Preparing for Travel

We are excited for your family as you prepare for your trip to China to bring home your child! It is important to remember we are traveling as adoptive parents, servants, guests & students of China. Our best witness is showing the character of Christ in all of our interactions. The following information is designed to assist you in preparing for this incredible life-changing journey.

VACCINATIONS & MEDICATIONS
We recommend referencing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for information about vaccinations they suggest for travel to China. The Hepatitis B and Tetanus vaccinations are also suggestions for your trip. You should plan ahead and be sure to pack your own prescription medications. Please consult your doctor to discuss their personal recommendations for you, as well as the possibility of taking an anti-diarrheal prescription medication in case of traveler’s diarrhea.

Although no shots are required, we strongly recommend receiving the Polio vaccination or a booster shot, as there have been some cases of Polio in China. In addition, we also strongly recommend receiving the Hepatitis A vaccination as it was mentioned in an article by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

INTERNATIONAL BAGGAGE REQUIREMENTS
(Source: United Airlines Baggage Requirements & Delta Airlines Baggage Requirements)
For travel to China, each Economy class passenger may check one to two free bags weighing no more than 50 pounds each, with dimensions up to 62 inches (157 cm) when you total length+width+height. Depending on the airline, you may be required to pay for the second checked bag. Please check your airline's specific baggage requirements prior to traveling.

Most airlines will allow each passenger one carry-on bag and one personal item at no extra charge. Carry-on baggage may not exceed 45 linear inches (115 cm) when you total length+width+height. Items such as strollers and child restraint seats typically do not count as carry-on baggage and are considered “freebies”. Please consult your airline for their specific requirements regarding carry-on baggage.

CUSTOMS
- Declare any money over $10,000 (per person)
- No fruit or plants can be taken in or out of the country.
- When returning to the US, DO NOT OPEN the sealed envelope containing your child’s adoption documents from the US Consulate. You will hand the sealed envelope to the customs officials at your US port of entry.
Preparing for Travel

TRAVEL MEDICINE KIT SUGGESTIONS
- Aspirin/Tylenol/Advil
- Antihistamine
- Sinus infection medication (Mucinex)
- Loperamide (Imodium, Cipro, Pepto Bismol, etc) to assist with traveler’s diarrhea – this is common due to the changes in food and environment
- Antiseptic for cuts or scrapes
- Calamine lotion for bug bites
- Cold & flu capsules
- Throat lozenges
- Tums
- Band-Aids
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm with SPF
- Antibacterial hand gel or wipes
- Toilet paper
- Tissue Packs

NOTE: While there are stores in China which carry many of the items listed above, we suggest that you bring some medicine that you are familiar with. In China, it may be difficult to find western brands of medicine.

HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS
- Do not drink the tap water in China.
- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of boiled water and/or bottled water while traveling.
- Be cautious of eating fresh produce. Fruits and vegetables washed in tap water could cause bowel issues. As a general rule, do not eat it, unless you can peel it.
- Travel with packs of tissues or toilet paper. Public restrooms often times will not have toilet paper available, or it will cost money.

MONEY TIPS
- Do not place wallets in back pockets or use purses with loose openings.
- Use a money belt and safeguard your wallet from pickpockets. Make sure money belts are fully hidden under clothing.
- Scatter your valuables. Keep some items hidden in your hotel room’s safe, others in your backpack, and some in a wallet or purse.
- Do not bring expensive jewelry or items of great sentimental value.
- We recommend exchanging some personal money at your hotel in Beijing, but do not exchange the $7,300 international province until you meet your guide in your child’s province.
- Your guide will tell you when and how to tip.
- Call your credit card companies to inform them of your travel dates. If they suddenly notice charges on your credit card from China, they may place a hold on your card until you return to the US.
- Bring emergency contact numbers to cancel credit cards in case of theft.
Preparing for Travel

- Please reference XE Universal Currency Converter for the current exchange rate.
- Keep receipts for all money exchanged – if you don’t spend it all, you may be able to exchange the money back into U.S. dollars if you have your receipt.

AWAA GUIDES
We primarily work with two National Guides who each have a team of local guides who will assist you during your trip. Your specific guide is determined by which province your child resides. Please prepare for the possibility that although you may receive your Travel Approval at the same time as another family, you may travel with separate guides and possibly in a smaller or larger group. Families who are adopting children from the following provinces will usually travel together: Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, and Shaanxi.

You will be with AWAA guides from the moment one greets when you time you step off the plane in Beijing up until you leave Guangzhou. Your provincial and national guides will be experts in adoption proceedings and travel in China, and are happy to answer any questions you have about your paperwork or process while traveling. Countless numbers of our families have returned to the US with compliments for all of our wonderful guides. We can say with confidence that you will be very well-attended during your trip.

CHINESE DOMESTIC FLIGHT BAGGAGE REQUIREMENTS
(Source: Air China Baggage Requirements)
Economy class passengers holding adult-fare (12 years and older) or child-fare tickets (children 2 – 11) are entitled to a free checked baggage allowance of 20 kilograms (or 44 pounds). Each piece shall not exceed the maximum dimensions of 100 centimeters (long) x 60 centimeters (wide) x 40 centimeters (high).

Economy Class passengers may carry on one small bag or other personal item per person, weighing no more than 5 kg (or 11 pounds). All carry-on baggage must fit under the seat in front of you or in the overhead bin. We suggest one carry-on bag with a shoulder strap or soft backpack for carrying your child’s supplies during the day. During your adoption in China, you will also be carrying items such as adoption paperwork, a camera, medicine, water bottles, and supplies for your child. Car seats are not required in cars or planes, though a car seat should be in your car at the airport upon your return to the U.S.

TIPPING
Tipping in China tourism is common. As a matter of fact, bellboys, tour bus drivers and guides live mainly on tips. Tips for your local and national guides, as well as the bus drivers are covered in your in-country package price, please do not tip them in China. Individuals you will want to consider tipping are the bellboys who assist you with your luggage at the hotels. We recommend 10 RMB per bag.
Preparing for Travel

HOTELS
We use four to five star, Westernized hotels to assist your family in making your stay as comfortable as possible while completing your adoption in a foreign country.

Most standard rooms will provide the following amenities:

- Maximum Occupancy = 3 adults per hotel room (12 years and older)
- Separate shower and bathtub
- Crib (upon request)
- Hair Dryer
- Safe
- Iron & ironing board
- 24 Hour Room Service
- Bottled Water (complimentary or for purchase)
- Coffee maker/tea service
- Instant hot water (or hotpot to boil water)
- Mini refrigerator
- Phone
- High Speed/Wired/Wireless Internet (free or for purchase)
- Cable/satellite TV with English-speaking channels

Other common hotel amenities:

- Gym
- Laundry Service (for purchase)
- Business Center
- Restaurant

For more information on the amenities that your specific hotel offers, please reference the AWAA hotel guide.

LAUNDRY SERVICE
The hotel’s laundry service is not included in your travel package and is available at most locations. In-house laundry services can be expensive, although rates vary and some hotels have rates that are very reasonable. When you arrive in Guangzhou, your guide will inform you of an outside laundry service option that is less expensive.

SIGHTSEEING & SHOPPING
In an effort to provide your family with more of an understanding of your child’s heritage and the Chinese culture, we have arranged sightseeing in each city where you will be staying: Beijing, the capital of your child’s province, and Guangzhou. In Beijing, typical sites include the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, Summer Palace, Forbidden City, and National Stadium. Beijing sightseeing is not required for the purpose of adoption and therefore is optional. Depending on which province you are adopting from, you may be required to meet your child on Sunday, instead of Monday. If you would like to still have two full days of sightseeing in Beijing, please arrive one day earlier than the normal schedule (arrive on Thursday).
Preparing for Travel

As part of each city’s tour, your guide will take you to gift shops to buy souvenir items. Most people find a couple hundred dollars is more than sufficient to cover their personal, souvenir purchases. Bartering is a common practice in China and should be expected.

APPOINTMENT GIFTS
As is custom in China, AWAA recommends that you bring one gift for the Orphanage Director, two gifts for the nannies who you will meet with on “Gotcha Day”, and three gifts for the officials that you will meet with at each of the three appointments in your child’s province. These gifts simply show the orphanage staff and adoption officials that you are appreciative of what they have done for your child. We suggest trinkets that are American in nature, avoiding items with a “Made in China” label, if possible.

Gift Ideas: state-specific souvenirs, commemorative postage stamps, lotions, hand sanitizers from Bath & Body Works, hand-crocheted scarves & hats, American candy, beaded necklaces, chocolates, ground coffee, energy bars, makeup, sports team apparel (size small)

ORPHANAGE DONATIONS
The most appropriate orphanage donations are items such as toys, clothes (new or lightly worn) formula, vitamins, iron supplements and nonprescription medicines. Please restrict medical donations to items such as cough syrup, children’s Tylenol, and other general, nonprescription medications. Many of our orphanage partners have specific items that they are in need of. If you are interested in donating to your child’s orphanage please contact your Travel Coordinator to see what items they are in need of.

MEETING YOUR CHILD’S FOSTER FAMILY
If your child is living with a foster family, there is no way for us to guarantee that you will be able to meet them while you are in China. In some cases, a foster family will attend a child’s Gotcha Day or Civil affairs appointment in order to say goodbye to the child and meet the adoptive family. It is entirely the foster family’s decision as to whether or not they attend either of these appointments and we have no control over whether or not they attend. If you prefer that your child’s foster family not be at the Gotcha Day or Civil Affairs appointment we unfortunately do not have control over this either since your child is still under the legal custody of his or her orphanage until your Civil Affairs appointment is completed.

VISITS TO ORPHANAGES
If you desire to visit your child’s orphanage or finding place, our in-country staff will need to request permission from the Orphanage Director and Civil Affairs appointment prior to your departure for China. We cannot always guarantee that they will say yes and many of orphanages do not allow outside visitors. An orphanage visit is not included in our standard travel package so families will need to pay the additional cost of transportation and to stay in a hotel, should it be needed, in addition to their travel package. This typically can cost anywhere between $300 - $1,200 depending on how far the orphanage is from where you are staying. In some cases, it could take up to 8 hours to get to certain orphanages or could require a plane ride. If you are interested in requesting an orphanage visit, please discuss this with your Travel Coordinator prior to receiving your Travel Approval.
Preparing for Travel

COMMUNICATING INTERNATIONALLY

Skype: One of the most common ways to communicate with family and friends back in the US is to utilize the popular internet calling system, Skype. Skype offers phone calls, video calls, and instant messaging. If you are new to Skype, or unfamiliar with the software, please click here to learn more and download it for free. We recommend downloading it on your laptop and creating a username prior to traveling.

FaceTime: Families who have iPhones or iPads will be able to utilize FaceTime when connected to wireless internet.

International Phone Plans: Some families switch to temporary international phone plans while in China. Please contact your cell phone provider for more information on their international plans.

Calling Card: You may purchase US calling cards for long distance calls back home or you may also purchase calling cards from our guides. We recommend OneSuite. To learn more about this service and to sign up, please click here.

Cell Phone Rental: We recommend using Panda Phone as a reliable cell phone rental service while in China. Panda Phone allows for incoming/outgoing calls to and from the United States. Please click here to reserve your panda phone.

Hotel Business Centers: Most of the hotels have business centers with email, copy, and fax capability.

Internet: All of the hotels families stay at provide free wireless internet. The Chinese government blocks access to certain websites such as Gmail, Google, Facebook & Blogspot. We recommend setting up an alternative email account through Yahoo in order to communicate with friends and family in the US.

ELECTRONICS

- China’s electrical system/hotels operate at 220 volts (US operates at 110 - 120 volts)
- Pack a universal power adapter to plug in your own electronics into the outlets in your hotels (sold at electronic stores). Be sure to check compatibility with Asia.
- Pack a converter/transformer to change the voltage of your own appliances (110 - 120 V) to use in China (220 V). USA Today has a great article on Electric Adapter Tips for traveling to China.
- Camera/Video Usage: Do not take pictures of anything military related, airplanes, airports, harbors, railroads, museums, or archeological sites. Use respect and tact when photographing people you do not know. If you are able to visit an orphanage, please do not take pictures out of respect and privacy for the children there.

HONG KONG RETURN FLIGHT INFORMATION

Families will often depart from Hong Kong as it is usually the most cost-efficient option. After receiving your child’s US visa in Guangzhou, you will need to take a 3 ½ - 4 hour private van ride from Guangzhou to the Hong Kong airport hotel. As most flights leave Hong Kong in the morning, we arrange a one-night stay in the Hong Kong Regal Airport Hotel, which is connected to the
Preparing for Travel

airport terminal for your convenience. Your guide in Guangzhou will assist your family in departing for Hong Kong but will not be able to accompany you to Hong Kong.

If you are at all uncomfortable with the Hong Kong departure, alternatively, you can book a flight from Guangzhou to Beijing and then Beijing to the US. International flights from Guangzhou are less common, and usually most expensive.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS IN CHINA
- Local Directory Assistance 114
- Police 110
- Fire 119

LITERATURE ON TRAVEL TO CHINA
You may want to look into buying the following below (all optional). Most can be purchased online:

- A China travel guide – There are many informative guides available but we recommend the Lonely Planet’s book, China. The Lonely Planet guide tends to be less touristy and provides history and background on each location.
- A Chinese phrase book – we recommend a small travel-size one that can fit in a pocket or purse. The Lonely Planet has a great one: Lonely Planet Mandarin Phrasebook (Lonely Planet Language Survival Kit)
- A basic Mandarin Chinese instruction book – We recommend Chinese in 10 Minutes a Day by Kristine Kurshel

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
- How to Make Phone Calls to/in China: http://www.howtocallabroad.com/china/
- Currency Cheat Sheet: http://www.xe.com/ucc/
- Health Information for Travelers to East Asia: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/china.htm
- General Information about China: http://www.ebeijing.gov.cn/
- Chinese Embassy: www.china-embassy.org
- Up-to Date Weather Forecast in China: www.weather.com
- Calling Cards: www.onesuite.com or www.firstphonecard.com
- Cell Phone Rental in China: www.pandaphone.com
- Skype:
Preparing for Travel