



Pre-Departure Information

THE SILK ROAD



Table of Contents

TRAVEL INFORMATION

- Passport
- Visas
- Money
- Tipping
- Special Diets
- Communications
- Electricity

MEDICAL INFORMATION

- Inoculations
- Malaria Prevention
- Staying Healthy
- Medical Services
- Getting In Shape
- Altitude Considerations

HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Shopping
- Photography
- Cultural Considerations
- Being a Considerate Traveler

PACKING LIST

- The Essentials
- WT Gear Store
- Luggage
- Weight Limits
- Notes on Clothing
- Clothing
- Equipment
- Personal First Aid Supplies
- Optional Items
- Prohibited Items

Reminders Before You Go

WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets.
- Passport Photocopy:** Scan* a COLOR copy of your passport photo page and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail (immediately upon reserving your trip).
- Visa Photocopy:** Once you have obtained the required visa in your passport, please scan* a copy of your visa and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail.
- Vaccination Card:** Please send us a photo or scanned copy of your completed Covid-19 Vaccination Card if you have not already done so. Just the front side of the card is sufficient.

**If you are scanning documents to email, we suggest a maximum resolution of 300 dpi.*

PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** (www.wildernesstravel.com) or e-mail us at: info@wildernesstravel.com.

Travel Information

PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from China. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office** (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

VISAS

China Visa

US citizens need a visa for China, which must be obtained prior to your arrival in China. You may contact a local Chinese Consulate to purchase your visa, or our recommended passport and visa processing service, **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>) (PVE). Please visit the PVE website for visa instructions and processing times/fees. PVE can also be reached by phone at 888-596-6028. Let them know you are booked on a Wilderness Travel trip.

China visa applications are only accepted for processing (by the Chinese authorities) provided that initial date of entry is within 90 days of the submission date. More detailed instructions regarding the visa process (and how to fill out all necessary forms) will be sent at that time (approximately three months prior to departure).

When applying for your visa, we recommend that you purchase a Multiple-Entry Tourist Visa valid for 10 years, even if you do not have plans to return to China in the near future, as the 10-year visa fee is currently the same as visas for a shorter stay.

If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, please check with a local consulate for entry requirements. Please note that all visa requirements and regulations are subject to change.

MONEY

The currency in China is the *Yuan (Y)* or *Renminbi (RMB)*, often referred to as "kwai."

We suggest you bring US cash, as it is typically the easiest to exchange and always best for minor expenses. Please bring your cash in a combination of large and small denominations. It is difficult to exchange money in the local villages, so please check with your Trip Leader for guidelines on where and how to exchange funds once you arrive in China. **Your US cash must be new bills in pristine condition, without tears, writing, stamp marks, fold marks, or blemishes.**

Credit cards are accepted only at major establishments in larger cities in China. In addition to cash, you can draw money from ATM machines, which are also available in major cities. To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, any meals listed as "on your own" in the trip itinerary (approximately \$20-\$30 for lunches and \$25-\$45 for dinners), and personal items such as snacks, phone calls, etc.

Please remember to keep all currency exchange receipts; you may need them to change currency back into dollars upon departure.

TIPPING

During the trip, the Trip Leader takes care of tips for waiters at restaurants, for porters for luggage handling, and for trip representatives who are with the group for only a short time.

For the staff who have accompanied you throughout a significant portion of your adventure—our local guides and drivers—excellent service can be rewarded through a pooled tip, a process that will be facilitated by your Trip Leader. Tipping for the Trip Leader himself is not formally organized. Should you wish to tip your Trip Leader, we suggest that you do so toward the end of the adventure.

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$12-14 per trip member, per day for the local guides/drivers, and \$15-\$18 per trip member, per day for the Trip Leader.

Some clients have expressed concern over carrying a large amount of cash on the trip. So, for your convenience, your Trip Leader will accept personal checks from you for any tips that you would like to give, as he will carry extra cash in country for tipping the local staff.

SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone

The international dialing code for China is 86.

Email & Internet Access

When in larger cities, most hotels will have access to the Internet. Those traveling with a personal computer can dial from their hotel rooms or connect to wireless internet, if available. Others can use the hotel business center. Additional charges may apply for internet access. In smaller cities and towns in China, there are internet cafes where you can access your email account for a fee. You can ask your guide to show you where they are located.

Please note: you may have trouble accessing popular US websites, such as Google, Yahoo, Facebook, Instagram, etc., due to Chinese internet regulations, including Gmail.

ELECTRICITY

You will need to bring a converter and/or plug adaptor kit for appliance use.

The voltage in China is 220-240 volts. There may be a variety of blade types, but plugs are often similar to the two-bladed plugs found in North America, but are slightly shorter and without holes in the ends, known as socket type A. Socket types C and I are also used.

Please check the label on your appliances to see if a converter is needed. Some appliances never need a converter. If the label states 'INPUT: 100-240V, 50/60 Hz' the appliance can be used in all countries in the world. This is common for chargers of many tablets/laptops, photo cameras, cell phones, toothbrushes, etc.

Medical Information

The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>)
Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

INOCULATIONS

Entry requirements and international health situations are subject to change; check with the Centers for Disease Control for updates. Arrange a schedule of inoculations to begin well before departure so that they can be adequately spaced. All shots should be entered on your International Health Card (yellow card), which is provided by the facility giving the shots. Keep it with your passport while traveling. It provides an important personal record for you to refer to when making future travel plans. Please consult with your physician regarding the following:

Tetanus Booster

Strongly recommended (effective for 10 years).

Polio

People who have received the primary series of at least three doses of polio vaccine are considered fully immunized. People who are unsure of their status should receive the vaccine (three doses spaced at intervals).

Hepatitis

The vaccines HAVRIX and VAQTA (two injections, six to 18 months apart) give long-term protection against Hepatitis A and are worthwhile if you travel regularly to developing countries. Hepatitis B vaccine (for viral hepatitis) is also worthwhile.

Typhoid

The CDC recommends the shot or the oral vaccine, Vivotif Berna.

MALARIA PREVENTION

Malaria is a serious but preventable disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. All travelers are urged to take antimalarial medications, available only by prescription. Please discuss antimalarial medication with your doctor, who will explain various antimalarials and their side effects and recommend a regimen for you. In addition to medication, a further precaution against malaria is to wear long sleeves and long pants at dusk. Thin clothing should be sprayed with insect repellent, especially around the elbows and ankles. Use repellent containing DEET.

If, after returning from your trip, you have a persistent fever with chills, muscle aches, and headache, report to your doctor the possibility of exposure to malaria.

For further malaria information, consult your doctor or the **CDC Malaria Hotline**(<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/malinfo.htm>): 888-232-3228.

STAYING HEALTHY

Change of diet and a number of other factors can cause stomach upsets while traveling, especially in underdeveloped countries. To guard against illness, follow these guidelines:

Consider all tap water unsafe. Do not drink it or brush your teeth with it. Bottled water is available everywhere. Don't drink the water served in restaurants (bottled water is widely available). Avoid ice in your drinks (it may not have been made with treated water). Beware of uncooked or raw foods such as salads. Don't eat fruit unless you have peeled it yourself. Avoid custards, pastry creams, yogurt, and milk where refrigeration and pasteurization are unreliable. Don't eat food bought from sidewalk vendors. Overall, be conservative about what you eat. Frequent hand washing, especially after using the bathroom and before eating, can cut down on the possibility of traveler's diarrhea. On any airline, drink only the bottled water, not the tap water.

Dietary Restrictions

Please let us know immediately if you have a restricted diet. We will try to accommodate you. However, cultural differences and other factors can make it difficult and at times impossible to accommodate your restrictions. Bring a flexible attitude and supplemental foods to ensure your dietary needs are met.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical services are extremely limited in the area you will travel in. In the event of illness requiring evacuation, there are risks involved. Depending upon the point where we are in the itinerary, an evacuation may take several days. You should bring an ample supply of any prescription medicines you need and the items listed on the personal first aid list, in consultation with your physician.

GETTING IN SHAPE

This is not a hiking trip, but there are opportunities on many days for touring on foot for one to three hours at a time. The walking tours are not difficult. However, we recommend you make a special effort to get in good physical condition for the trip. Six weeks to a month before you go, begin a program of hiking or other form of aerobic exercise that goes beyond your normal routine.

ALTITUDE CONSIDERATIONS

Altitude Sickness can happen from about 8,000 feet upwards. On this trip, you will reach a maximum altitude of ~9,186 feet for two days, although most days will be between 1,000-6,500' (or less). Altitude sickness usually occurs following a rapid ascent - you may feel the shortness of breath, heart-pounding and lack of energy, due to the low oxygen in the air. The symptoms of acute altitude sickness may include headache, lassitude, dizziness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting. Insomnia is common, which is often associated with a suffocating feeling when you lie down. In most cases, the symptoms are temporary and usually abate as altitude acclimatization occurs. Still yet, it is important that you inform your Trip Leader immediately of any symptoms or discomfort, however minor, so that they can help you monitor the situation.

The best way to avoid altitude sickness is to pace yourself carefully (especially when walking), drink plenty of water, eat light, high-carbohydrate meals and snacks, and avoid alcohol, smoking and heavy foods. Do not push too hard regardless of how physically fit you may be or feel. If the symptoms are mild, the treatment is to rest and relax.

If you have any concerns, please speak with your doctor regarding the elevations you will be reaching on this trip, and if they recommend medication to help you adjust to the higher altitudes, such as Diamox. Diamox is a mild diuretic and is well-known for alleviating the symptoms caused by rapid ascent to altitude, but it is a Sulfa drug. Anyone who is allergic to Sulfa drugs should avoid taking Diamox and consult with their doctor about potential substitute medications, such the steroid diuretic Dexamethasone.

Helpful Information

SHOPPING

Chinese regulations prohibit taking antiquities and artifacts unless they are affixed with an official red-wax seal or accompanied by a receipt from an official state-run store. Customs officials can be very strict and purchases have been confiscated on departure. Ordinary or inexpensive items may be let through, but the officials may be arbitrary.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to wtphotoblog@gmail.com or tag us [@WildernessTravel](#) on social media.

Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are some essential elements common to the cultural experiences of most of the people of these areas. For example, respect for one's elders and hospitality are widespread cultural attributes. Here are some things to be aware of:

Losing Face

As elsewhere in Asia, it is considered unseemly to show too much emotion, such as displaying anger. It is best to just relax through any conflicts or irritations. In particular, avoid doing anything to cause public humiliation to anyone. This extends to criticism of service, engaging in public arguments, and "demanding to see the boss." The people of these countries have an extreme reluctance to hurt others' feelings and thus lose face.

Bowing your head and body slightly when walking through someone's "space" is considered a polite and necessary thing to do. Public demonstrations of affection between men and women are frowned on. Your efforts to emulate the local behavior while in these countries will be much appreciated.

Gifts

Many of the people we visit are living under hardship and our natural instinct would be to give them gifts. Because the unwary distribution of pens, money, candy, and so on has led to beggar mentality in many places in the world, we suggest you do not give anything to soliciting children.

BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

Packing List

THE ESSENTIALS

- Passport (valid for at least six months after your date of exit from China)
- One other picture ID, such as driver's license
- Visa for China
- Photocopy of passport page to carry with you
- Photocopy of China visa to carry with you
- Two extra passport photos
- Air tickets and expense money
- Personal checks for optional gratuities and emergency use
- Proof of travelers insurance, if purchased (insurance is recommended)
- Prescription medication, if required (packed in your carry-on bag, not your checked baggage)

WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

LUGGAGE

- Soft-sided roller bag with small padlock is recommended (must be unlocked for travel or have a TSA-approved lock). Please be mindful of baggage weight limits on domestic flights within Asia.
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- Daypack, large enough for a fleece jacket, rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want during the day.
- Small roll-up duffel if you are an avid shopper.

WEIGHT LIMITS

Please note that there is a **weight limit of 44 lbs (20 kgs) per person for checked luggage, and 11 lbs (5 kgs) per person for carry-on baggage**. Your carry-on bag must fit under the seat or in the overhead compartment.

NOTES ON CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only; we encourage you to pack as lightly as possible. Dress on the trip is informal, with the exception of city dinners for which you may want to dress up a little (jackets are not required for men). You should carry or wear your walking shoes on your flights to make sure they arrive with you. People in China dress conservatively and visitors should take care to dress modestly. A flexible system of layered clothing is recommended, such as lightweight shirts and trousers and lightweight raingear. Comfortable walking shoes will carry you a long way on this trip. A fleece jacket for cooler evenings is convenient.

CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only; we encourage you to pack as lightly as possible.

- Wind/waterproof lightweight rain jacket with hood
- Fleece jacket or sweater
- Hiking pants, loose-fitting and comfortable. Quick-drying synthetic hiking pants are a practical choice.
- Long-sleeved shirts. Quick-drying “travel” fabrics like nylon are ideal.
- T-shirts
- Shade hat with wide brim
- Sturdy walking shoes with good traction and ankle support
- Tevas or other hiking sandals
- Socks, underwear (again, synthetics dry faster)
- Bandanna to help on dusty drives or walks
- Sleepwear
- Casual city/hotel attire

EQUIPMENT

- Good quality sunglasses with cases
- Personal toiletries, biodegradable soap
- Tissues or roll of toilet paper for “nature breaks” on drives and hikes
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Assorted plastic bags to organize items
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member should bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF #30 or higher. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headache.
- Topical antibiotic (such as Neosporin) for cuts, bites, or sores
- Insect repellent
- Throat lozenges
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. “Liquid band-aids,” such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Moisturizing cream, Vaseline for nose/lips
- Anti-bacterial gel for hand washing
- Post-insect bite cream (antihistamine)
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl and cold remedy such as Sudafed
- Pepto-Bismol tablets for diarrhea, heartburn, indigestion
- Imodium for diarrhea. If you wish to bring an antibiotic for diarrhea prophylaxis, consult your physician.
- Prescription medications properly labeled—bring a plentiful supply as they will be impossible to replace in China
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Camera, spare batteries, spare flashcards, lens cleaner
- Reading/writing material
- Portable tape recorder to record the sounds of China
- Lightweight binoculars
- Travel clock

PROHIBITED ITEMS

E-Cigarettes: Please do not bring e-cigarettes (vaporizers), including e-cigarette refills. The countries of Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam have all outlawed the import and export of e-cigarettes (vaporizers), including e-cigarette refills. Travelers found with these items could be fined or sent to prison for up to 10 years if convicted. This applies for transit through the countries as well as entry into them.

Revised: July 10, 2019