

奧克蘭孔子學院

China 101

**An introduction to travelling
in and working with China**



**CONFUCIUS
INSTITUTE**



China 101

An introduction to
travelling in and working
with China

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

--Lao Tzu



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Disclaimer

This booklet has been written to provide readers with an introduction to Chinese culture and customs. It is, by necessity, a general introduction. While all reasonable attempts have been made to ensure that information in this publication is accurate and current at the time of printing, no liability is assumed for any errors contained within this work or reliance on the information contained within.

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China: Overwhelming Visitors for Centuries

I couldn't get over the sheer number of people. The streets were teeming with them. I was being pushed and jostled, people were spitting and there was noise all around me. It was just too much.

China has been overwhelming visitors for centuries. But now, perhaps more than any other period, New Zealanders need to be aware of some of the key aspects of this unique country.

Large and diverse, China can pose many challenges for first time and regular visitors alike.

Culture, language, environment can all play a part in unsettling visitors – and that's before one gets to the differences that impact business dealings.

This booklet provides New Zealand travellers and business people with general advice on what to expect when visiting China, including tried and true tips from Kiwis who have been there, done that. The following will help you avoid some of the common misunderstandings that arise in dealings between Chinese and New Zealanders and ensure your time with China is a successful one.

What's in this booklet

This booklet is divided into five chapters. Each chapter outlines a key aspect of Chinese culture and context.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to Chinese culture and China's development, highlighting some of the growing pains that the country is currently experiencing.

Relationships, family and the home are introduced in **chapter 2**, including the all-important concepts of guanxi and face.

Chapter 3 will start your taste buds watering with a focus on eating, diet and cuisine – and baijiu.

Card swapping and the business context in China is introduced in **chapter 4**.

Chapter 5 provides information on getting around China, including some important dates to avoid.

The **resources section** includes useful websites, sources for further information and contact details.

Quotes from New Zealanders throughout highlight some of the differences they have encountered.

The importance of 'chalk understanding cheese'

We're as similar as chalk and cheese. While cooperation between China and New Zealand continues to improve, basic cultural differences remain.

China is fast becoming one of New Zealand's most important international partners. Following the signing of the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement in 2008, trade between the two countries has increased to the extent that China is New Zealand's second largest trading partner. China is likely to become New Zealand's largest trading partner in the near future.

Every year hundreds of thousands of Chinese and New Zealand citizens visit each other's countries, forging links in areas such as tourism, culture, education and business. These exchanges reinforce the overall connections between the two countries, and help find new areas in which relationships can be established.

While cooperation between our two countries continues to improve, basic cultural differences remain. On both sides, there are habits, customs and etiquette that are foreign to the other.

Start off on the best foot

I should have done more research before I first visited China. I kind of went on a wing and a prayer, which was silly as I wasted a lot of time and missed a number of signals and opportunities.

Written for the benefit of first time visitors to China, the following chapters provide insight into some of the common areas of difference encountered by New Zealanders when in China or engaging with Chinese counterparts.

You won't necessarily encounter all of the areas of difference outlined here; similarly, there will be areas of difference you encounter that haven't been explained here. This booklet aims to alert you to some of the most common areas of difference you are likely to encounter during your travels or business visit.

Chapter 1

China essentials

Never in a million years would I have considered how developed China had become. I expected images of China of old, with rice paddies and traditional buildings. But there I was, just minutes after arriving from the airport, looking at block after block of skyscrapers. They went on for miles. I realised then how much China has moved on from the traditional images I was brought up with and fed through the media.

China is a country that intrigues. From its people to geography, politics to culture, customs to the built environment, China has been amazing foreigners for centuries.

More recently, China's economic development has lifted millions out of poverty but has significantly impacted on the environment.

This chapter provides an introduction to some key features and developments within China. Subsequent chapters delve into specific areas relating to relationships, food, business dealings and transport.

A land of contrasts

I just couldn't believe the contrasts that exist. Not just between leaving major cities on the sleeper train and waking up in the middle of farmland, but also the contrasts within cities. You can go from towering skyscrapers to ramshackle huts to bare land in just minutes.

From the steppes of Inner Mongolia to the skyscrapers of Shanghai, from the pandas of Chengdu to the pollution of Chongqing, the monasteries of Tibet to the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, the land of China is one which amazes and intrigues.

Significant diversity exists across what is the world's most populous nation and second largest country in land area. From areas relatively untouched by man to land that is intensively developed, China is a country rich in resources and potential.

China by Numbers	
55	Number of ethnic minorities in China. Han Chinese comprise 92% of the population
2019	China-New Zealand Year of Tourism
8,827	2018 GDP per capita in USD. (NZ GDP per capita is US\$38,518)
9.6 million	Area in km ² . China is the world's second largest country
30 million	Estimated population of Chongqing, China's largest megacity.
30 billion	Two-way trade between China and New Zealand
1.4 billion	Population in 2018, making China the world's most populous country

中国:

At the world's centre

In Chinese, China literally translates as “middle country”. This alone indicates the importance placed on China within Chinese perspectives on the world. For centuries China has seen itself as the Middle Kingdom – the centre of the world.

Many ‘firsts’ reinforced this perception in China. Gunpowder, papermaking, printing and the compass: many foundations of the modern world were invented in China.

This outlook is perhaps best illustrated by the ill-fated visit of Earl Macartney, Britain’s first envoy to China, in 1792. On arrival in Beijing, Macartney was kept waiting for many months while negotiations occurred determining the protocols by which he would meet with the Emperor. On finally meeting with the Emperor, Macartney was quickly dismissed with a curt notice that China had no need to engage with foreigners.

Fast forward nearly two centuries and China’s perception of her role in the world is strengthening. While China's links with the rest of the world have developed quickly in the decades since the establishment of US-China relations, a residual sense of the country's superiority remains.

This is a perspective that has grown sharply alongside nationalism coinciding with the nation's economic development. Two showcase events - the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai - have helped shape Chinese considerations of 'coming out to the world'.

This increased nationalism has become a rallying point for domestic political benefit and is also beginning to be reflected externally. China is in the process of reasserting itself within the international system.

East versus West

Almost brought to its knees during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution periods, China has since become the world's economic powerhouse. Since the initiation of the 'opening up' and reform period in 1978, China has averaged around 10 per cent growth per annum. This sustained period of growth has been so strong that commentators have called it the biggest movement of people out of poverty in world history – achieved within a generation.

All is not equal however; China's seaboard east coast has experienced the dragon's share of economic development with development in China's central and western provinces lagging behind that of their eastern cousins.

Fearful of the inequalities arising between these regions, recent cohorts of Chinese leaders have sought to encourage the development of the non-Eastern provinces. The “Go West” suite of policies aimed to encourage the flow of business and investment into central and western China, helping spur the development of these regions and stymie the mass migration of people to the eastern provinces.

Mobile workforce

I was struck by the sheer mass of humanity that confronted me at the train station. There were so many people just sitting outside the train station with all their worldly belongings beside them.

Unequal economic development between provinces and the household registration system, has led to the development of a significant social phenomenon: that of the migrant worker.

Migrant workers have left their home provinces (usually in central or western China) to seek better employment opportunities in more developed provinces. Consequently they are disadvantaged as under China’s hukou (household registration) system they cannot access government services such as schooling, healthcare and social security in their adoptive province.

Given the social implications, the migrant worker phenomenon is potentially a ticking time bomb for China.

Growing numbers

In 1990 the Chinese government counted 30 million migrant workers. The number has since exploded to anywhere between 150 to 260 million.

Over 80 per cent of China's migrant workers hail from the Sichuan, Guizhou, Henan, Hubei, Anhui, Hunan, Jiangxi and Guangxi provinces.

Seven coastal regions - Beijing, Tianjin, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong receive 80 per cent of all migrant workers (can be up a third of a city's population). In smaller industrial centres, migrant worker numbers can be as high as 90 per cent.

Steering the ship ahead

China's leaders are facing challenging times. The country's rich history and traditions are colliding with the drive to modernise and further develop China's economy. As China's economy grows, so too does the environmental impact of development. While China's society remains greatly influenced by ancient Chinese traditions, such as Confucianism, modern political frameworks and pressures from China's rapid economic development are having a considerable impact on society.



The economic development of China is clear, unlike the skies, a symbol of China's new challenge: living in harmony with the environment. Here the Forbidden City is almost obscured by Beijing's smog.

你你你你你
你你

汉语 / 中文

The Chinese language

Often considered as 'the Great Wall of languages' – designed to keep foreigners out – Chinese is steadily becoming learned by a large number of foreigners.

- ✧ Chinese characters date back over 3000 years, making written Chinese the world's oldest continuously used writing system. Each Chinese character has a unique meaning. A character can be joined with other characters to form other words.
- ✧ It is generally accepted that there are 40-80,000 Chinese characters, many of which are rarely used or ancient characters. Knowing 2-3000 characters is the benchmark for functional literacy. University graduates will generally know around 6-8000 characters.

- ✧ Traditional Chinese is used in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. Simplified Chinese is used in mainland China. Simplification is often attributed to Chairman Mao Zedong's desire to encourage mass literacy.
- ✧ Pinyin is a system for writing Chinese characters in the Latin alphabet. It is useful for learning the phonetics of Mandarin and for using a computer. There are four tones in Chinese and meanings can vary considerably depending on which tones you use.

While “to speak Chinese is not to know China” as one of Australia’s former ambassadors to China has noted, any attempt to acquire some Chinese will likely be positively received when travelling and working in China.

Beginner’s mistake

Mandarin's four tones trip up most language learners. Meaning can greatly vary according to the tone used. For example, depending on the tone you use you could go into a restaurant and ask for a dumpling (shui3jiao3) or a sleep (shui4jiao4). Be careful what you ask for!

Useful Phrases			
English	NZ Pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Chinese Characters
Hello	Nee How	Nǐhǎo	你好
To greet more than one	Nee men how	Nǐmen hǎo	你们好
My name is ...	Woa jow	Wǒ jiào	我叫
New Zealand	Shing she lan	Xīnxīlán	新西兰
China	Joong gua	Zhōngguó	中国
Very good!	Hun how	hěnn hǎo	很好
Male	nan	Nán	男
Female	nyu	N[ǚ	女

Brush up

There is a wide range of language learning resources available for budding Chinese speakers online. If you're based in Auckland, learn about Chinese language and culture with a Confucius Institute course.

Check out <https://ci.ac.nz>



Chapter 2

Relationships, family and the home

The relationships in any culture can be multi-varied and complex. No more is this so – at least to an outsider's perspective – than in China.

Relationships in China are influenced by a wide range of factors, including reference to societal mores, historic traditions, political frameworks and modes of operating, and – increasingly – Western approaches.

This chapter explores some of the more common influences on relationships in Chinese society.

Confucianism

Confucianism is often regarded as a key influence on relationships in China, though its influence on relationships in modern-day China is debated.

However, principles of Confucianism can be seen to more or less degrees in a range of situations.



Confucius identified five basic relationships as the bedrock of human relationships:

Relationship	Characteristic
Ruler and Subject	Benevolent/loyal
Parent and Child	Loving/reverential
Elder Sibling & Younger Sibling	Gentle/Deferential
Husband and Wife	Good/Listening
Elder friend & Younger friend	Considerate/ Deferential

Confucianism places family at the centre of Chinese society; three of the five key relationships are familial. The Confucian structure of relationships involves hierarchical deference, a degree of mutuality and responsibility, Respect, loyalty and harmony are key Confucian values.

While they do not apply at all times, they are generally the principles that underpin relationships in China – and thus impact on the development of relationships. Foreigners visiting China would do well to be at least be aware of them.

Good things take time

A central tenet of Confucianism is the respect for elders. Age is considered to give all things their worth – from objects to organisations to people.

Elders have an important place in Chinese society. They are frequently deferred to and shown great respect. This ranges from formal greetings, deference in meetings and when remarks are made, and looking after one's parents in old age.

Collectivism

One of the key differences between Chinese and Western society is the importance placed on collectivism over individualism. Rather than a focus on the individual, there is a strong sense of group connection, whether to family, education institution, company or country.

The importance placed on collectivism plays out in a number of ways, from familial situations to business relationships and dining etiquette. Collectivism prioritises harmony to encourage seamless relations between many individuals.

The importance of harmony

It was like watching a train crash in slow motion. My boss lost his

temper during negotiations. I knew we wouldn't recover that relationship thanks to that outburst. Sure enough, next time we visited, the gift we were given was a build-your-own pagoda set. If that wasn't a telling symbol of where our relationship got to, I don't know what was.

Given its history and population base, China has long emphasised harmony as a key value. Harmony is a value that was prioritised by Confucius and is still evident in current government policy which seeks to build a 'harmonious society'.

The premium placed on harmony at the macro level operates at individual levels and ties in strongly with the notion of face. Many individuals will repress their thoughts and feelings to avoid causing someone else public embarrassment and thus ensure harmony.

关系 Guanxi

The concept of guanxi is often stated but seldom fully understood. At its most basic level, guanxi relates to art of relationship development; friendships or connections between people. It is the 'unseen glue' that joins one person

to another, one friend to another, one business partner to another.

A business partnership without guanxi is unlikely to be sustainable.

In essence, guanxi involves an obligation to help friends first. Guanxi involves the reciprocal exchange of favours over time. A favour provided is a way to increase guanxi but also requires a favour in return. That obligation can have a number of interesting effects in business: the obligations of guanxi can override contracts, for example.

The importance placed on guanxi can perhaps be best understood when you consider the size of the country. Given the number of people in China, it is logical to have a 'framework' to prioritise with whom to do business. Guanxi provides a way in which relationships can be developed and maintained.

Guanxi warning

Guanxi can only be formed over a long time period. Those who claim they have it, often overstate it.

The importance of 'Face'

Alongside guanxi, the concept of 'face' is often talked about with respect to China and can seem an uninviting concept to a foreigner. Face is one of the most important concepts in Chinese culture.

Face can be considered to involve notions of honour, reputation, respect, dignity, pride, trustworthiness, authority and social status. At its simplest, however, the concept of face merely relates to not causing others embarrassment. In that respect, most societies have some version of face – whether or not they consciously acknowledge it.

Face is both gained and given according to one's actions. Losing face is a serious matter and can adversely impact your relations both personally and professionally. The best way to avoid losing face is to follow the lead of your Chinese hosts.

Ways to gain face	Ways to lose face
Compliment others	Show anger or lose your temper
Show others respect	Yell at people
Avoid mistakes	Accept compliments too easily
Compliment others to a third person	Self-promotion

Show 'wisdom in action'	Criticising someone in front of others
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Face is also preserved by avoiding sensitive issues such as family or general problems.

Staying 'mum'

To ensure harmony and maintain face, people will often remain quiet rather than publicly disagree with what someone has said. To speak out would make both parties lose face.



Non-verbal communication

They were saying all the right things – I thought we had a deal. But when I returned home, none of my emails were answered. Our phone calls and subsequent meetings saw them reaffirm the desire to work together, but we never managed to get anything off the ground. I don't know what I did wrong.

Given the focus on face and the avoidance of public disagreement, a lot of store is placed on non-verbal communication to communicate that which can't be said.

Facial expression, tone of voice and body language are all important in expressing meaning. Your facial expressions while people are speaking can be interpreted as your agreement or disagreement with what that person is saying. For this reason, most Chinese maintain impassive expressions while others are speaking.

When dealing with Chinese counterparts, taking note of the non-verbal communication employed may yield a better insight than a simple focus on what is being said.

The concept of jia: 家

Home and family

Jia 家 in Chinese reflects the centrality of family in society and can mean family, home, house, restaurant or even in relation to the country (guojia 国家).

Invitations to homes

It is rare to be invited into a Chinese home. Entertaining is normally undertaken in public places, such as restaurants; there is fear of losing face in inviting people to one's home. Being invited into someone's home, therefore, is a significant privilege.

If you are invited to someone's home:

- bring a gift to give to your host. You may suggest the gift be opened, though don't expect it to be opened in your presence
- be prepared to remove shoes
- be prepared to accept tea on arrival
- don't expect a tour of the house
- be sure to offer compliments to your host on their home
- wait to be told where to sit
- follow the lead of the host when it comes to serving and eating food.

Full house

In China, more than one family often reside together under the one roof. It is not uncommon for grandparents to live in the same home as their children and grandchildren. As Chinese middle classes get wealthier, however, more families are maintaining their independence – with grandparents delaying co-location with their children until they are much older.

Gift etiquette

Gift giving is an important part of Chinese way of life and an important ritual in establishing and maintaining relationships. Gifts are given for important events, such as weddings, births and Chinese New Year, or when visiting someone's home. Gifts are also often exchanged between prospective and current business partners.

In business meetings, the exchange of gifts usually occurs toward the end of meetings. The giver and recipient often pause to have the moment recorded by photograph.

When travelling to China on business, you should bring appropriate gifts – and have some pre-wrapped gifts as backup in case they are needed.

DO	DO NOT
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Present gifts with both hands; this indicates you are giving fully of yourself and not withholding anything. For similar reasons, receive gifts with both hands. ✓ Give items in multiples of eight, as eight is the luckiest number and is seen to bring luck to the recipient. ✓ Wrap gifts in gold or red paper; these colours are considered the luckiest in China. ✓ Consider giving food as a gift. ✓ Note that gifts may be refused three times before being accepted. <p>However, this is a practice on the decrease.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Give scissors, knives or other cutting utensils as such items connote the severing of ties. × Give an umbrella or pear to your friend or partner; in Chinese these words sound like 'separation'. × Give white or yellow flowers, clocks or handkerchiefs; these items are associated with funerals and death. × Give anything related to 'four' as four connotes death. × Wrap gifts in white or black paper. × Open any gift given to you unless asked to by the giver. Traditionally gifts are not opened when received.
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The little red envelope

红包

On special occasions, red envelopes filled with money (“hong bao”) are given instead of gifts. This is particularly so at weddings and Chinese New Year.

As a foreigner, it is unlikely you will need to give *hong bao* at Chinese New Year, you will need to for any weddings you are invited to attend. In determining the amount of money to give, be mindful of Chinese' predilection to avoid the number 4 and prefer the number 8.

Lucky red

While red is considered a lucky colour in Chinese culture (you just need to take note of the prevalence of red for all



important events), there are some areas in which the people's colour should not be used. One such instance is in writing people's names. Writing people's names in red is considered inappropriate because red is the colour used for the names on gravestones.

Useful Phrases for Receiving and Giving Gifts			
English	NZ pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Chinese characters
This is our gift	Zhe sher woa men de showe lee woo	Zhè shì wǒmen de xiǎo lǐwù.	这是我们的礼物
Please accept it!	Ching nin showe na	Qǐng nín xiào nà!	请您笑纳!
Thank you!	Shea shea	Xièxie!	谢谢!
You are welcome!	Bu shea	Búxiè!	不谢!

Family Members			
English	NZ pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Chinese characters
Mother	Ma ma	māma	妈妈
Father	Ba ba	bàba	爸爸
Elder brother	Gur gur	gēge	哥哥
Younger brother	Dee dee	dìdi	弟弟
Elder sister	Jie jie	jiějie	姐姐
Younger sister	May may	mèimei	妹妹

Love, marriage and divorce

I heard about it, but I never expected I would encounter it in this day and age. I was in Shanghai and grandmothers were trying to set up their grandchildren for marriage. They were wearing sandwich boards in a public park and walking around trying to find a suitable match for their grandchild based on factors like income, apartment ownership, car ownership and city of birth. It was an amazing phenomenon to observe.

The matchmaking grandmothers in Shanghai's Peoples Square is just one example of the differences in the way relationships in China can evolve compared with New Zealand. Marriage in China can quickly boil down to considerations of income, job, assets and status. Parents can often make their feelings quickly known on the suitability – or otherwise – of prospective suitors.

Chinese families revolve around the notion of taking care of every member of that family. The family functions as a unit. Hierarchies play a part, with the husband commonly controlling most family matters.

The wife, however, is often holder of the family's finances, and thus has considerable influence in the family.

Divorce, while traditionally rare, is becoming more pronounced in modern Chinese society with the number of divorce cases increasing every year. The social stigma still remains, however, and many couples will choose to stay together despite marital unhappiness.

Don't touch the forehead

Much as in Māori culture, the head in Asian cultures is tapu. You should avoid touching someone else's head; to do so is a significant no-no.

Physical contact

Generally, Chinese people avoid physical contact between opposing sexes. Indeed, you will more commonly see physical contact between same sexes; it is not unusual to see two males or two females holding hands or walking with arms over each other's shoulders. Such behaviour does not indicate sexual intention. Indeed, public displays of affection are rare and generally unwelcome.

You may find that you have more physical contact with your Chinese

partners the longer and stronger your relationship is. This will be with counterparts of the same sex, however. Physical contact between opposite sexes is extremely rare.



A family takes a nap outside their house.

Close up

You may find that people stand closer to you than you may be used to in New Zealand. Rather than taking this as an invasion of your personal space, consider this as a sign of trust. Similarly, if you stand far away from someone, it may be seen as a sight that you are unfriendly or untrusting.

Gender matters

妇女能顶半边天

Chairman Mao once said “women can hold up half the sky” but this recognition of women's role in society was more a statement in theory than practice. While things are changing – thanks to a number of female trailblazers – business and politics in China remain dominated by men.

As in most countries, women are paid less than men and are less likely to gain the highest positions. However a number of women have started to make their mark in business and politics. Several of China's richest people are female and women are starting to rise in politics, though the Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee has not yet had a female member.



The one child impact

The impact of China's One Child Policy, introduced in 1979, is being keenly felt in modern Chinese society. Implemented as a blunt tool to address China's burgeoning population, the policy has had its own curious and unintended effects within Chinese society.

A shrinking population

The One Child Policy has led to a decrease in the number of working aged people able to support an ageing population. Family situations reflect at a micro level what is happening across the country. Within families, one child faces the prospect of supporting their parents, and potentially their four grandparents as the older generations move out of employment and into retirement. Such ratios quickly become unsustainable, particularly if the spouse does not work and the spouse's family members must be supported – in addition to any children that the couple may have.

The missing generation

The One Child Policy has also brought about claims of a 'missing generation'. Since the boys of the family traditionally cared for the parents when they reached old age, many parents have sought to have boys rather than girls. This has led to countless girls being

abandoned or aborted; now men significantly outnumber women in China and leading to claims of a missing generation of women. Chinese society is debating the impact of this gender imbalance, particularly for Chinese bachelors who are unable to find a potential wife.

Rise of the Little Emperors

A generation of only children has spawned the rise of a new phenomenon: the so-called Little Emperor syndrome which has resulted from only children, the key to a family's future well-being, being excessively pampered by parents and grandparents. Provided with few boundaries, these children grow up into 'little emperors' who are primarily motivated by self-interest and not by societal or familial obligations.

Despite the rise of the little emperors, familial bonds still remain tight. It is not uncommon for parents to call their children every day when they are at university.

Abolition

The One Child Policy was only ever applied to the Han people, the dominant population within China, and not to the 55 ethnic minority groups within China.

At the end of 2015, the one-child policy was officially abolished in China. And effectively from January 2016, the national birth planning policy became a universal two-child policy that allowed each couple to have two children.



Chapter 3

Chinese food and dining

I had a manager who refused to eat any Chinese food. It was so embarrassing. She would just peer down at the dish and state she couldn't eat it. She subsisted on coffee and muffins and refused to eat anything during the lunches and dinners our Chinese partners would host us for. It nearly ruined our relationships. I couldn't bring her back.

Meals in China are not just about sating one's hunger, they serve an important social function. Dining brings people together and helps to develop and reinforce social, familial and business bonds.

Given its importance in daily life, there is a range of points to be mindful of when dining with Chinese counterparts. This chapter outlines some of the key information you need to know when it comes to partaking China's famous food.

An introduction to Chinese food

Savour it all

The colour and aroma of Chinese food is just as important as the flavour.

I had never eaten tofu before I went to China and I didn't really like eggplant either. But while there, I tried the famous mapu doufu dish and a number of eggplant dishes. They were delicious – a true taste sensation – and they really made me rethink my approach to foods I thought I didn't like.

From plain to spicy, liquids to solids, colours to smells, the variety of Chinese cuisine is truly impressive. Amongst this variety are some common staples: rice, noodles, tofu, wheat, pork, duck, chicken and vegetables all form the base for Chinese cuisine.

Rice is a bedrock of Chinese food, and particularly popular in southern China. Most commonly served steamed or fried, it is also used as the basis for rice wine and vinegar. Considered as 'peasants' food' – in that it is a staple food for farmers – it is often only served at the end of banquets after more expensive and exotic dishes have been served.

Noodles are also a common element in Chinese food, particularly in northern cuisine, coming in a variety of shapes

and sizes and with different sauces or in different soups. Tofu forms the basis of a number of dishes, including the famous mapu doufu. Wheat is used for a variety of dishes, including noodles, bread dumplings and steamed buns.

Vegetables in China are served steamed and stir fried and frequently served in sauces. Many are familiar to New Zealanders, such as spinach; others are endemic to China like bok choi, or Chinese cabbage.

Herbs, seasonings and spices combine to form the many flavoursome sauces that accompany Chinese meals. Ingredients such as soy, oyster, rice vinegar, fish sauce, hoisin sauces accompany ginger, garlic, spring onion, sesame oil, white pepper, Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, cinnamon, fennel, cloves and chillies. With such



combinations, you can fall in love with food you never liked served other ways.

China isn't particularly well known for its desserts; sweet snacks are normally served between meals rather than after a big meal and are made of bean paste,

cane sugar and glutinous rice. The most common dessert, however, is fresh fruit. A plate of palate-cleansing seasonal fresh fruit will often be brought out after the last main dish, usually a whole fish, signalling the end to the meal.



Fruit in Chinese supermarkets and fruit shops often come pre-packaged in individual polystyrene coverings - with little regard for the aftertaste.

Eating fish

It is customary to be served a whole cooked fish as the main course in a meal. As with other meals, the fish can be served with chopsticks.

If you are unsure how to eat, just follow the lead of your host.



You should avoid flipping the fish over in order to access the meat on the bottom part of the fish; to do so is considered a sign of bad luck.

The most prized part of the fish is the cheek meat, considered to be the most delicate section of the fish. Often the host will encourage their guest to eat this section. Do not be tempted to take this yourself.



China is of course famous for its tea; it is often served liberally throughout meals.

There are many Chinese tea varieties, from leaves to flowers and white to black, including green, black, white, yellow, oolong, puer, jasmine, kuding and chrysanthemum. During meals, it is common for diners to pour tea for the guests beside them.

Teapots should also be placed on the table so as the spout does not point at any individual.

Parochial pride

Given China's size, it's unsurprising that regional variations exist in the cuisine. Most regions lay claim to a particular speciality, its food influenced by available ingredients, history and the geography and climate. Chinese are justifiably proud of their food and, if you're travelling around China, it pays to partake of the local kai.

Cuisine in China has different cuisine styles: Anhui, Beijing, Cantonese, Fujian, Hunan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Sichuan/Szechuan, Hubei and Zhejiang. Each has a number of sub-cuisines. Other food styles to try include Xinjiang and Tibetan.



Seafood is the base for many dishes.

Some of the more common culinary traditions:	
Beijing 北京菜	Beijing is well known for its famous Peking Duck (北京 鸭 <i>Beijing Kaoya</i>).
Cantonese 粤菜	Cantonese cuisine, centred on the Southern China provinces, has a strong focus on seafood. A wide variety of ingredients, including in the most famous dish, dim sum (点心 <i>dianxin</i>).
Shanghai 上海菜	Shanghai cuisine is often sweeter than China's other regional cuisines, with sugar in fried dishes. Equidistant between Beijing and Hong Kong, Shanghai cuisine has a balance of northern and southern influences, combining the Jiangsu and Zhejiang cuisine styles. Famous Shanghai dishes include “Red-cooked” Pork (红烧肉 <i>hongshaorou</i>) and snack xiaolongbao (小笼包 <i>Xiaolongbao</i>).
Sichuan 四川菜	The Sichuan peppercorn makes Sichuan food so spicy your mouth will go numb. Extra zing is added with chilli peppers and garlic, ensuring bold flavours. A famous Sichuan dish is mapu doufu.

‘We’ versus ‘Me’

I took a group of New Zealanders out for dinner with some Chinese friends and it was just embarrassing. They all just went for the food, basically wolfing it down like pigs at a trough, with little regard for the rest of the table. I could see my Chinese friends wondering what on earth they had got themselves into.

One of the main differences between Chinese and Western dining etiquette stems from the communal nature of eating in China. Diners share the range of dishes brought to the table over the course of the dinner so it is important to be mindful that everyone has a chance to eat from the dishes.

It is customary for the most senior representatives to be served or invited to dish themselves first. Often diners will serve each other choice pieces of food as a sign of deference and respect. On more formal occasions, dishes may be served away from the table and diners provided with individual plates.



A good host will ensure there is more food than can be eaten by the guests. In more formal occasions, the supply of food is likely to greatly exceed the stomach capacity of the guests. It's therefore advisable to pace oneself.

Food for thought

Growing up, many of us were taught to 'finish your plate', to make sure that all the food served to us was consumed. The situation can be different in China where to leave some food on one's plate is to indicate that your hosts have been generous. A 'clean' plate can indicate that you hunger for more food and that the host has not looked after you well enough.

Watch your elbows

Some Western habits that should be avoided include “keep your elbows off the table” that your mother used to remind you.

I had a piece of food stuck in my teeth. It was annoying me to no end so I just had to get it out, which I did with my finger as there were no toothpicks available. I was shot a look by one of my Chinese off-siders which made me realise I shouldn't be doing that. I was so embarrassed; I hadn't made a good impression.

Key Dining Tips

- **Timeliness:** It is important to be punctual for functions. Arrive on time for your meal or a little early. If you are hosting a meal, arrive early to ensure you meet your guests.
- **Seating:** The host is usually seated in the part of the table facing the door but furthest from it, with the primary guest to the right, the second guest on the left.
- **Menu selection:** Consult others as to menu selection when dining. Be flexible when discussing menu selections; there will be many dishes which you can pick and choose from.
- **Dish acceptance:** Accept dishes presented to you as a gesture of kindness and respect. Accept dishes given to you but there is no requirement to eat them. Simply leave dishes you don't want to eat to one side.
- **Use of utensils:** Cups or glasses are always put on your right side. Ensure the spout of the teapot is not facing anyone; it should be directed to where nobody is sitting.

When using a spoon to consume soups, scoop the dish towards you rather than away from you; by doing so you are considered to be raking in wealth rather than pushing it away. Use toothpicks, not your fingers.

- **Culinary satisfaction:** When being hosted for a meal, it is important to note your satisfaction with the host's quality of the dishes and skill of dish selection. Do not be offended by slurping or belching sounds; it can just indicate enjoyment of the meal. Don't eat the last piece on a plate.
- **Departure:** While in New Zealand it may be considered rude to leave quickly after dinner is completed, this is not the case in China. Once the dinner has finished, be prepared to leave promptly.
- **Payment:** Going 'Dutch' isn't really applicable for meals in China; whoever hosts the meal will pay for all of it. If you invite someone or a group to dinner, you will be expected to pay for everyone.

筷子 Two little sticks

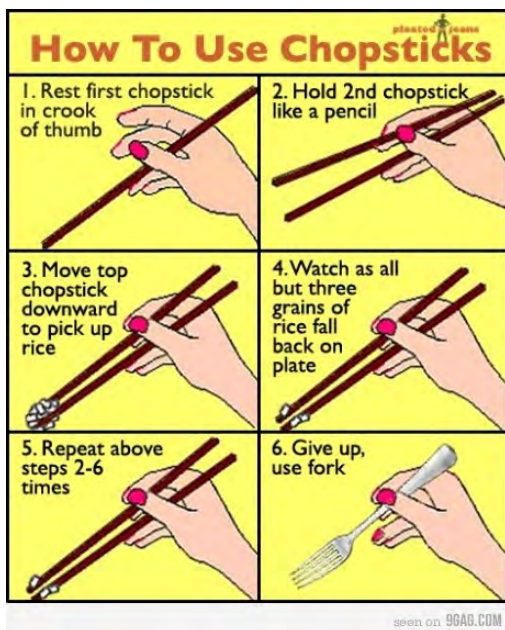
Chopsticks have been used in China for over two millennia. It's said that Confucius associated knives with acts of aggression so knives were banned from the table. The humble chopstick – made of wood and not metal – was thus born.

Whether this legend is true or not, you can't get far in China without mastering the art of these little sticks. Indeed, Chinese food is usually prepared in bite-sized pieces for consumption using chopsticks. If you haven't learned how to use them, it's time to get practising.

There are few rules with chopsticks, except that, like most dining utensils, they're designed to get food in your mouth, not on your shirt.



While any lack of chopstick ability is sure to provide humour at the dinner table in more informal contexts, you should be prepared with your best kuaizi action for more formal occasions.



Rofhard.blogspot.com

Confucius once said:
*‘Eating is the utmost
important thing in life.’*

Chopstick Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
<p>Hold your chopsticks towards their end, not in the middle or front third.</p> <p>Use the chopstick rests, if provided, when chopsticks are not in use. Rest your chopsticks after every few bites and when you drink or speak.</p> <p>Use your chopsticks only for food; avoid using chopsticks to pull plates or dishes closer to you.</p>	<p>Play with your chopsticks, wave them around, beat them on the table or against your bowl or plate</p> <p>Use chopsticks to gesture or point with, particularly at people.</p> <p>Stick your chopsticks into your food, particularly rice, as this connotes offering of food for the dead.</p>

Feel free to use the reverse ends of your chopsticks to serve food or if you have already eaten from your chopsticks.

Use your chopsticks to break apart large pieces of food or simply to pick up large pieces to bite them.

Wait your turn until another diner has served themselves from a dish.

Spear food with your chopsticks; use a spoon.

Pass food directly from your chopsticks to another person's chopsticks. Do not lick your chopsticks.

Hover chopsticks over food while you decide what to eat or use chopsticks to examine pieces in a dish.

Eat directly from the serving dishes; transfer the food first to your plate.

BYO kuaizi 筷子

With a population of over 1.4 billion requiring chopsticks for their three meals a day, there is significant demand for chopsticks. It's estimated that over 50 billion chopsticks are produced annually from over 25 million trees to satisfy demand.

This environmental footprint has led many to advocate for more sustainable approaches, with a push to adopt reusable chopsticks instead of disposable ones. In 2006, the Chinese government joined the effort and imposed a tax on disposable chopsticks in an attempt to reduce waste.

Today, a small but growing community is seeking to reduce the environmental impact of disposable chopsticks by bringing their own chopsticks for use at restaurants and for takeaway meals.



Toasts and speeches

People were getting up and toasting each other. I had no idea whether I should join in or stay sitting. Or what I'd say if I did get up.

Most Chinese meals, whether informal or formal, involve a toast of some kind. Toasts are normally relatively short and centre on the friendship and partnership between the two parties.

A generic toast will usually be initiated by the host of the meal.



Then the principal guest can respond.

After a general toast, individuals may toast each other. In this instance, it is best to follow the lead of the host.

Again, such toasts reinforce bonds between the various parties. The content of such toasts should focus on the current and future partnership between the parties.

At the conclusion of the meal, the host will make some short remarks to thank the participants for attending and mark the end of the dinner.

白酒

The joys of the clear liquid

I got to a point where I had to say I was allergic to it. My liver was just not coping – nor was I. Night after night drinking rocket fuel? It just wasn't worth it.

Many a foreigner has horror stories from the excessive consumption of baijiu, a high-proof Chinese liquor made from assorted grains. It's often consumed during meals when doing business in China, between prospective and current partners.

The small shots of transparent liquid look harmless enough but some versions of baijiu have an alcohol content of 60 per cent.

As rotating rounds of toasts occur between increasingly friendly friends, things can quickly get out of hand

particularly when combined with that other Chinese custom: ganbei or bottoms up!

In moderation, baijiu provides a spring in your step and a zing in your throat. At its worst, well, you'll feel the results the next day or so.

While baijiu consumption in business dealings has been declining in major metropolitan areas, in part due to a crackdown on what has been perceived to be excessive consumption on the public purse, it's a tradition alive and kicking in many areas of the country.

If you're not up for baijiu you can simply decline; you're unlikely to cause offence if you choose not to partake. Besides, you can always claim you're allergic. But, be warned: once you start, it can be hard to stop.

The moral of this chapter

As Confucius once said, "Eating is the utmost important thing in life." So before you go to China, it pays to become familiar with the food. Luckily, Chinese food can be found in just about any corner of the world; try some – with your kuaizi!

Useful phrases for Dining			
English	NZ Pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Chinese Characters
Let's drink a toast!	Gan bay	Gānbēi !	干杯！
I want to make a toast to you!	Woa jing nee	Wǒ jìng nǐ	我敬你！
I like it!	Woa she hoan	Wǒ xǐhuan	我喜欢！
Delicious!	how chee	hǎochī	好吃
Nice to drink	how hur	hǎohē	好喝
Chopsticks	kwai ze	kuàizi	筷子
Knife	dow	dāo	刀
Fork	cha	chā	叉

Chapter 4

Business contexts

I was so terrified I would commit a faux pas and screw the relationship up. I totally clammed up and was just really awkward. It was terrible – and I knew they knew that I didn't know anything. It was a really intense business meeting – thankfully I got better!

In perhaps no other country can one find such a powerful link between politics and business.

Successfully operating in China on a large scale invariably requires well-developed political links to support business objectives as well as a focus on ensuring positive and deep relationships with your business partners. The old mantra remains true: you should make friends first and do business later.

This chapter outlines some of the key considerations when developing business links in China.

Introducing yourself or your organisation

I had no idea where to start. It just seemed too foreign, too inaccessible. The initial contacts I made either got no response or I just ended up wasting time.

It can be difficult to start out when the culture and ways of operating are so different. Chinese organisations may be reluctant to meet unknown, untested domestic representatives, let alone foreign ones.

The size of the country, together with the protocols around face and guanxi, means that doing business often involves using an intermediary to arrange introductions and to help establish relationships in China.

A successful intermediary, an individual or a company) will be well-known to the other partner, will attest to your organisation's credentials, provide introductions and play an important role in asking questions that the main partners may not wish to ask directly.

Trading cards

Getting the small things right will make achieving the bigger goals easier.

A number of customs make all the difference when conducting business in China. Take, for example, the swapping of business cards.

In China, as in a number of other Asian cultures, it is important to treat a business card as an extension of the person rather than just a piece of paper that cost a lot to print. Business cards, in other words, should be treated with respect:

- Have one side of your business card translated into simplified Chinese (for mainland China) or traditional Chinese (for Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan). Present this side to your business acquaintance.
- Rather than just flicking it to your acquaintance with one hand, take the time to give your card with two hands. This practice indicates that you are giving all of yourself and not holding anything back. Similarly, you should take care to receive cards with both hands.
- Once you have received someone's business card, be sure to treat it with respect. Always examine a card which has been presented to

you and be sure not to bend or write on it.

- Avoid putting business cards in trouser pockets as this indicates a mark of disrespect. If you need to stow a card in a pocket, place it in your jacket pocket.
- In meeting contexts, you can place business cards on the table beside your notes. This allows you to easily associate each person with their card.

While business cards in Western society are often only exchanged in business contexts, business cards are frequently exchanged in a range of circumstances in China.



Be happy

There's no need to be too serious when involved in business dealings in China; smiling is a standard, expected mode of communication which helps the exchange get off on the right foot.

Translations

I ended up asking the New Zealand company reps whether they could read Chinese. That was the only way I could get them to understand the importance of getting their company profile translated into Chinese so their business counterparts could better understand their company and offer.

In addition to your business card, you should also consider other key documents to get translated to bolster your presence in China. Initial introductions can be cemented by providing your Chinese counterparts with important information about your organisation in Chinese.

Translation tips

- Use simplified Chinese for mainland China; traditional Chinese is used in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.
- For sensitive documents, particularly where the language is of a technical or legal nature, it pays to choose an appropriately qualified translator – and to have the translation reviewed.

Arranging meetings

Business meetings, particularly initial ones, can often take time to arrange. Even if you begin the process early, it takes time to finalise arrangements, with details often being confirmed very late. Somehow, despite the apparent chaos, it invariably all comes together.

Meetings are the preferred means of conducting business rather than via electronic communications. Always seek written confirmation of the meeting as well as the objectives and agenda of the meeting.

If you secure a meeting, be sure to turn up on time. Punctuality is important; indeed, tardiness can be considered an insult. Be sure to factor sufficient time for travel so you arrive prior to the meeting start time.

Dress sense

When it comes to business dress, much the same rules apply in China as they do in New Zealand. However there is perhaps less scope to dress boldly; dressing conservatively is the norm. Dark colours and high necklines for women are preferred, as are shoes with small or no high heels. Bright colours or avante garde fashion are not common for conducting business.

Respect my authority

It was the most boring three days of my life. I basically just sat in the room while people talked around me. As a more junior member of the delegation, my role was to listen and not say anything unless called upon. Despite all the grinning and nodding, it was a struggle to stay awake.

Unlike more collaborative meeting styles you may encounter in New Zealand, Chinese meetings are dominated by the most senior representatives of each team.

The senior representatives will be expected to lead the exchanges on both sides, particularly for the introductory and closing sessions, but often for the remainder of the meeting as well.

The hierarchical nature of meeting etiquette means that junior team members are often unlikely to publicly contribute in meetings unless specifically called upon by the lead representatives. They will also not make a decision without first gaining the consent of their senior.



Seating at meetings will reflect hierarchies, with the most senior members of

each respective side sitting opposite each other in the centre of the table. The more junior members will be placed toward the end of the table.

Ranking matters

Chinese can be very sensitive to rank; their preference is to ensure that like is matched with like, that the appropriate level of seniority is reflected on both sides of the table.

Despite the importance placed on rank within China, many New Zealand businesspeople recommend 'talking to the person in the room'. In this sense, gaining the ear of the person who does the work may be as important as solely focusing on the figureheads.

Using interpreters

Interpreters can play an important part in helping bridge communication divides. However it is important to know how to use interpreters to best effect:

- Think about what you are going to say in advance, providing clear distinct statements.
- 'Speak in paragraphs', pausing every now and then to allow the translator time to translate.
- Brief the interpreter in advance to ensure they are prepared for the subject areas and terminology you will be delving into.

Negotiations

I've found that the road is seldom easy. Negotiations are gruelling, drawn-out affairs. And even when you think you have a deal, things are moving. The situation can often be constantly changing, so you need to keep your wits about you.

Negotiations with Chinese counterparts can be a long process. “Careful review and consideration,” is often required. Decisions may not be taken in the meeting; instead decisions can be made outside of the negotiating room.

The way negotiations are undertaken is a critically important part of developing the overall relationship. Negotiations are often viewed as a sign of whether the two sides can work together comfortably. In negotiating with

prospective or current Chinese partners, you need to do so with respect and with the end relationship in mind.

Employing high pressure tactics or losing your temper in such negotiating contexts invariably has an unfavourable outcome and will result in you losing face. To preserve face, Chinese are generally non-confrontational. Rather than directly saying 'no', you may instead hear the more indirect responses, "I will think about it" or "I will see".

You may also hear 'yes' a lot from your Chinese partners. This should not necessarily be taken as agreement to what you are saying but rather an indication they are paying attention and following what you say.

Chinese negotiators have the reputation of getting the best deal at the best price. You should therefore leave room for movement in any starting position. Once agreements have been signed, they can still be subject to further negotiation so be aware that you may need to constantly negotiate your arrangements – or at least check that any subsequent discussions have not moved away from the written agreement.

Say what?

Sometimes it can seem as if a person is saying an awful lot but saying nothing at all. In such contexts, it is important to be patient and listen carefully. That person may be providing subtle messaging as to what may or may not be possible.

You should also not expect useful information to be divulged in group contexts. Business people recommend developing close relationships with individuals so that information may be gained in a private setting. Chinese can be more direct, straightforward and free to speak their minds in such settings.

You should also be mindful of silence. Chinese are often more comfortable with silence in conversations than Westerners. Your patience in waiting for a response could be rewarded with interesting or insightful comments.

Useful phrases

English	NZ Pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Chinese Characters
This is my business card.	Zhe sher woa de ming pian	Zhè shì wǒ de míngpiàn.	这是我的名片。
Nice to meet you!	Hen gao shing ren sher nee	Hěn gāoxìng rènshi nǐ!	很高兴认识你！
How much?	dwar showe chan	Duō shǎo qián ?	多少钱？

Chapter 5 “Xing” Getting around China

Thwak! My ribs pinged with pain, shooting up the side of my body. I spun around ready to take on the thug who so rudely inserted their elbow between my ribs. It turned out to be a pleasant looking little old lady, a good couple of feet shorter than myself. That trajectory explained why the elbow had such effect, but didn't explain why someone as lovely looking as my grandmother would sucker-punch me to the spleen.

For someone who is used to roaming wide New Zealand streets, entering a Beijing subway carriage at rush hour can be a very foreign experience.

A country with the mass population and developing transport infrastructure of China invariably results in unique side effects.

From subways to rapid trains, bicycles to buses, there is a range of ways to manoeuvre relatively safely around the Middle Kingdom. Just be careful to pick your travel dates well.

By train or plane

I was wasting my time something chronic. I was queuing with what seemed like half of Beijing just to buy a train ticket. With no way to buy tickets online, I had to stand in this queue for hours. Then I had to repeat the exercise all over again a few days later to ensure I got a return ticket. It was a killer.

As with any country, transport links are centred on the main cities, with ‘all roads leading to Beijing.’ Outside the main centres, transport links are less developed.

For long distances between major cities, plane and rapid rail are the two most common ways of travel. China is heavily investing in rapid rail between major centres e.g. Beijing to Shanghai, with trains capable of travelling up to 431 kilometres per hour. You can also purchase cheaper tickets for slower moving trains between centres.

Gateways

Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong are China’s key gateways for air travellers with a large number of international carriers servicing those airports. Air New Zealand services both Shanghai and Hong Kong with multiple flights every week.

Subways

I felt so rude. You just don't push in New Zealand, let alone invade someone's personal space. But I quickly realised that it's push and be pushed on the subway or bus, or you might be waiting for a while. Similarly, if you don't push to get out, you can spend a long time backtracking.

China's remarkably efficient subway systems are well known for squeezing as many commuters into a carriage like sardines.

Millions of people are transported across cities every day. New users of China's subway systems can find the crush of people slightly overwhelming, particularly at rush hour. While you may feel your personal space compromised, local commuters use other ways to respect their privacy: avoiding eye contact.

Staring into another person's eyes is considered disrespectful.

If travelling in a crowded subway carriage, be sure to position yourself near the door to get off at your stop. If you don't start early, you can find yourself unnecessarily backtracking on

the subway line – or walking a significant way between stops.



Stand aside

It seems obvious but can be forgotten in the drive to get to where you're going. When you're trying to board a subway, stand aside to let those on, off first. But don't be too polite – you can quickly find yourself on the wrong side of a closing door if you don't jostle to get on.

Taxis

Taxis are a relatively cheap and convenient way to get around China's cities, if you don't mind coming across the quintessential smoking and spitting taxi drivers. Depending on the route and time of day, travelling by taxi can be more convenient than the subway. Allow time, though if travelling in cities with an undersupply of taxis (e.g. Beijing), or at peak times.

If your Mandarin is not yet up to scratch, make sure that you carry a taxi card from your hotel showing its address in Chinese. Your concierge will write any addresses for the taxi driver. Most taxis do not have GPS, so you may need to explain how to get to your destination.

Be sure that your taxi driver uses the taxi meter; otherwise you may end up getting ripped off. In cities there are a number of illegal taxi operators – drivers who use their own cars to ferry passengers around, usually at night – which do not use taxi meters and which require bargaining of taxi fares prior to departure.

China by bicycle

It seems to be a cascade effect: vehicles use the bike lanes, bikes use the footpaths and pedestrians quickly learn to get out of the way. It appears as total chaos, but it actually works out really well. I just needed to keep an eye on everything that was happening around me.

There are perhaps few more quintessential sights of China than the sturdy black bicycle which the masses rode through the Cultural Revolution and beyond.

Once an omnipresent sight, the iconic bicycle is at risk of disappearing as car

ownership becomes a defining status symbol. Roads once governed by bikes are now filled with automobiles. Yet while cars remain the preferred transport choice for many, bicycles remain popular thanks to local government attempts to encourage more people to return to pedal power to help curb air pollution.

There is still an estimated half a billion bicycles in China – and about as many bikes in Beijing as there are people in New Zealand. Bicycles will also likely remain popular with tourists as there are few better ways to explore China's urban environments.



Safety first

Wearing a helmet on a bicycle is not compulsory in China. It is good sense to wear one though; bicycle riders have a number of collisions with cars every day.

China's holidays

I felt really stupid. I hadn't even bothered to check dates; public holidays never occurred to me. So of course I ended up landing just before the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Beijing's main streets were closed in advance of a massive spectacle for a global audience. And I ended up getting caught in the middle of it, wasting several days of my holiday as I couldn't get around or do the things I had planned.

When travelling around China, ensure you don't coincide with peak travel periods, such as before, after or during China's national holidays.

Chinese workers get about five to fifteen days leave a year, depending on the seniority of position a person occupies and the industry in which they work.

Many take what leave they have around the main public holidays of Chinese New Year and National Day which results in what is billed as the largest annual migration in the world as millions of people criss-cross the country to return home to catch up with family.

Holidays Change

China's State Council sets the nation's public holidays every year. From 2000, two holiday weeks were celebrated annually, with May Day and National Day. They became known as the “golden weeks”, partly because of the good weather and partly because they were established to encourage spending.

From 2008, the May Day golden week was abolished in favour of three traditional holidays. The Dragon Boat festival involves eating zongzi, glutinous rice dumplings, and racing dragon boats. Mid-Autumn, or Moon Festival, is held at the autumnal equinox and is celebrated by the consumption of moon cakes, pastries with sweet fillings. Qing Ming Festival, or Tomb Sweeping Day, is a time to tend to ancestral graves.

During those periods businesses can be closed down and accommodation and travel in high demand.

Dates and duration of public holidays can vary from year to year. Public holidays can also be called at relatively short notice, so be sure to keep an eye out in Chinese media before you go.

Key Chinese Public Holidays		
New Year's Day	1 January	1 day
Spring Festival / Chinese New Year	Date varies, usually around late January to mid-February	3 days
Qingming Festival	Usually early April	1 day
May Day	1 May	1 day
Dragon Boat Festival	Early June	1 day
Mid-Autumn Festival	Mid-September, 1 day holiday	1 day
National Day	1 October	3 days

You win some, you lose some

A unique feature in contemporary Chinese life is the flexible approach taken to public holidays. If a holiday falls on a Tuesday, schools and workplaces will often open on the preceding Saturday so people have a three day long weekend (Sunday to Tuesday). The situation gets more surreal when schools and workplaces open at weekends to accommodate several days of public holiday during the week.

Working hours

Standard business hours in China run from 8 or 9am to 5 or 6pm, though in practice times vary between organisations.

While government offices and education institutions often close for two hours in the middle of the day, private companies often operate beyond these standard business hours.

What's the time?

When you glance at your wristwatch, never forget that Beijing is the capital of China. Despite China's landmass spanning five time zones, there is only one time: Beijing time.

No matter where you are in China, then, you will be only four hours behind New Zealand time (or five during daylight saving). While that may be convenient for Beijing-ren, it's a little more inconvenient when you head as far West as Xinjiang or Tibet.



Useful travel phrases

English	NZ Pronunciation	Chinese Pinyin	Characters
Sir, I want to go to...	Hsian cheng,woa xiang qu	Xiānshēng ,wǒ xiǎngù	先生，我想去
Where is ?zai na leezài nǎr?	...在哪里?
Train station	ho chur zan	huǒchēzhàn	火车站
Bus station	chee chur zan	qìchēzhàn	汽车站
Subway station	dee tie zan	dì tiě zhàn	地铁站
Airport	fee gee chang	fēijīchǎng	飞机场
Receipt	fah piao	fāpiào	发票

Resources

Travelling to or doing business in China? Check out these websites to help you plan or stay up to date.

NZ INC IN CHINA

New Zealand has a number of offices in China, with diplomatic, immigration, trade and tourism offices in key cities in mainland China and beyond. Find out where from

<http://nzembassy.com/china>

CHINESE GOVERNMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

The People's Republic of China has an Embassy in Wellington and Consulates in Auckland and Christchurch:

<http://chinaembassy.org.nz>

NEW ZEALAND WEBSITES

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise

NZTE has a number of guides outlining various aspects of doing business in China at:

<http://nzte.govt.nz>

Free Trade Agreement with China

Brush up on the details of the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement.

<http://chinafta.govt.nz>

Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry

Get up to speed with the overall state of the New Zealand-China relationship, and the NZ Inc China Strategy, with information from <http://mfat.govt.nz>

Travel safe

Get the latest travel advice and warnings from MFAT's Safe Travel website.

<http://safetravel.govt.nz>

Confucius Institute

The Confucius Institute in Auckland offers language and culture courses, as well as news updates.

<http://ci.ac.nz>

New Zealand – China Trade Association

The NZCTA seeks to promote and strengthen NZ-China trade relations and organises events in New Zealand and trade missions to China.

<http://nzcta.co.nz>

New Zealand China Friendship Society

The NZ-China Friendship Society promotes links between the two countries and organises a number of events across the country and in China.

<http://nzchinasociety.org.nz>

The Office of Ethnic Affairs

Promotes the benefits of ethnic diversity to develop prosperity for every New Zealander.

<http://ethnicaffairs.govt.nz>

CHINESE WEBSITES

Chinese Government

The Chinese Government's central web portal can be accessed at:

<http://english.gov.cn>

China Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The China Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be accessed at:

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng>

China Daily

Get the latest news from the Chinese government's official newspaper:

<http://chinadaily.com.cn>

South China Morning Post

Gain news from a Hong Kong perspective:

<http://scmp.com>

Expat rags

Find useful information about Shanghai and Beijing life from these expat magazines:

<i>Beijing</i>	<i>Shanghai</i>	<i>Hong Kong</i>
timeoutbeijing.com thebeijinger.com cityweekend.com.cn/beijing	shanghaiist.com timeoutshanghai.com cityweekend.com.cn/shanghai	timeout.com.hk

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‘It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.’

--Confucius



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