the invitation unless you have an obvious and important time schedule obstacle. As a rather collectivist society, Chinese people prefer to entertain in public places rather than in their homes, especially when they are with foreigners, and always in a group of several people. Do not feel offended when Chinese people leave abruptly after a meeting or a meal. When the Chinese say farewell they will often simply go without lingering thanks.

Going to KTV is what frequently happens after a dinner with friends or acquaintances. While Chinese people feel generally rather shy about dancing, singing, in contrast, is very popular, whether it is in KTVs, when meeting in parks or in one’s home.
2. What do I need to know about the consumption of alcohol and smoking in China?

The alcohol and cigarette culture in China differs massively for men and women. For example, while China has one of the highest rates of smokers among men in the world (over half of Chinese males over 15 years old are smokers), only about one in forty women smoke in China. Men in many social settings can hardly refuse a drink of alcohol, while a woman usually gets away with a polite refusal. Most Chinese understand if you are unable to drink or smoke. Stating medical reasons is always a good way to get out of drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes.

Smoking is a widespread social custom among men in China and offering cigarettes to somebody is a sign of respect and friendliness. Even though China prohibited smoking in many public areas in 2010, enforcement is still rare and smoking is still usually considered socially acceptable virtually anywhere and any time. Many foreigners complain about a lack of consideration when people smoke in China and their failure to ask permission to smoke. However, this needs to be seen in perspective of well-established smoking traditions in the country. In China, the consumption of alcohol plays a considerably important role in social settings and is considered a social lubricant. Alcohol is consumed mostly over dinner with family, friends, colleagues, and business partners. Nowadays a growing number of young city people also meet in cafes, pubs, and night clubs for socialising over drinks.

The drinking officially begins after the host offers a short toast to everybody. It is considered good manners to return the toast either right away or when a good opportunity arises. Popular toasts in China include toasts to friendship, pledges for cooperation, and the desire to reciprocate the hospitality one is offered.

The simple toast “ganbei” (干杯, meaning “dry cups” or bottoms up) is also used very frequently, but the meaning is actually much closer to “cheers” in the English language and people do not necessarily empty their glass after this toast. If there are too many people to toast to, you can also tap the bottom of your glass on the table to express toasting to everybody present. When pouring drinks, it is considered good etiquette to first fill the cups of all the other people drinking with you.
Chinese spirits (白酒, baijiu) often have an alcohol content of 50% to 60%, so make sure not to drink too much too rapidly. Beer is often the drink of choice in China, though grape wine (domestic produced as well as imported) is rapidly growing in popularity. There are also countless regional drinks such as the famed shaoxingjiu (绍兴酒).

Minorities often drink their own distinctive alcoholic beverages such as mijiu (米酒, rice wine) among many of the south-western minority people and chhaang (a fermented beer-type beverage based on barley, millet or rice) among the Tibetan communities. If you like to try something altogether different, you can also sample the many sorts of Chinese medicinal wine (药酒, yaojiu) that you can find in markets and restaurants. If you feel you have had enough alcohol, make it a point to indicate this politely to your host or otherwise the drinks might just continue coming your way.

3. How do I get to know other people?

The people of China are very hospitable, especially towards foreigners. They are always keen to strike up a conversation with you and make new friends. Thus getting to know other people in China should probably be the easiest part of your stay. Either by sharing a flat, socialising with colleagues at work, clubbing, cultural events or, for example, a movie-evening at an embassy, you will get to know a lot of interesting, open-minded people from almost all over the world – and especially from China – in a really short time. In China it is astonishingly easy for foreigners to meet “important” people and to broaden your network. In any case, you will live in a Chinese neighbourhood and will have plenty of opportunities to get to know people.
Based on the experience of most foreigners in China it is possible to say that you will be able to meet new people nearly every day. Therefore make sure that you have enough space in your pocket for the dozens of business cards you will get from them.

4. What about languages in China?

China has a rich linguistic landscape. The language that clearly dominates all the others, however, is what is generally referred to as Mandarin Chinese in English language. Putonghua (普通话, Standard Speech) is originally based on the language spoken in Beijing. Other important Chinese languages include Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghai dialect), and Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese). Even in major Chinese cities, English-speakers in hospitals, police stations, etc. are still very rare and among the general population, speakers of English are even less common.

Mandarin Chinese is spoken by about one-fifth of the world population. It is used in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Macau, the Philippines, the United States of America, Australia, and other regions with large Chinese communities. While there is a high level of internal diversity in spoken Chinese, Mandarin (Putonghua / Guoyu / Huayu / Hanyu) is very standardised and will be understood by about 1.3 billion people worldwide. It is used as a lingua franca among Chinese people in social settings, in the media, as well as for instruction in schools.

All spoken varieties of Chinese use one common writing system referred to as Zhongwen, which ensures a shared cultural and linguistic heritage across the various forms of Chinese language. Chinese characters (Hanzi) are written within imaginary rectangular blocks, traditionally arranged in vertical columns, read from top to bottom down a column, and right to left across columns.
Depending on where you go, learning the local language might be an alternative to studying Mandarin, such as Cantonese (广东话, guangdonghua) in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, or Tibetan languages if you go to Tibetan-dominated areas. But for most of China, learning Mandarin will clearly be the best choice as it functions as the country’s lingua franca.

Language Must, a division of Knowledge Must, offers you the perfect opportunity to study China’s languages. You will get to know the Chinese culture from a totally different perspective, widen your career choices, and express your thoughts more clearly. With our enjoyable and result-oriented language training programmes you will develop practical language skills. The innovative range of individual and group trainings teaches you the expressions for your chosen destination and soon you will realise that learning the local language means gaining access to the life world of the locals. Please visit www.language-must.com to learn more about our language offerings.

5. Why should I learn Chinese?

“一分耕耘, 一分收获” (yi fen gengyun, yi fen shouhuo)
“If one does not plow, there will be no harvest.”

- Chinese Proverb

There are many good reasons for learning Chinese language:

- First of all, Chinese is spoken by more people than any other language in the world. In fact, studying Chinese will allow you to converse with more than one-fifth of our planet’s population.
- China plays an increasingly major role in world affairs, not least due to its burgeoning economy. Accordingly job opportunities in various fields, such as business, government, international relations, IT, tourism, education, among many others, emerge rapidly. Organisations are looking for people who can speak Chinese and operate successfully in a Chinese cultural context.
- The study of the Chinese language opens the way to different important fields such as Chinese politics, economy, history, or archaeology. But to study Chinese ultimately means to study a culture, a people. At the heart of Chinese culture is its rich heritage of traditions accumulated over thousands of years, from Confucianism to Chan Buddhism, martial arts to cuisine.
- Chinese culture also had and still has an enormous influence on East and Southeast Asian nations. Chinese culture has also greatly inspired the Western world through the writings of
Chinese is not as difficult of a language as people tend to think. Especially reaching the key goal of learning any new language - i.e. being able to converse with a wide range of people - can be achieved with a reasonable amount of effort.

The grammatical structure of Chinese is not only logical, but also pragmatic and manageable. For example, different to Hindustani, German, or English, Chinese has no verb conjugation (i.e., tense inflection) and no noun declension (e.g., gender and number distinctions).

While writing Chinese proves to be the major hurdle for most students, its unique ideographic writing system at the same time provides visual comprehensibility.

Languages within the Chinese sphere of cultural influence also have a very large number of loanwords from Chinese. Fifty per cent or more of Korean vocabulary is of Chinese origin and the influence on Japanese and Vietnamese has been very extensive, too. Chinese has also lent a great deal of many grammatical features to these and other neighbouring languages. Moreover, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese share a corpus of terms describing modern terminology, in parallel to a similar corpus of terms built from Greco-Latin terms shared among European languages.

Chinese language is also increasingly used outside of the Sinosphere. For example, it allows one to communicate with the growing Chinese diaspora all over the world.

Learning Chinese is an extraordinary experience through which you can immerse yourself in one of the world’s oldest and at the same time most forward looking cultures. Whatever your particular objectives, studying Chinese will be an immensely rewarding experience for you.

Each year more and more students around the world succeed in learning Chinese. If they all can learn it, so can you!

6. What should I DO/DON’T do?

- DO be patient when things take more time than you are used to.
- DO get in touch with the locals to learn more about China.
- DO show an interest in the people around you.
- DO act carefully with intermediaries working on a commission basis for hotels, shops, and travel agencies.
- DO put up a token friendly argument when it comes to who pays for purchases or bills at restaurants. This is considered good etiquette in China.
Work Guide China

- **DO** be on time. Although Chinese may sometimes not be punctual, they will probably expect a foreign guest to be on time.
- **DO** keep in mind that Chinese hospitality obliges hosts to go out of their way to fulfil your requests, even if this means a strong inconvenience to them. It is your reciprocal obligation as a guest to take care of not being too heavy of a burden.
- **DO** respect the diverse customs of local ethnic groups (often vastly different from the Chinese mainstream).

- **DON’T** show frustration or anger in public.
- **DON’T** shy away from approaching or talking to people when you have a question.
- **DON’T** drive home at night time with people you don’t know or you just recently met, especially if you are a woman.
- **DON’T** voice any opinions publicly that are contrary to China’s laws and code of ethics and morals.

**7. How to blend in when visiting China?**

Whether you backpack through rural areas or journey in royal style, blending in when visiting China is key to make the most out of your experience, be it in terms of enjoyment or learning. Local people generally are highly appreciative of visitors who take a genuine interest in their culture. Make an effort to reach out to them. Take a few lessons from the locals and make yourself at home!

- Do research on your destination (background info on the culture as well as what is currently going on)
• Read up on the history of your destination (understand where the things you will see are coming from and how they came about)
• Talk to anyone in your personal network who travelled there (learn about the best and worst experiences and develop a feel for your destination)
• Learn key phrases in the language of your destination (make yourself understood and connect to the people)
• Absorb the culture using all five senses (listen to the symphony of sounds, watch the kaleidoscope of colours, feel the fabrics, smell the spices, and taste the delicacies)
• Observe carefully how locals eat, talk, move, and work (copy their behaviour and experiment with gestures)
• Dress according to local standards (respect sensibilities and show your cultural sensitivity)
• Buy local products (handy tools as well as works of artisanship)
• Explore local delicacies (home grown produce and regional flavours)
• Choose local lodgings (be it a comfortable traditional-style boutique hotel or a cosy homestay)
• Take local transportation (such as three-wheelers in small towns and subways in modern cities)
• Have the courage to get lost (follow your instincts and travel beyond the trodden paths)
• Learn from insiders (eccentric taxi drivers or hipsters in stylish coffee houses, all can be great sources of information)
• Find the places popular with locals (might be a hole-in-the-wall food joint or a fancy lounge cafe)
• Make local friends (delve right into the local community and profit from expert tips)
• Stay away from what you know from home (multinational restaurant chains as well as big brands)
• Dare yourself to try things you have never done before (be prepared to embark on a journey to the unknown, immerse yourself, and broaden your horizons)
8. Why immerse yourself in Chinese culture?

“Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.”

- Jawaharlal Nehru

Foreign expat life in China can often be very isolating due to the considerable linguistic and cultural barriers. One survey made in China put the percentage of expats who return to their home countries earlier than planned at a staggering 70%. This makes developing realistic expectations and preparing for a successful cultural immersion even more important. Immersing yourself in the local social environment will make your adjustment in the country far more successful.

Successful immersion in the Chinese cultural environment is not mainly associated with education, type of employment, salaries or one’s particular location in China. The most important variables are related to one’s social environment, especially whether one has a long-term relationship with a local Chinese and the percentage of Chinese people among one’s friends in the country. Additionally, if you have no intention of learning any Chinese language at all, you are sure to face a rough time in the country.

Immersing yourself in another culture is arguably one of the most rewarding efforts a human can undertake. Imagine yourself being a child again – comparably steep is the learning curve. By immersing yourself in another culture, you multiply your opportunities. By successfully functioning in a strange environment and under a different set of ground rules from those found in your own culture you tremendously expand your experience. It is for those individuals who have the courage and energy to make the most out of it.

- Opportunity to broaden your professional experience:
  - Build up a powerful CV
  - Gain exposure to different work streams
  - Prepare for global developments
  - Make more money
- Great way to network
- Endless career opportunities

- Experience a life in a different culture:
  - Fulfil your personal interests in another culture
  - Satisfy your curiosity and sense of adventure
  - Look for new challenges or simply a change

- Discover yourself:
  - Deeper awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
  - Increased self-confidence
  - Train your resilience

- See things from another point of view:
  - Opportunity to increase cultural knowledge
  - Develop your own intercultural competencies for operating internationally
  - Heightened knowledge of effective approaches to other human beings
  - Broaden global perspectives
  - Acquire a new vision

9. What are the obstacles to cultural immersion?

“Problems become opportunities if the right people come together”

Robert South

An alien cultural setting can be extremely demanding. You will have to communicate in a new language while finding new, culturally appropriate strategies to seek out interactions. What is common to one culture may seem strange, counterintuitive or appalling to another. Language barriers and cultural differences will move you beyond your comfort zone and might result in feeling isolated and frustrated. However, by overcoming the following obstacles you will create borderless opportunities for yourself.

- Fear of:
  - The "other"
  - The "unknown"
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- Physical safety
- Diseases
- Nutrition problems
- Being alone
- Making mistakes
- Loss of face
- Leaving behind family, friends, job, and security
- Loss of identity
- Not being able to settle back to one’s own culture

- Hardships:
  - Stress, frustration, and anxiety
  - Unwillingness to change
  - Lethargy
  - Inconvenience

- Constraints:
  - Bureaucratic hurdles
  - Finances
  - Limited time

10. What is required to immerse yourself successfully?

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

- Thomas Edison

Success comes naturally when you realise your opportunities. In fact, your opportunities start to multiply as you seize them. To be able to pursue your desire and reach out to other cultures, tenacity and resilience are indispensable. If you bring along courage and flexibility, then you can prepare yourself for this challenge. Your fear will start to melt as soon as you take action towards a goal you really want.

- Motivation:
  - Determination to pursue your particular goals
  - Awareness of the unique chance
Eagerness to learn  
Curiosity to engage on a journey of knowledge discovery  
Will to go beyond your comfort zone  
Resoluteness to keep striving to immerse yourself further and further  
Courage  
Audacity to experiment  
Resilience to deal with inevitable setbacks

- Respect:  
  Willing to engage other cultures and participate in them  
  Acceptance of other customs and traditions  
  Critical reflection on your own culture  
  Communicative awareness  
  Willingness to question yourself, make compromises, adapt, and integrate  
  Behavioural flexibility  
  Tolerance of ambiguity  
  Ability to deal with ambiguous situations constructively  
  Appreciation for otherness  
  Empathy

- Commitment:  
  Time  
  Patience  
  Open eyes and an open mind to see and comprehend differences  
  Finances

11. How to deal with culture shock?

Cultures entail differences in perspectives. They can be perceived as the personal baggage one brings into any situation. Since culture constitutes the cornerstone of our identities, that is who we think we are, the ways we make meaning, what is important to us and how, it is also a key source of conflicts between people. One of the detrimental outcomes is culture shock. It can profoundly affect a person, especially when they are living in another country for a long period of time, which is also referred to as “culture stress”.
Culture shock and stress often result when an individual tries to work and live outside of their regular cultural context. Symptoms, including low self-esteem, ineffective work, and depression, are often denied or attributed to different causes. Ultimately only cultural immersion alleviates these symptoms, but this can be difficult to achieve without adequate study, training, exposure, and application.

A little cultural knowledge goes a long way. This truism however does not imply that a few tips here and anecdotes there, and a couple of pleasant exercises thrown in, do provide an effective method to learn about other cultures. Precise and relevant knowledge is needed to adapt and learn quickly when working in or with the target culture. Cultural immersion as simply being amongst people of another culture, with knowledge of local culture and language following naturally, appears rather naive. To successfully immerse yourself in another culture you need to develop cultural fluency, i.e. not only knowing, but doing the right things at the right time. In fact, virtually all foreigners visiting China have to deal with some form of culture shock one time or another. It is of utmost importance for you to learn to deal with it. How to deal with culture shock on a practical level is very individualistic – there are no cookbook recipes.

However, you might try some of the following pragmatic strategies:

- Learn to differentiate between people. Rather than just perceiving them as “Chinese” distinguish according to their specific origin, gender, age, behavioural patterns, dress, and so on.
- Find a safe-haven, which could be a coffee shop or a place with a beautiful view that gets you away from the crowds.
- Find places where you feel comfortable.
- Talk about your experiences. This will help you to deal with all the crazy things that will happen to you!
- Exchange your experiences with other international visitors in China. This will make you learn from other people’s experiences and helps you to let off steam.
- Finally, maybe the most important advise: try to take things with humour! In fact, once you make the most out of it, the prevalent diversity in China will keep you entertained!

Never lose your respect towards the locals in general – however weird you might perceive their behaviour. But this does not mean that you should tolerate everything. In fact, never shy away from
acting firmly. If you feel your privacy invaded, then get your point across. Try to experiment what strategies work best for you.

Ancient scholars already highlighted the importance of experiential education. For example, the Chinese sage Confucius is often quoted as: “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand”. Only personal experience through all senses results in a sustainable understanding of other cultures. Learning by doing is the ultimate in intercultural learning!

12. What are specific gender issues I should pay attention to?

“真正的男女平等, 只有在整个社会的社会主义改造过程中才能实现”
(zhenzheng de nannv pingdeng, zhi you zai zhengge shehui de shehuizhuyi gaizao zhong cai neng shixian)
“Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole.”

- Mao Zedong

Even though China has undergone revolutionary changes, not least due to its communist past, the country is still very traditional in many ways, including gender relations in society. China’s gender issues are diverse and particularly dependent on location and community, as modern city life can be greatly different from countryside life and different ethnic communities across the country have different customs and practices.

Generally speaking, over the past century the situation of women in China has improved significantly. Women have been allowed greater access to education and thus to employment, and as such their roles in schools and the workplace are more culturally accepted and likewise expected. China’s women now make up about half of all university students and increasingly push into top management positions in the country.

Rural areas tend to be more conservative and often harbour a deeper connection to religion or traditional beliefs. Beliefs and customs are different in each region, so it is important to be aware of these and the social expectations associated with each. Gender relations greatly vary between Shanghai, for instance, and a traditional village in Xinjiang, where Muslims are in the majority. Outside
of the larger cities, it is unusual for people of the opposite sex to touch each other in public. This includes even married couples, who generally refrain from public displays of affection.

Historically, China exhibited a tendency to prefer the bearing of male children. Male offspring were considered the carriers of family lineage and had greater opportunity for bringing wealth and prestige to a family. Families without a son feared poverty and neglect in their communities and were limited in their avenues to obtain wealth. Since in marriage a women would become part of her husband’s family, a son’s duty was to take care of his parents in their old age and so represented directly the family’s social security.

An example of the traditional way of thinking can be found in the ancient “Book of Songs” (1,000-700 BCE):

“When a son is born,
Let him sleep on the bed,
Clothe him with fine clothes,
And give him jade to play...
When a daughter is born,
Let her sleep on the ground,
Wrap her in common wrappings,
And give broken tiles to play…”

China’s sex ratio was still fairly unchanging and within a “normal range” through the 1960s and 1970s, but the situation worsened quickly with the institution of the One-Child Policy in 1979. Using illegal prenatal sex-determination techniques many families opted for sex-selective abortions and practiced female infanticide to ensure their one child was a son. As a result of this growing imbalance, there has been an increase in kidnapping and sex trafficking, as well as marriage fraud. Other consequences are more obvious. Men are unable to find wives and an increasing number of bachelor villages can be found across the country. This imbalance also strongly affects the way men and women consider marriage and relationships.

In the main cities, dating has become a part of the classic way to get a boyfriend or a girlfriend but has not spread much to the countryside yet. Traditionally, a Chinese woman is looking at the man’s age, educational level, earning potential, overall personality, and ability to provide for her and her family, in order to choose the right husband.
It would be unusual for many Chinese women to agree to spend time with a man in anything but a group setting, unless she is expecting him to take her as a future spouse. So if you have the desire to start a relationship with a Chinese person, pay attention to all the characteristics of Chinese relationships and try to adapt your behaviour as much as possible. It is always wise as a guest in China to act responsibly and do your best to the respect social norms.

As a final note, gender issues particular to China do not necessarily carry over to foreign women in China, who are often seen to exist outside the traditional model and society. Gender may take a second role to nationality when working in China, and one’s “foreignness” may be more emphasised than gender differences.
1. How can I spend my leisure time?

China has a wide range of cuisines and eating out with friends continues to be China’s most popular leisure activity. In the 1990s discotheques, karaoke halls, and bars became popular nightlife venues for the younger generation. China has not turned back since. Now bars have become popular venues for a wide range of activities such as live music concerts, business networking events, and literature readings. At the same time, traditional Chinese activities are very abundant, whether you are interested in watching Chinese opera in an authentic tea house setting or listening to an impromptu performance of Chinese traditional music in the many parks around town.

Local expat magazines and websites in your city of residence will carry events that might be interesting for you. An excellent resource for activities is also the Chinese website Douban.com. Besides that, you will hear about a lot of events by word of mouth and never will have to worry what to do and whom to go with.

But also outside of the cities China has a very lively cultural scene. If you are willing to adjust a little bit, you will be able to make the most of the local festivities you will likely encounter. Ask around to learn about things that are happening. Often you will end up being a guest of honour at a marriage or shaking a leg during some lively celebrations.

Even if you are living in one of the big cities, make it a point to visit the surrounding rural areas. You will be stunned by the many natural marvels and genuine people you are going to meet there. Do not feel intimidated by their traditions. Chinese tend to be very curious by nature. Your visit to the most far-off places will generally not be perceived as an intrusion – quite the contrary. People will seize the opportunity and pour all their curiosity on you!
Along with economic development and social evolution in both developed and developing countries, leisure activities have become more important and diverse than ever. Relaxing after long and strenuous working hours and the other obligations of daily life is now a necessity. The "need to escape" is enjoyed in different ways across cultures and is closely related to daily lifestyles, working life, and cultural patterns. As Chinese society has experienced great changes over the last few decades, leisure activities have also developed a lot. I have had the opportunity to observe these evolutions in China and explore Western and Chinese views on this issue. The following is an interview conducted with David Ritter, a 27 year old American male who has been living in China for two and a half years, and Yang Qi, a 25 year old Chinese male who studied in Australia for six years but has since returned to Chengdu. Below is a transcript of our discussions about Chinese leisure activities.

KM: What can you tell me about how Chinese people like to spend their leisure time?

Yang Qi: Leisure means what people are doing during their free time for me. Chinese people want leisure activities to be sporty and healthy. More and more people are doing sports because they have more opportunities to do it and they are also more willing to do it. Doing sports is getting more and more popular, especially team sports, in different ways. First of all, it is a means to connect socially.

Another reason is that Chinese people want to show their social status through leisure. For example playing tennis and golf means you have enough time and more money to play and enjoy a more luxurious life than other people. Finally the young generation wants to show its difference and young spirit when they practice rock climbing, sky-diving, BMX, skateboarding, etc. These sports are becoming popular among young people because having a hobby that was introduced recently from
Western countries means “being different”. The sport industry is changing and there are more infrastructures that enable people to practice sport.

**David Ritter:** Well it’s different from American leisure. Recently there was a holiday in China. You know on holidays Chinese people might find a place to go, visit some of the famous sites and so many people go to the same sites! But I think… My experience of Chinese famous sites is this: that they are more interested in providing entertainment than preserving historical value and some of their treasured places including the Great Wall, for instance, in Badaling. And I think from the perspective of someone who is from America, a country that doesn’t have a lot of history, we value “historical purity” very highly. So you now have one difference.

Another thing that is different about leisure in China is they are less interested in sports I think, than we are in America. So in that regard, a lot of their leisure activities revolve around eating food, going to bars or to dance clubs. They don’t do house parties as often as we do in America. House parties are less popular, maybe because more Chinese people live with their family. But I think in term of basic weekend leisure, I think it’s quite similar: going to bars, going to dance clubs, going out to have dinner with your friends, sometimes going to see a movie or even going to a friend’s house for dinner. I think all these things are pretty much the same, pretty similar. And I think the Chinese people are very easy going, fun to hang out with, they like to have a good time, they have a good sense of humour.

One of the differences in Chinese leisure activities that I have also noticed in my few years here relates to differences in leisure habits for men and women. My first time in China, in 2008, I was surprised to find in many places (particularly smaller, more traditional cities) that women were discouraged from drinking and smoking in public places. I believe this notion has changed quite a lot in the last few years, with men and women in the younger generation being much more open minded about these and other issues.

**KM:** You are only talking about sports, Yang Qi. Does leisure only include sports?

**Yang Qi:** I don’t know what about in France but in Australia, for example, leisure is broader than sports. Leisure includes sports and also the daily life that may be having just a free time a few days without doing anything with your family on a beach, or living in a tent, that is cool leisure, or just spending several hours walking along the beach and going swimming. This is different from China because in China, especially in Sichuan Province, leisure is pretty much nothing else than sports. Apart from sports there isn’t anything left but there are reasons for that.
In Australia, probably because they are surrounded by the ocean, they have more opportunities to enjoy the ocean and take it as a part of their leisure life. But in Sichuan, there are only mountains so probably going hiking is leisure but hiking is not as relaxing as "normal" leisure. It’s not the most relaxed kind of leisure. So that’s probably why in Sichuan, leisure is closely connected to sports. The definition of leisure is different according to the place you live. For example in Hainan, people prefer water activities, in Beijing, people prefer snow skiing and so on.

**KM:** You told me that apart from sports there is not much left, but what is left though?

**Yang Qi:** What is left, well… majiang! They play majiang you know. I think my definition of leisure is roughly about using one’s time to do what you want to do for your body and your soul to get relaxed from work. Because work can be tiring, right? So during their free time what would they do: they would play majiang for the whole day, drink tea and apart from that they can do sports or sleep.

So in a way leisure life in Sichuan is more passive, quieter – Sichuanese people are not moving a lot. This is why Sichuanese people are skinnier than people in the north of China. This is a good example of how life patterns influence people’s body.

**KM:** You think it is different from Beijing?

**Yang Qi:** Yes, there is a huge difference. Because of historical reasons first. Sichuan has been known as a very relaxed and slow paced environment in China but Beijing has never been as relaxing as Sichuan Province in Chinese history. And this is closely related to geographical reasons. Sichuan is surrounded by mountains and has been protected in a way. So people don’t want to go out or at least it’s not easy for them to go out, especially in old times. But in Beijing there is not any natural element to protect them, especially between Beijing and Mongolia. So they cannot be quiet or passive. So people in Beijing have to fight against the Mongolians and their lifestyle has thus been determined by both geographical and historical reasons. So what Beijing people do during their leisure time, well…I know! They go to work and after work they are jammed on the road for three hours because of the bad traffic and then get home.

**KM:** You said leisure is mostly sports, playing majiang and sleeping. What about going to a restaurant or a bar? How is it now for most Chinese people?
Yang Qi: Compared to the first group I mentioned it’s still a small part because not many people go to bars to drink. But yes, some people do it. It’s a whole new way of interacting with other people for them. Before they didn’t have such a place that gave them the opportunity to interact with other boys and girls in that way. Over the last 10 or 20 years the pub and bar culture has been introduced in China and the Chinese young generation has immediately accepted it and is enjoying it.

KM: Going to the restaurant with friends is something new also?

Yang Qi: No, I mean going to the pub is a new habit. Going to the restaurant remains Chinese leisure and this hasn’t changed for ages. It is the same in every country around the world.

KM: So in your opinion leisure is just the same in China as in the rest of the world?

Yang Qi: No there are some differences. Typical Chinese leisure would rather be drinking tea, playing Majiang or go to see traditional Chinese opera, while drinking in a pub is a custom coming from abroad.

KM: What about travelling? More and more Chinese people are travelling around China or around the world. Do you consider travelling as Chinese people’s leisure?

Yang Qi: Yes. People want to discover new things, have new experiences. They have money and free time so they are just eager to discover the world.

KM: What was leisure like traditionally in China in your opinion?

Yang Qi: Traditional leisure has nothing to do with sports. In the past, traditional leisure was already theatre, majiang, drinking tea, painting, writing poems and going to some places to get inspiration, having a drink in a restaurant, going whoring.

KM: So we could say that traditional leisure hasn’t changed. What is different nowadays is just the fact that there are some new customs coming from abroad. Is that right?
Yang Qi: Yes, like in every country. And the technology is helping each generation to enjoy a more advanced life. People are still considering cooking as leisure, as in France, but the cooking instruments are changing in terms of safety and effectiveness. People are still going to the opera in Italy, but they could choose to watch it from the Internet. And finally, people are still performing arts all around the world, but computers have changed it a lot.

KM: David, what is your opinion on these questions?

David Ritter: Well I agree with a lot of what Yang Qi said. I think it’s true indeed that Chinese people are becoming more interested in sports and health related activities but I don’t think that sports in general are popular in China. Gyms for example are becoming popular in China, working out, exercising, but in my circle of friends in China I don’t see a lot of people spending time, participating in or going to be a spectator for team sports, at all.

In my experience in China the vast majority of people are not athletic, not interested in sports. Maybe they play ping pong, maybe they go to the gym, or go running and do some exercise. But as an American, coming from a country where we are crazy about sports, China for me is not interested in sports at all. You know they were really interested in the world cup but I have never seen anybody going to a soccer game in Chengdu – I never see anybody playing soccer in Chengdu. They love the NBA, but I rarely see people playing basketball. So it exists but I just don’t think that it is really widespread.

Another thing that I agree with is when Yang Qi talks about participating in sporting events as a symbol. That is true. People who have enough money in China and enough time will play golf or tennis or racquetball, one of these kinds of “status sports”. Definitely, people will do that as a status symbol. But I’m not sure that people doing something for a status symbol qualifies to make it an overall leisure activity in China. I think maybe slowly that will change. And of course he mentioned majiang. Majiang is certainly a major leisure activity, not only in Sichuan like he mentioned, but in other places in China that I visited – but it is particularly big in Sichuan.

One thing he said that I definitely agree with is also that technology has impacted leisure activities. I think that is true in any country. I mean the way that we meet friends, the way that we meet girlfriends and boyfriends, the way that we participate in activities that are interesting for us like our hobbies is so influenced nowadays by the Internet, by social networking websites, mainly by those technologies but
even by cell phones and other technologies, so I think that I totally agree with him: technology has had a big impact on leisure activities in China.

**KM:** What kind of place is the most representative of modern Chinese leisure in your opinion?

**Yang Qi:** Karaoke, tennis court, golf course.

**David Ritter:** KTV!

**KM:** Could you choose one sentence or one word to illustrate Chinese leisure today?

**Yang Qi:** Nowadays leisure is doing a great job in releasing China’s enormous pressure in daily life.

**David Ritter:** Chinese leisure is urban.

2. **What about travelling in China?**

“千里之行，始于足下” (*qian li zhi xing, shi yu zu xia*)

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

- Laozi

No visit to China would be complete without the experience of travelling and exploring the beauty of this extremely diverse country. From mountaintop Buddhist pagodas shrouded in fog to the neon facades of Shanghai’s skyscrapers, China’s diversity will offer amazing sights for you – whatever your interests. Since China’s opening to foreigners in the 1980s it is getting easier to travel independently around the country. Walking along a bustling street in
Beijing or Shanghai, trekking along the Great Wall or climbing one of the Chinese holy mountains are all amazing experiences for foreigners coming to China.

Travelling around China and discovering its ancient civilisation remains unforgettable, even as the country changes at a rapid pace with cars substituting bicycles and skyscrapers mushrooming where there once were agricultural fields. Despite the rapidly developing economy, it is still easy to find cheap accommodation and food.

On the one hand travelling by train or bus is very inexpensive, but on the other hand it can be very time consuming taking China’s huge dimensions into account. Air travel is a faster and still affordable way to travel around the country. Besides, you should always plan in a couple of weeks for travelling while in China. You can also have many weekend trips to places near your Chinese home. Opportunities are almost infinite!

“Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.”

- Miriam Beard

Journeys to China can be complex and challenging. If any tourist destination asks for support in logistics, knowledge of culture, local connections, and insightful guides, it must be China. At the same time, the extra amount of support and attention needed is highly affordable in China.

With our division Travel Must, we at Knowledge Must also offer unique travel services. All our trips are tailored according to your individual interests and will take you to places far beyond the usual tourist spots picked out of a travel guidebook. Years of experience, proven logistical capabilities, and exceptional knowledge of the most remote areas and cultures make Travel Must the ideal partner to consult you on possible destinations and activities, book your accommodation and transport, and
conduct adventurous expeditions. All you have to do is enjoy your trip and have the time of your life. For further inspiration please have a look at: www.travel-must.com.

3. What about transport in China?

China has given priority to developing its railways, but today huge road and highway construction projects are in progress across the country and every year new airports are opening up. The state of China’s transport infrastructures tends to vary widely according to locations. While remote, rural areas are still largely dependant on traditional means of transport, some of the world’s most modern subway systems are being built in China’s leading cities.

Travelling by plane is also becoming more and more convenient with the rise in the number and quality of airport facilities. Literally dozens of airline companies operate in China. Domestic flights in China are very inexpensive, although prices rise during the major holidays and sometimes it is even difficult to book a seat at all during this time.

The quality of public transportation network has improved a lot over the past few years but enjoying being given a lift in a private car or in a taxi is a pleasure that travellers can afford. It is even recommended when you are driving across amazing landscapes and want to stop for pictures regularly or when you want to save time. Buses are still the major public transportation means in all large cities of China.

Buses in urban areas normally operate from very early in the morning to somewhere between 7 and 9 pm depending on the popularity of the particular bus line as well as the size of the city.

In China, taxi fares are calculated on the basis of distance travelled and time spent waiting and in traffic jams. When entering the taxi just make sure that the taximeter is switched on, but most drivers do so automatically anyway. You might also like to have a ride in one of the fast disappearing motorized pedi-cabs called San Lun Che, which are analogous to the famed auto-rickshaws of South and South-East Asia. Don’t forget to fix the price in advance – you don’t want to get a bad surprise at the other end.
China has excellent, yet inexpensive, public transport and even taxi rides are quite reasonably-priced:

• Short metro ride: 3 RMB
• Taxi rate per km: around 2 RMB
• City bus: 1 to 2 RMB

The Chinese train network is very extensive and increasingly includes high speed rail services connecting large regional cities. Trains are divided into three classes: hard seat, hard sleeper, and soft sleeper. If you wish to book train tickets, you can go through travel agencies or the hotels you are staying at. Alternatively, the Chinese railways have recently started online sales of tickets.

Pedestrians should exercise utmost caution at all times when crossing roads. Traffic turning right is allowed through a pedestrian green light – never assume that as a pedestrian in China you have the right of way. In Chinese traffic “might is right” is very much the policy. Hitchhiking is still very rare in the country. The general notes of caution exist, but once you have found a free lift, often amazing experiences can be shared with the local people you will meet.

4. What about driving by myself in China?

Please keep in mind that Chinese roads are considered to be among the most dangerous in the world, so great caution is advised when driving. World Health Organisation statistics claim that traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for Chinese between the age of 15 and 45. Renting a car with a driver is very affordable in China and, depending on your objectives, may be a good alternative to driving.

In case you do not have “resident” status in China, you will generally not be allowed to drive in the country and even International Driver’s Permits are not accepted in the country. However, based on your existing driver’s license, the traffic management office responsible for your location of residence can issue you a provisional Chinese driver’s license. Get in touch with them to find out about their particular requirements.

Foreign drivers must try to adapt to Chinese traffic culture. “First is right” is often considered to be the law on Chinese streets, meaning that Chinese drivers have a habit to cut right into traffic flows forcing other vehicles to slow down or even stop. This implies that while driving in China you need to be alert all the time.
Road signs outside the major cities are in Chinese characters only, so when driving by yourself you might get lost easily if you cannot read Chinese language. The poor quality of roads and sometimes reckless driving standards lead to frequent traffic accidents. If you are involved in a serious accident, you may be prevented from leaving the country until the case is resolved.

Electric scooters are very common in Chinese cities nowadays. They are mostly licensed as bicycles and therefore do not require you to apply for a driver’s license. One thing to keep in mind is that electric scooters are very silent and thus collisions with pedestrians are a serious danger. In contrast, motorcycles have been banned in a number of cities.

5. Which places should I visit in China?

“读万卷书不如行万里路” (du wan juan shu bu ru xing wan li lu) 
"Reading ten thousands of books is not as useful as travelling ten thousand miles."
- Chinese Proverb

China is a country of epic proportions. From the wide open and empty panoramas of Tibet to the push and shove of Shanghai, from green paddy fields in the misty hills of the southwest to the scorched vistas of the Central Asian Silk Road, from the spicy dishes of Sichuan to the steaming dumplings of Manchuria – China has it all. China is also a multi-ethnic country. Be it Mongols, Tai or Turkic groups, the diversity of China is stunning. Curator of the world’s oldest continuous civilisation, China will have you bumping into history at every turn. At the same time, China is undergoing a huge commercial and creative upheaval. Some of the world’s most up-to-the-minute cities propel the land on with forward-thinking dynamism.

Whatever attracts you to China, the sheer pace of change visible in every part of Chinese life will ensure that your trip is a unique one. One tip: make it a point to get off the tourist trail at least once. It will often be an experience different altogether.
What you could experience while in China:

- Get to know some of the dozens of ethnic communities in China and experience their way of living and cultures (Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, Yi, Mosuo, Bai, Dai, etc.)
- Find yourself in the largest city square in the world, while about to discover the secrets of the fabled Forbidden City
- Trek along the magnificent Great Wall of China, one of the wonders of the ancient world
- Sleep in a yurt and try Mongolian wrestling, horse riding, and traditional food, while enjoying the company of Mongol families and their unique art of singing in the remote scenery of the Inner Mongolian grasslands
- Explore the mysterious sand dunes of the Taklamakan desert and discover lost cities along the historic Silk Road
- Take amazing pictures in the most populated and up-to-the-minute cities of the world as well as in some of the highest and most breath-taking mountains on earth
- Be completely absorbed in this ancient and remarkable culture by learning some of its arts such as calligraphy, acupuncture or the tea ceremony
- Learn how to prepare Chinese dumplings and other delicious dishes from traditional Chinese chefs
- Learn Kung Fu, Taijiquan, Qigong, and other Chinese arts from true masters in authentic settings
- Reside in a far-off temple, help the monks, and learn about their elaborate religious practices
- Relax while experiencing a traditional Chinese medical treatment at one of the famous Chinese Spas
- Try the famous local delicacies of each city in China, such as Beijing Roast Duck, Canton Dimsum, or Chongqing Hotpot
- Stroll around the historic Shanghai Bund and marvel at the 21st century skyline in Pudong across the river
- On Hainan Island, enjoy the beautiful beaches and amazing scenery in its interior throughout the year
- Find outstanding internship, volunteer, and job opportunities across the country

Wherever you choose to go, please pay extra attention when choosing your travel service providers. At Knowledge Must’s division Travel Must (www.travel-must.com) we make it a point to minimise the negative environmental impacts caused by your visit and make positive contributions to the local communities that make your experience in China so special. This way you will not only have a great trip, but you will also be investing in a better future for the people you will meet along the way.
While travel around the country itself is seldom problematic, it would be wrong to pretend that it is an entirely easy matter to penetrate modern China. We invite you to engage China with our support. Get to know the Chinese!

6. What can I study next to working in China?

“十年树木, 百年树人” (shi nian shu mu, bai nian shu ren)
“Grow trees for ten years; grow men for a hundred years.” Meaning: educating people is the key to prosperity.

-In Chinese Proverb

In China you will also have the chance to do courses that are often not even offered in most other countries. The variety of universities, the sheer number of higher education institutions and different regional traditions result in a great diversity of courses. Apart from undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral courses, there are many training and diploma-level institutes that cater to the growing demand for skill-based and vocational education.

Vocational training prepares learners for professions with a focus on practical activities, traditionally non-academic and related to a specific trade or occupation. Whether one trains to become an artisan or a carpenter, vocations generally contain a very high cultural content. Each region has developed and refined its own distinctive vocations, reflecting geographic and historic conditions and people’s needs. Vocations vary in technique and use of materials from region to region depending on the climate, topography, availability of materials, social environment, and so on.

The legacy of these crafts is as unique and diverse as Chinese culture itself. Traditional crafts have been passed down to the artisans of today, who incorporate modern ideas and production methods into their work. Vocational trainings are an excellent vehicle for understanding culture. We can learn much about cultures through the tools, techniques, and products they create.
Besides conventional educational institutes, you might also be interested to study with traditional masters in genuine settings. There is so much to enjoy about and learn from the activities of other cultures. Whether you are interested in philosophy or religion, cuisine or music, China will have the right opportunity for you. Sampling the diversity of local food is one of the most straightforward ways of learning about a culture. Learning to prepare the foods by yourself yet goes another step towards developing a deeper understanding.

An abundance of regular courses can be found, whether you want to learn Mandarin Chinese or another of the many languages in China, Chinese cuisine, Chinese martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, Feng Shui, calligraphy, Chinese painting or how to play a traditional Chinese musical instrument. To give you an idea about the type of activities that you could pursue in China, have a look at the following examples:

- Martial arts
- Cuisine
- Chinese art (such as paper cutting and painting)
- Chinese traditional medicine
- Chinese massage techniques
- Tea ceremony
- Music
- Drama
- Religion
- Philosophy

Knowledge Must’s division Training Must gives you the opportunity to learn a wide range of vocations from traditional musical instrument like guqin to worldwide popular Kung Fu. Learn more from our website [www.training-must.com](http://www.training-must.com) and get in touch with us.
Kung fu (功夫, in Mandarin Chinese pronounced as gong fu), the popular term for Chinese martial arts, is a notion that conjures up mystical masters living in misty mountains and awe-inspiring artistic movements. Even in the rapidly modernising China of today one can find this cliché real and alive. One protector of this treasure trove of traditional Chinese culture is Master Li Quan (师傅李全). Born in Heilongjiang Province in the far north-eastern reaches of China, Master Li Quan has been a student and teacher of Chinese kung fu for more than 25 years.

When he was a little boy, he was already fascinated by kung fu. His grandfather was a man of the military and, despite his old age, was very fit and agile, continuously exercising his body. His grandfather’s kung fu movements appeared to little Li Quan as the most perfect dancing in the world. Li Quan imitated his kicks and punches and, under his grandfather’s instruction and guidance, he learned the basic skills by age 10. He then joined the local kung fu community and was taught by more professional kung fu masters.

At that time, the only game little Li Quan really took an interest in was fighting. While others were playing basketball or football, he was always scuffling and wrestling with someone. One evening, when he was fighting with another kid, he accidentally used his kung fu skill to attack him so that the kid got hurt. Li Quan’s parents were very angry and banned him from continuing his training.

So, secretly, Li Quan began to train all by himself. He made a punching bag so heavy that he was barely able to lift it up the tree. After school, the first thing he did was to take it out from its hiding place, hit it 200 times, and bury it under the hay afterwards. His fist soon got so hard that nobody in his school dared to challenge it.
When he was 14, a supposedly stronger boy in school emerged who nobody dared to fight. Li Quan took up the challenge and beat him. But when he turned his back and left him lying on the ground, the other boy grabbed his legs from behind. Li Quan fell over and broke his arm. He had to stay for weeks in hospital and tragically missed the exam that would have allowed him to pursue higher education.

When he came out of hospital he became even more secretive in his exercise regime. He practiced when other people were sleeping, sneaking into the horse stable and spreading a piece of cloth on the ground to train.

Since he failed to join university, his parents wanted him to learn something practical in order to make a living. In fact, he already had made up his mind to join kung fu school, but he did not dare to tell them. He picked up work at a construction site and from morning to evening he moved bricks and cement. Even though it was very strenuous work, it was a very happy period in his life. Tired at the end of the day he got 11 Chinese yuan in his hand, this meant he was getting closer and closer to fulfilling his dream to enter kung fu school.

He was saving virtually all his income, rather going hungry than spending anything, and after 10 months he already had accumulated 2,000 Chinese yuan. He packed his stuff, left a letter for his family, and then went to kung fu school in Hebei Province. It was the first time he ventured beyond his native place - that year he was 17.

In Hebei he joined the Chinese Wu Shu Academy and by 1991 he already had become Team Captain of the Northeast China Amateur Wu Shu Team. Two years later he moved to Sichuan Province, where he has been residing ever since. First he studied and taught at the Chinese Gong Fu Research Academy in Deyang and then he became a family member of the Dai Shi Men Wu Shu Institute in Hanyuan. Dai Shi Men is lead by Grandmaster Dai Kang, one of the most respected individuals in the world of kung fu in Sichuan.

Studying under Grandmaster Dai Kang, Li Quan soon attained the Master level and started to teach more and more students, including an increasing number of foreigners. He even continued to participate in competitions from time to time, and in 2005 Master Li Quan became Champion in the 78kg weight class of the prestigious San Da Wu Shu Tournament.

In between, Master Li Quan was asked to teach self-defence and martial arts techniques to airport and in-flight security, work as an unarmed bodyguard for highly endangered individuals in hostile environments (having successfully fought off assailants on several spectacular occasions), train
Chinese police in self-defence and apprehension tactics as well as People's Liberation Army troops in hand-to-hand combat - all the while teaching students at his kung fu school. He even managed to graduate with a degree in English language from the distinguished University of Sichuan in his sparse leisure time.

For the Beijing Olympic Games 2008 he was asked to become Head of Security for Olympic Torch Relay across the People's Republic of China. He was made responsible for planning and logistics for the three-month tour across 37 cities. During the Olympics itself, he acted as Security Liaison between Holland House and the Beijing Public Security Bureau, helping to coordinate security for Dutch dignitaries, including the Prince and the Prime Minister.

Beside his great responsibilities in Chinese society, Master Li Quan’s real passion has always been to instil traditional kung fu in his students, whether locals or individuals from other countries. He aptly named his school Kung Fu Family (武道之家), highlighting the family aspect of kung fu practitioners as well as the close bond between master and student (highly influenced by the guru-chela tradition of Indian culture). Chinese kung fu in its true form is grooming students towards the ideal of the “gentleman-scholar-warrior”. This wholesome concept demands a unique combination of fighting skills, virtues, and scholarship.

Among other media, Ya'an Ribao, Sichuan Jingji Ribao, and the South China Morning Post have already been reporting on Master Li Quan’s famed school. It is unique in that Master Li Quan focuses on employing traditional training techniques to bring students closer to the roots of kung fu. The school, located in the San Sheng Xiang area of Chengdu, features all the traditional equipments used in kung fu schools, such as obscure historical weapons, iron circles, stone dumbbells, heavy sandbags, ba gua poles – you name it.

His Kung Fu Family provides a real home for all interested people regardless of their nationality, gender, or creed. However, he makes it a point to instil more than brute force in his students. His is a wholesome approach to Chinese kung fu, which incorporates not only physical exercises, but also meditation techniques, combat strategies, nurturing Qi levels, mental exercises, studying how the body operates, medical knowledge, and learning about herbs and their healing effects.

Master Li Quan invites people from all over the world to learn about traditional Chinese kung fu. If you are determined to get the Qi flowing through your veins, then make sure to join him!
7. Can I do sports in China?

“In general, any form of exercise, if pursued continuously, will help train us in perseverance. Long-distance running is particularly good training in perseverance.”

- Mao Zedong

China has long been associated with martial arts, such as Taijiquan (“shadow boxing”), Qigong (a system of deep breathing exercises), and Kung Fu. In today’s China, however, there large number of other popular sports activities of foreign as well as Chinese origin. Next to martial arts, the most popular sports activities are badminton, football, and table tennis. Ethnic minorities in China have their own unique sports, such as archery, wrestling, and equestrian sports among the Kazakhs, Mongols, and Tibetans.

Recently, residents of larger cities in China have been exploring many alternative sport activities, such as rock climbing, skateboarding, and golf. In winter, some people also have a go at skiing or snowboarding at an increasing number of ski resorts across China. More and more people in China are also joining the fitness trend and enlisting in the rapidly growing numbers of gyms across the country. Big cities have large sports complexes that offer various facilities like swimming pools, tennis and squash courts, football fields, running tracks, etc.

Another very popular activity, particularly for women, is Chinese fitness dancing. Groups of women will commonly form up in lines and dance to music played over a sound system. In many Chinese public spaces you will be able to see them exercising in the mornings and evenings. Ballroom-style dancing and traditional Chinese dances are practiced by some groups, as well.
Another great way to keep mentally agile and having fun is learning to play Chinese chess, Majiang (Mah-jong), local card games or Weiqi (Go). You could teach games popular in your native country to your local Chinese friends, too. Jogging is also becoming increasingly popular in China. It is not exclusively practiced by the younger generation, but the old folks have also jumped on the bandwagon. Either in the morning or at sunset, you will easily find people jogging, mostly on the racetracks of schools and universities as well as in the parks around the cities. Only the very brave try running in the streets in China. You can find the locations of parks and racetracks in your city of residence conveniently on city maps and the Internet, too. If possible opt for the larger parks as some of the smaller parks can get rather crowded.

8. Which websites should I know in China?

The following selection of links gives you an overview of websites you should really know in China. You will be frequently using many of them. Please do get in touch with us if you have further recommendations so that we can incorporate them in our next edition. Also, if you find any broken links, please let us know so that we can fix them.

Search engines:
- Baidu: www.baidu.com
- Google China: www.google.com.hk
- Sogou: www.sogou.com
- Tencent Soso: www.soso.com
- Yahoo China: www.yahoo.cn
- Bing: cn.bing.com

Web portals:
- Sina: www.sina.com.cn
- QQ: www.qq.com
- Sohu: www.sohu.com
- NetEase/163: www.163.com
Microblogging (such as Twitter):
  • Sina Weibo: www.weibo.com

Social networking (such as Facebook):
  • RenRen: www.renren.com

Social review sites:
  • Douban: www.douban.com
  • Dianping: www.dianping.com
  • Koubei: www.koubei.com

Community sites:
  • Tianya: www.tianya.cn
  • Mop: www.mop.com

Online shopping:
  • 360Buy: www.360buy.com
  • DangDang: www.dangdang.com
  • Taobao Tmall: www.tmall.com
  • Joyo Amazon: www.amazon.cn

C2C platform (similar to Ebay):
  • Taobao: www.taobao.com

B2B platform:
  • Alibaba China: china.alibaba.com

Video sites (similar to YouTube):
  • Youku: www.youku.com
  • Tudou: www.tudou.com

Online TV:
  • PPTV: www.pptv.com

Wiki sites:
  • Wikipedia: zh.wikipedia.org
  • Baidu Baike: baike.baidu.com
  • Hudong: www.hudong.com
Classifieds:
- 58.com: www.58.com
- Baixing: www.baixing.com
- Ganji: www.ganji.com

Travel sites:
- Ctrip: www.ctrip.com
- eLong: www.elong.com
- Daodao: www.daodao.com

Maps:
- Google Maps: ditu.google.com
- Baidu Map: map.baidu.com

Job sites:
- 51Job: www.51job.com
- Zhaopin: www.zhaopin.com

News sites:
- iFeng: www.ifeng.com
- Xinhuanet: www.xinhuanet.com
- People: www.people.com.cn
- 163 News: news.163.com
- Sina News: news.sina.com.cn

Property sites:
- Soufun: www.soufun.com
- Anjuke: www.anjuke.com

Popular web mail services in China:
- 163.com Mail: mail.163.com
- 126.com Mail: mail.126.com
- QQ Mail: mail.qq.com
- Yahoo Mail: mail.cn.yahoo.com
- Sina Mail: mail.sina.com.cn
- Sohu Mail: mail.sohu.com

Popular blogging platforms:
- Ozone: gzone.qq.com
- Sina Blog: blog.sina.com.cn
Blogbus: www.blogbus.com
Blogcn: www.blogcn.com
163 Blog: blog.163.com
Baidu Hi: hi.baidu.com

General information on China:
- China.org.chn: www.china.org.cn
- China Times: www.chinatimes.com
- China Today: www.chinatoday.com

Expat-Oriented Websites

Ministry of Tofu: www.ministryoftofu.com (translates interesting Chinese articles into English to make the world more aware about what is going on in the country)

Lost Laowai: www.lostlaowai.com (information and commentary on Chinese affairs)

eChinacities: www.echinacities.com (China-wide expat platform with articles, classifieds, etc.)


In addition to these China-wide expat platforms, many major cities have their own local websites for foreign visitors and residents, such as the excellent www.GoChengdoo.com and www.Chengduliving.com in Chengdu.

9. Where can I find more information on the Internet?

The following selection of links, while not comprehensive, includes a range of useful resources for your stay in China. Choose from the following categories to access the links and get in touch with us if you have further recommendations that we can incorporate in our next edition. Also, if you find any broken links, please let us know so that we can fix them.
Travel Logistics

Embassy World:
Provides a list of contact resources for all of the world’s diplomatic offices, the diplomatic community and the online community.
http://www.embassyworld.com/

Project Visa:
Information on visas, embassies, and travel.
http://www.projectvisa.com/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
Source for credible health information for travellers.
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/

World Health Organisation - International Travel and Health:
Source for credible health information for travellers.
http://www.who.int/ith/en/

What’s on When?:
Helps you to find out about local events while you are travelling.
http://www.whatsonwhen.com/

Destination Guides

Portals to the World:
Library of Congress links to cultural information of the countries of the world.
http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/portals.html

World66:
User-generated travel information for destinations all over the world.
http://www.world66.com/

Wikitravel:
User-generated travel information for destinations all over the world.
http://www.wikitravel.org/
Virtual Tourist:
Travel-oriented community website featuring user-contributed travel guides for locations worldwide.
http://www.virtualtourist.com/

TrekEarth:
TrekEarth is dedicated to fostering a global community interested in photography from around the world.
http://www.trekearth.com/

Tripadvisor:
User-generated hotel reviews, photos, and travel advice.
http://www.tripadvisor.com/

Lonely Planet:
A wide variety of travel guides.
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/

Rough Guides:
A wide variety of travel guides.

Footprint:
A wide variety of travel guides.
http://footprintbooks.com/Home/Index.cfm

Language

Google Language Tools:
Google’s collection of language tools, such as online translation.
http://www.google.com/language_tools

Google Transliterate:
Google’s transliteration tool.
http://www.google.com/transliterate

Word2Word:
Totally free language learning resources for a huge assortment of languages.
http://www.word2word.com/
nciku:
One of the most comprehensive English to Chinese and Chinese to English dictionaries.
http://www.nciku.com

Maps

University of Texas Library Collection:
University of Texas' outstanding collection of maps.
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/

National Geographic Map Machine:
Locate nearly any place on Earth, find country facts, and search and print historical, weather, and population maps, and more with our dynamic atlas.
http://maps.nationalgeographic.com

Wikimapia:
An online editable map allowing everyone to add information to any location on the globe.
http://www.wikimapia.org

Google Maps:
Find local businesses, view maps and get driving directions in Google Maps.
http://maps.google.com

Tools

Universal Currency Converter:
Converts all major currencies.
http://www.xe.com/

World’s Weather:
Weather news including real-time forecasts and educational information for local, regional, national and global weather conditions.
http://www.weather.com/

Unit Converter:
This tool converts all major units.
http://www.digitaldutch.com/unitconverter/
World Time Server:
Internet time clock with adjustments for Daylight Savings Time and global location choices.
http://www.worldtimeserver.com/

INCA Project:
Online intercultural competence assessment.
http://www.incaproject.org/index.htm

Culture, History, and Religion

National Geographic World Music:
An overview of music traditions from around the world.
http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/

Ancient World Cultures:
On-line course supplement for students and teachers of the ancient and medieval worlds.
http://eawc.evansville.edu/index.htm

Window into Global History:
Multimedia lesson plans and video clips useful for anybody interested in geography or world history.
http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/wideangle/index.html

Sacred Sites:
Anthropologist and photographer Martin Gray spent 25 years to study and artistically photograph nearly 1000 sacred sites in 80 countries.
http://www.sacredsites.com/

BeliefNet:
BeliefNet is the largest spiritual website containing information on various faiths.
http://www.beliefnet.com/

Cultural Institutes Working in China

Asia Society:
Institution promoting communication between Americans and the Asian-Pacific region.
http://www.asiasociety.org/
Work Guide China

Japan Foundation:
Promotion of the Japanese language and culture world-wide.
http://www.jpf.go.jp/

Goethe Institut:
Promotion of the German language and culture world-wide.
http://www.goethe.de/enindex.htm

Alliance Française:
Promotion of the French language and culture world-wide.
http://www.alliancefr.org/

British Council:
Promotion of the English language and culture world-wide.
http://www.britishcouncil.org/

Instituto Cervantes:
Promotion of the Spanish language and culture world-wide.
http://www.cervantes.es/

Società Dante Alighieri:
Promotion of the Italian language and culture world-wide.
http://www.ladante.it/

Instituto Camões:
Promotion of the Portuguese language and culture world-wide.
http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/

News from China

Xinhua:
News in English from China's official news agency Xinhua.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/

Sina.com:
English news about China from Sina.com.
People’s Daily:  
English news web-portal from the newspaper People’s Daily.  
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/

BBC:  
BBC offers a wide range of world news in different languages (great if you want to learn Chinese).  
http://news.bbc.co.uk/

Reference Resources

America’s Library of Congress:  
Largest library in the world.  
http://www.loc.gov/

United Nations:  
The UN is committed to preserving peace through international cooperation and collective security.  
http://www.un.org/english/

The World Bank:  
The World Bank Group offers advice and an array of customised resources to more than 100 developing countries and countries in transition.  
http://www.worldbank.org/

CIA World Factbook:  
These country profiles focus more on facts than cultural trends. Learn about the economics, government, and people of individual countries.  
FAQ Support from Knowledge Must

1. Why should I approach Knowledge Must for working in China?

Whether you are interested in teaching in a school deep in the mountains of Yunnan, interning with international organisations promoting cultural and institutional exchanges, or finding employment with a Fortune 500 company in China’s megacities, it will be the experience of a lifetime to live and work in China. Working and studying in China offers the chance for immersion in one of the world’s most captivating countries and the opportunity to witness one of the oldest and at the same time most forward-looking cultures as it develops into a global power.

Knowledge Must’s division Career Must will assist you in locating and securing a position that suits your needs. Career Must provides you with a total employment resource no matter where you are in your career. We not only help you find quality job opportunities, we also provide you with comprehensive assistance throughout the process, from legal and logistical requirements up to instilling the skills required for your new endeavour.

Career Must’s wide network of prospective employers forms a solid basis for placing you in rewarding job positions. Depending on your particular career objectives we help you to advance your individual career. Many who come with our support to China for a short while end up getting hooked to the culture and staying much longer than expected. Get in touch with us to learn more about job opportunities in your fields of interest and together with us explore borderless career opportunities!
2. How do you make sure I have a suitable and satisfying work experience?

As one of the prime placement agencies for outstanding job opportunities in China, we differ from other organisations in several important ways. Our intercultural solutions are carefully structured around your individual objectives and education background, all coordinated and supervised by experienced consultants, who have experienced other cultures the same way you are planning to. That is why our team has first-hand knowledge regarding the potential benefits, your expectations, your potential concerns as well as the problems that might ensue in the process.

The entire placement exercise is a joint effort between you and Career Must. What is most important to understand about our placement process is that you are in complete control at all times. You choose your field of interest, the organisations to which you would like to apply, and whether or not to accept each offer you receive. Career Must even offers you a money-back guarantee. We guarantee that we will place you in your field of interest. In the highly unlikely event that we do not succeed in finding you a job opportunity that meets your sole approval by the designated placement deadline, you will receive a full refund – no questions asked.

3. What are your accompanying services?

We are also able to offer you all-inclusive programmes, complete with accommodation, meals, transportation, travel arrangements, language training, and more. With our solution Relocation Plus, for instance, we offer the most comprehensive array of relocation services available in the market. Based on our five company divisions Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must, we are able to offer the whole range of services required to successfully adjust to living in Chinese culture. And our services do not even stop with your successful relocation to China. We provide on-going on-site support for all your intercultural needs. Our key priority is always your cultural experience, comfort, and safety.

Complimentary services can be as specific as organising your transfer from the airport to your accommodation or assistance with getting access to the Internet. You pick the additional services you desire and we will take care of the logistics for you. Take accommodation as an example. You can choose to handle your own accommodation or Career Must may assist you in securing appropriate accommodation, generally in the vicinity of your place of work. We can act as a coordinator between you and property owners, making firm reservations and payments on your behalf.
Work Guide China

Options include:
- Homestay accommodation (your own room with a host family where meals can be provided)
- Shared accommodation (your own room in a shared flat or house with local and international students or young professionals)
- Independent accommodation (your own flat or house)

Or if you would prefer something more unique in terms of accommodation, we are happy to arrange your stay in monasteries, palaces, villages or wherever you might like to live. When you tell us your budget and the type of accommodation you are looking for (homestay, shared, independent or special accommodation), we will accordingly search for an adequate home for your stay.

Our cultural activities are also very popular. Travelling and experiencing your host culture is a crucial element in allowing you to explore all your new home has to offer. In order for you to gain additional cultural insight, we organise culture-specific activities to introduce you to the intricacies of your host culture. These are great opportunities to let loose after work and they provide a fun way to meet like-minded people. You can look forward to guided tours of the locality, longer excursions, sport events, performing arts, and nights out in town.

4. What could a work abroad experience with Knowledge Must include?

Depending on your objectives and the amount of support you would like, the following services might be included in your tailor-made experience in China.

- Needs Analysis
- Career Counselling
- Providing required information to you about job opportunities in China
- Transfer knowledge to you about the Chinese labour market and your particular challenges in competing in it
- Develop a detailed Project Plan to achieve your career vision
- Research and counselling on best suited job opportunities in respect of your career fulfilment
- Intensive counsel on pros and cons of different options
- Create top-notch Application Documents
- Facilitating pre-departure and visa formalities
- Logistical support
- Finalise terms of employment in China
• Finalise living arrangements in China
• Assistance with all travel arrangements prior to departure for China
• Arrange transport and pick up to the accommodation
• Orientation tour and neighbourhood familiarisation
• Assistance with authorities (registrations, permits, etc.)
• Monitoring of the work experience on the job
• Arranging for preparatory courses if required
• Regular support from our Knowledge Must team in China
• Show up opportunities to continue immersion in China
• Optional travels to discover China’s diversity

5. What can Knowledge Must do for our organisation?

Organisations need to have strategies in place to address the on-going changes not only in their own workplace but also in their place of operations. Stagnancy means falling behind in global competition. The ability to operate successfully in diverse geographies and shift operations flexibly between countries may be essential to furthering your objectives. In order to successfully venture into Chinese culture, Knowledge Must has developed a variety of powerful tools and innovative services to overcome the strategic, logistical, technical, and tactical challenges resulting from crossing your cultural boundaries.

Among our clients are leading businesses, prestigious organisations, and outstanding institutes. We help them navigate the intricacies of culture, advice on intercultural strategies, help forge cultural and political alliances in local communities, and support the implementation of operational strategies. We help clients incorporate a long-term perspective into their strategies, while focusing on the biggest issues they currently face and on the best way to get results.

For your organisation we offer a comprehensive range of Intercultural Consulting, Implementation, and Facilitation services designed to further your objectives. We provide the additional expert resource you need to develop and drive a focused intercultural strategy through in a cost effective way. When working through international channels and partnerships, engaging with a critical outsourcing vendor, executing a corporate merger across cultures or conducting a joint project with international organisations, we assist you in the preparation and optimisation of your intercultural activities.
At Knowledge Must consulting is delivery. Our experts employ the most expedient methods for any particular situation, which may include training, coaching, facilitation, logistic support, and project implementation.

Knowledge Must also offers effective and professional intercultural facilitation for a variety of purposes and various types of groups. Whether you need facilitation for conducting business meetings or for resolving political crises, independent skilled facilitation can make all the difference to your success. We act as helpers and enablers with the goal to support you to achieve exceptional performance. By using our facilitation skills to draw the best out of your experience and expertise, and adding the best of ours, we build a fully participative process which enables you to focus on your objectives.

We invite all organisations to contact us and learn how we can maximise their intercultural potential!

6. What other services does Knowledge Must offer?

Knowledge Must is a leading intercultural solutions provider that assists students, professionals, and organisations to successfully cross cultural boundaries to and from India and China. Our team of highly qualified experts has the knowledge, experience, diversity, and passion to provide you with the best customised solutions to achieve your individual objectives. Unlike other solutions in the market, Knowledge Must
offers complete service packages with its five company divisions: Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must. Starting with career consulting, Knowledge Must provides work experience, language immersion, culture-specific and process-oriented training, individualised travel arrangements and cultural events, in order to fully equip our clients to work more effectively across a multitude of cultures.

Once you have arrived in China, you may like to learn Chinese language, or find out about the context and origins of “Chinese quirks” with a cultural training. You may want to have some assistance in your travel planning and booking, because we at Knowledge Must, with our cultural expertise, can bring you to places away from the mainstream and take care of the sometimes stressful travel organisation, so you are enabled to fully focus on enjoying the beauty of China. Moreover, with our company weblog that you can find under blog.knowledge-must.com we offer you many interesting insights and valuable advice on intercultural issues, such as experiences of other foreigners working in China.

Unravel the World!

Our Five Divisions

The operations of Knowledge Must encompass five crucial components for achieving cultural fluency, each covered by one of our five divisions: Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must. The experts at our five divisions guide you through the process of successfully crossing cultural boundaries. The unmatched combination of all our divisions’ services into tailor-made Integrated Solutions gives you the unique opportunity to successfully move between cultures. We address your specific intercultural needs – no matter what you require.
Work Guide China

With our division Career Must, we assist students and professionals to build an international career. Career Must’s platform directly interlinks requirements to select highly qualified personnel for organisations and rewarding work prospects for outstanding job seekers. We help to bring the right people together, even across the largest cultural gaps, and handle the ensuing complexities in an effective and efficient manner.

With our division Language Must, we offer the best in language teaching. Whether you are working or studying abroad, effectively crossing cultural boundaries requires a considerable level of language proficiency. Students and professionals alike benefit from the Language Must Method of language training. We know that language is about communication. And that is exactly what we focus on. We equip you with the tools to effectively communicate with people from other cultures.

With our division Training Must, we offer a range of flexible and effective intercultural training solutions that are both practicable and tailored to each particular cultural challenge. In today’s increasingly smaller world, understanding the ways of other peoples’ cultures is an essential. Our specialised training solutions broaden your intercultural capacities in diverse areas. From process-oriented to culture-specific competencies, Training Must instils in you the ability to interact effectively across cultural boundaries.

With our division Travel Must, we offer the best in intercultural travels. Because travel is such a precious commodity, part education, part relaxation, part life-enriching experience, part adventure, Travel Must takes utmost care to fulfil your individual expectations. Our unique travel services cater to open-minded individuals from all walks of life. From executives to students, from urbanites to outdoor enthusiasts, Travel Must offers you great ways to immerse yourself in a foreign environment and culture.

With our division Culture Must, we make you experience the arts and beyond. To appreciate the strength in differences between us and find comfort where we overlap, Culture Must events let you experience the backbones of culture, be it music, visual arts, religion or festivities. With us you will get to know the best that human creativity and intellect has brought about. Connecting musicians, performers, designers, painters, writers, film makers, photographers, and other artists, Culture Must creates a platform that cultivates and promotes intercultural collaborations. Diversity is the true source of our inspiration. At Culture Must we celebrate diversity every day.
What We Can Do for You

We at Knowledge Must are genuine cultural immersion specialists. We aim at full cultural fluency, knowing what to do when, where, and why. What others consider as cultural gaps we understand as opportunities to learn and grow. We help individuals as well as organisations to grow to their full potential.

The unique chance to move between cultures opens totally new professional and personal perspectives, and helps you to pursue your goals in life. Analogously, we provide professional and creative intercultural solutions to help your organisation achieve its particular mission and to drive through internationalisation strategies in a cost-effective way.

Unlike other solutions in the market, we offer complete service packages with our five company divisions: Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must. Combining the expertise of our five divisions into Integrated Solutions, we deliver truly comprehensive intercultural services. With our career counselling, study abroad programs, internship, volunteer and work placements to language immersion, culture-specific and process-oriented training, individualised travel arrangements, and intercultural events, we fully equip you to make the most out of the diversity of Indian and Chinese cultures.
Our Social Objectives

Knowledge Must is an organisation with strong social objectives. Through the prism of language, religion, ethnic identity, traditions, and other principal pillars of culture we apply our effective solutions for fostering intercultural understanding among individuals, organisations, communities, and countries. At Knowledge Must we understand that embracing diverse ideas, creating diverse opportunities, and developing diverse partnerships will positively impact the communities that we engage. In order to stay affordable to everybody and to live up to our philosophy to promote genuine cultural exchange, we are committed to keeping the fees of our Cultural Immersion Solutions as low as possible for all of our participants. The synergies generated when people of diverse cultures collaborate are truly borderless. Join hands with us!

Thank You for Your Interest

Thank you for your interest in Knowledge Must and in our guide books. We invite you to have a look at our Career Must division website www.career-must.com to find out more about our career services and visit www.knowledge-must.com to learn what our entire organisation can do for you. Please contact us with any enquiries and bookings as well as with comments or suggestions you might have. For more information on how our intercultural solutions can benefit you, we would be happy to discuss your needs.

So what are you waiting for? Be proactive and trust in yourself to take the right decisions. Rather than just think about it, start to take action. Whether you come with our support or just by yourself, we look forward to welcoming you in China!

Your Knowledge Must Team
Contributors

Author

Mr. Daniel Ratheiser

Born in Montreal, Canada, Daniel has lived, studied, and worked for extended periods in eight countries and speaks nearly as many languages. Having himself relocated many times across national borders (and having helped many others to do so), he has practical experience moving between cultures and understands first hand the complexities that arise when crossing cultural boundaries.

Founding Knowledge Must, Daniel has assisted individuals and organisations to cross cultural boundaries and to grow their global competence. He also conducted numerous research studies in the intercultural field, from historical cultural exchange to contemporary interfaith relations. His real passion, however, has always been researching and writing about the cultural relations between South Asia / India and East Asia / China, the two regions of the world he feels most indebted to.

Additional Contributors

- Ms. Chen Fengchao
- Mr. Jonathan Kraima
- Ms. Noémie Lataud
- Mr. Sascha Matuszak
- Ms. Mariya Otake
- Dr. Michael Pörner

With contributions from Knowledge Must's Blog (blog.knowledge-must.com) by:

- Ms. Noémie Lataud: "Leisure Culture in Modern China"
- Ms. Mariya Otake: "China's Mid-Autumn Festival – Millions of Poets Under the Moon Light"
- Mr. Daniel Ratheiser: "Master Li Quan – Cultivating Kung Fu Traditions in Sichuan's Chengdu"
- Ms. Anne Rhebergen: "A Journey Crossing Two Continents: Riding the Trans-Sib"
- Ms. Helena Trapero: "Building a Career in Taiwan: An Interview with Jesús Trapero"

A big thank you also goes to the generous support of the many clients and readers that help us to continuously improve upon our guide books.
Creative Commons and Copyrights

The “Global Commons” is the set of natural resources, public spaces, cultural traditions, and other essentials of life and society that should be enjoyed by all people and cherished for all our well-being. In this “Information Age” a re-thinking of the role of “Global Commons” is taking place. Information technology revolutionised the way ideas and knowledge are flowing. It has done away with many of the geographic and technological barriers to sharing. This, in turn, has led to a revolution in the way that knowledge and culture are created, accessed, and transformed.

Being human means being part of a shared culture. Not being able to share that culture with others would inhibit diversity. Sharing stimulates improvement and participation, while preventing unnecessary work and maximising efficiency. At Knowledge Must, we expressively share our expert knowledge for stimulating diversity and contributing to the common good. We actively want to participate in maximising social creativity and learning for the sake of everybody’s well-being. That is why we use Creative Commons licenses, copyright licenses that allow the distribution of copyrighted works.

The non-profit Creative Commons contribute to the free use of knowledge, arts, and inventions. Creative Commons licenses are great tools for promoting cultural exchange as they encourage collaboration, innovation, and creativity, rather than the intellectual hoarding encouraged by traditional copyrights.

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