

China Travel Information **Final Orientation**

You're almost ready to travel! Please review all materials for last minute reminders. Be sure you have read "The Journey" by Deborah Pope. Also be sure that you have looked over your "phrases" list and letter from Dr. Young. I want to again emphasize that flexibility, a relaxed personality, and a workable spirit are going to be very important in this "journey." You will be happier and healthier for it.

Travel

Travel to China has been arranged by your travel agent, Irene Young from Vision Travel (some families may have a different travel agent). This includes your plane reservations for both the Hong Kong route and travel to the orphanage city, as well as your hotel accommodations for Hong Kong. You will receive your tickets to Hong Kong by mail with a complete itinerary. Your Mainland China tickets will be delivered to you in Hong Kong. While in China, you will need to reconfirm all flights. This is very important and necessary! **Please check in for all flights 2 hours before scheduled departure.**

How to Avoid Jet Lag

- Rest on plane as much as possible.
- When you arrive, try to go to bed at the normal time.
- Walk around on the plane.
- Eat balanced meals.
- Don't drink carbonated beverages, try hot tea.
- Don't stress out, flying's very safe.
- Be flexible to changes.
- View trip as an adventure.

Immunizations

There are no immunizations required, but you might want to consider updating your Tetanus and also have your Hepatitis A and B immunizations series- which once completed- are good for ten years. Hepatitis B immunizations, which is a series of 3 shots, needs to be done 8 or more months before departure as there is a waiting period of 6 months after the second shot. Hepatitis A immunizations, a two shot vaccine, is relatively new and is replacing (for the non-exposed) the Hepatitis A Immunoglobulin booster. Again, this vaccine needs to be done 8 or more months before departure as there is a waiting period of 6-12 months before the second shot. If you elect to get only the first shot of the Hepatitis A series, this needs to be done 2 weeks before you travel. The only problem with both of these vaccines is that they are in short supply. My local physician, the Public Health Department, or the other health clinic in Eureka did not have a supply. The only place that seemed to have it available, along with other travel vaccines, was the Open Door Clinic in Arcata (770 - 10th Street, 707-826-8610). You will need to make an appointment weeks in advance of the needed date as they are usually very booked. The cost of these shots is between \$50-100 each, which is to be paid in cash.

Carry-On Documents

Please purchase a plastic (clear with a color tint) binder for papers. They are under 2 dollars and are perfect for all you need to take.

Luggage and Hotels

(Check with your airline for updated luggage information)

Concerning luggage, you may take one “checked” bag up to 44 lbs. in weight per person and a standard carry-on bag. A backpack is also okay if you prefer not to take a carry-on bag. You should also use a luggage strap on your bag. If you want to take or buy more luggage, be prepared to pay an extra fee. The sum of all the luggage dimensions (length + width + height) must not be more than 72 inches. Please try to stick as close to the suggested specifics as possible, and most importantly, you need to remember to pack light and sensible, as you might be carrying your own luggage and perhaps a baby, too. A duffle bag on wheels made of heavy canvas is recommended.

As a group, you need to see what items you can share (medical supplies or whatever). Some hotels may have hair dryers, laundry service, and shops. We stayed at very modern hotels with heat and everything we needed including paper or cloth slippers. Toilet paper was plentiful and of fine quality. Kleenex was also in the room. The Laundry service was cheap and there were tea and cups provided. Also room service was available.

Running a Tab

While in China, CWTS suggested families run a “tab” while in the hotel to be paid at the end. Families were charging phone calls, food, room service and laundry. Many got a big surprise at the end. You’ll need to decide which works best for you.

China Women’s Travel Service

When you arrive in the orphanage city, you will be met at the airport by your guide from China Women’s Travel Service. CWTS will be caring for you during your stay in the orphanage city and consulate city. The fees you pay them cover your hotels, in-country travel, a translator/guide, and airfare back to Hong Kong. They will also collect for the transit visas needed. They are available to help you with your translation needs and the other mentioned items, but it’s important to remember not to abuse their availability.

Weather/ Clothing

Most hotels will have heat, but public facilities will not. If traveling to the cooler regions, you need to be prepared for this (especially in Winter). You do not want to get stuck inside your room the entire time because you do not have warm clothing. Conversely, you do not want to only bring sweats and coats for a warm climate. You need to remember this when packing for you child, too. We will be checking the weather for the time of year we are traveling, so we should be prepared. We will also try to get information from the Internet so we will have an idea of what sights and shops to visit. Washing is very easy, but it’s still hard to plan for clothing since weather conditions can vary.

Hong Kong

Transportation is easy and cheap. You won’t have any language problems as many people speak English. Food’s expensive, but there are a lot of American chains (McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, Jack in the Box, 7-11’s). Taxi’s are very nice and easy to catch. You can bargain on most souvenirs. Fresh fruit is available, but I never really saw a large grocery chain. Hotels had slippers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, body wash, soap, clothes lines, hair dryers, wet bar/ fridge, TV/radio, safe, Kleenex/ toilet paper, cups, and a coffee shop. There were wake-up calls, mail services and money exchange available.

Mainland China

Hotels are very nice. Buffets available. Full supplies (like Hong Kong) in room. Phones in bathroom, paper slippers and robes, extra comforters, tea sets and supplies, coffee shops and banquet rooms, health facilities.

Entering and Exiting China

When entering Mainland China, you will be filling out two forms. They are a customs declaration form and a health declaration form. Your passport will need to be with you at all times. You will be asked to show it at different times, and upon demand. Upon departure from Mainland China you may be asked to list your electrical equipment, and/or show it to reconcile the customs form you filled out earlier. You may also be asked to show any remaining currency you have. When finally exiting Mainland China, you will pay an Exit Tax. The child will not be charged, but each adult will be charged around \$15 each.

Laws in Foreign Countries

Remember, if you break the law in a foreign country, your consulate cannot help you. You will be subject to the laws of that country. Do not accept packages or items from anyone unknown. Do not bring drugs or items to sell. Stay away from trouble.

Currency

The currency in Hong Kong is Hong Kong dollars. Its value is 7.75 to every U.S. dollar (as of 2/09). The currency in Mainland China is the Remminbi, or Yuan, and is 6.83 to every U.S. dollar (as of 2/09). The money for China Women's Travel Services and The Adoption Center will be wired to Beijing in advance of travel. The amount to be wired per couple will be around \$2,400, singles \$1,400. There will be a \$42 wiring fee divided by the group. (You should check to make sure this is the most current information).

A family may choose three options regarding the money they need to bring to China for fees and travel expenses. Families can carry travelers checks (you will need to exchange), or may take cash only, or a combination of both. Remember though, you will be carrying around \$6,000-7,000 or more dollars.

You will need a money belt, also, a calculator is a must as it's sometimes hard to think in different currencies. Mervyn's carries a very nice travel purse. Some families recommend that all fees are put in separate labeled envelopes, so that all you need to do to pay something, is pull out that envelope.

The exchange rate was higher for travelers checks than cash. Hotels exchange is not as good as the banks, but can be convenient. You must at all times guard your passport. China is very safe, but don't open yourself up to an unsafe situation (like going to a busy area late at night, alone).

In Hong Kong you can pay for some items like hotels and meals with a major credit card and U.S. dollars; however, you will need to plan on exchanging money, too. In Mainland China, the fees paid to the various agencies will need to be in U.S. dollars, not travelers checks. You should be able to exchange your money in the orphanage city at a Bank of China, but be aware that you will be paying a 10% exchange fee. Most hotels and restaurants in Hong Kong and China charge 10-15% service charges.

Phone Calls to U.S.

You can do phone calling several ways. You can route the call through the hotel desk (at a charge) or you can call an AT & T operator direct for a calling card call. We don't recommend either one. While in China, you can use "phone cards". These are cards that can be purchased in different denominations. Once bought, you insert into the phone (not available in your hotel room) and dial direct. This seems to be better than returning home to a huge phone bill.

Meeting Your Child

When you receive your child, you are going to be very excited and emotional. This is the time that you need to ask those who know your child best, all the important questions about the child- so plan for this. Remember to be reasonable and relevant about what you are asking. Do not use this as the time to try to find out something that we have already told you is unavailable to you. Also remember, that even though you have seen the child's photo, the real child may be a shock to you. After all, this child looks very different from you and is unfamiliar. The child might also be sick or upset or perhaps her hair is standing on end. You also may or may not bond upon first meeting. Do not lose heart, if fireworks are not there, they will come with time. Try not to reject the child in any way (out of fear or concern), and be very soothing and reassuring. Remember the child will be scared, too. If you have grave concerns about the child, wait until you can get with your group leader so that the situation can be discussed and an appropriate plan can be made. **But hopefully this never comes up, and if it does, there better be a very catastrophic reason for it (not that the child just wasn't cute enough or the like)!**

Your child may arrive in multiple layers of clothing with or without a diaper. The Chinese potty train children at 3 months so they use crotchless clothing. Although you might think your child too hot, please refrain from removing their clothing. The child care workers who accompany the babies will become very concerned about your removal of the babies' clothing. They may try to rebundle or retie whatever you've undone. Wait until you get to your room before you start removing clothing and then do it slowly.

The children may also never have been bathed. You'll notice black stuff under their arms and fingernails. If you want to clean them up, just use a warm wet washcloth for the first few days.

The child care workers will want to try to "help" you with the babies while they are still there. Don't reject them, as soon enough you'll be all alone. If the babies cry in their presence, they'll want to take the babies to comfort them. Let them do it and include them in the beginning minutes of meeting as that will make them feel very good. They are very protective of the children.

Mongolian Spots

Asian children sometimes have a spot that looks like a black and blue mark on their lower backs or buttocks. They can be quite big and very dark. They will look just like a big bruise. Don't be alarmed, it's just a birth condition that is very normal and will disappear later. Be sure to share this information with your baby's doctor as you wouldn't want someone to think you abused the child.

Front Carriers

Please do not go without a front carrier for your baby. Everyone used them and found them essential. One family took a stroller for their older child, which was nice, but cumbersome. You can take one if you have it bagged in an airline bag. An umbrella stroller would be preferred.

Documents

You will be traveling to China with your pre-requested documents. You may be asked to copy documents in China. Most hotels have a copier and business center. When you receive the child, you will also receive all the necessary documents needed for visa processing. You need to have a Xerox copy of your passport and visa stamp for Mainland China, and for the Consulate in Guangzhou. Please go over your check list several times to make sure that you have packed every document you need. If you do not have what's required, you will find yourself in very deep trouble.

Don't be an "Ugly American"

While traveling in China, keep in mind that you are an Ambassador of Goodwill. What you do in China will have a direct effect on future adoptions. People in China may come up to you to touch or see the babies, and may ask you very personal questions such as what you do for a living, or how much money you make.

These folks are only curious, so be friendly, kind, and patient with them. Remember to not get **upset or angry**; **it's very important that you remain calm in all situations.** You are not in America and cannot use poor or pushy behavior to get your way. You need to be very careful that you do not violate any international laws or carry out contraband, including ivory that is sometimes called "bone."

Traffic

The traffic in China is very busy. There are many cars, people and bikes all traveling together. When walking on the street, you need to be very cautious, looking in all directions before crossing a street. Remember that in Hong Kong they drive on the opposite side of the road like the British. You need to look carefully when crossing the street. You will hear horns honking a lot in China, and the traffic noise will carry on all night, so it may bother you during the sleeping hours. You might want to consider wearing earplugs, but if you're the sole person caring for your child, you will have to "grin and bare it" as you will need to hear your child. Ear plugs are also good for your flight, if you want to rest. There are limited seatbelts in the cars, so be prepared for some high adventure!

Your Child's Health

You will not be updated after "referral" as to your child's current social/ health condition. To be safe, just anticipate that your child will be sick. All of the children suffer from some kind of respiratory infection or other temporary illnesses. These conditions are common in China, and usually clear up after treatment. To prepare yourself more fully, please bring the following items:

1. Antibiotics for respiratory, bronchial or ear infections (not recommended, ask me)
2. Pedialyte for re-hydration
3. Both soy and milk formulas. (Some babies have adverse reactions to soy)
4. Diaper rash ointment
5. Cold and fever medicine
6. A good baby book
7. Nasal syringe
8. Q-tips
9. Baby thermometer
10. Ear cleaning solutions
11. Suppositories

For the child's daily care and wear:

1. Disposable Diapers 10/day
2. 2 hard plastic bottles for measuring
3. Diaper wipes (in a Ziplock Bag)
4. Plastic Funnel
5. 2 Disposable bottles with liners and nipples
6. Formulas
7. Clothing
8. Snacks for child: crackers, dried fruits, rice cereal
9. Blankets
10. Baby equipment and toys
11. Front pack
12. A warm outside-type sleeper

While in China, your child has been on a milk-based Chinese formula. This formula is different from U.S. formulas, so some children won't be able to tolerate our milk-based formulas. Some children cannot tolerate soy formulas, so bring both to be safe. Your child will be underweight compared to U.S. children, even though the babies look "chubby" in the photos. (The child may have only received 3 eight-ounce bottles per day while in the orphanage.) Clothing and diapers need to be for a baby your child's age. Most things come in ranges, so find items that span sizes on either side.

Food and Water

A must, when staying in China, is that you **do not drink the tap water!** Do not even have an ice cube in your drink, brush your teeth, rinse out a cup or bottles or clean your contact lenses with tap water. Showers are okay. You should drink only bottled or boiled water! Boiled water will be provided daily by the Hotel. A canteen or plastic container will be good for cooling boiled waters needed for other uses.

There are some really nice foods in China, but also some very unusual things as well. Some menus are in English, and buffets are available at the hotels which are safe and varied. It is recommended that you not use the restaurant's silverware for hygiene reasons. Do not eat any raw vegetables, and only fruits that have been peeled. Remember to drink lots of fluids (what a contradiction)! You should consider, in addition to all the other stuff you are bringing, to bring the following:

- water canteen/container
- chopsticks
- fork and spoon
- pocket knife
- drinking straws
- cameras/ film/ batteries
- ear plugs
- Ziplock bags
- Tea or coffee drinks
- adult snacks: dried fruits, nuts, candies
- Cup O'Noodles
- Cup O'Soups
- Lysol Spray
- prescriptions
- other medications
- extra contacts or glasses
- Ammodium AD or other stomach remedies
- calculator (very important for converting money values)

It's very possible you might get sick while in China. There are several things that might cause this. Lack of rest, excitement or change of diet. Food contaminants, water, or illness from the child might also be the case. Come prepared for this, and remember to get as much rest as you can. Drink fluids, eat carefully and try not to worry. This will help a lot. Remember why you are there, and revel in the whole experience.

Check List

Make yourself a check list of things to do, things to take, and things to buy. A list helps a lot. For one- you won't forget anything, two- you'll also feel less stressed, and three- you'll feel a sense of accomplishment after you've checked everything off.

Also, you might want to practice packing and or have your packed bag weighed before the trip to be sure you're within the limits.

Almost anything you need can be bought in China (except disposable diapers). Everything can be bought in Hong Kong.

Souvenirs

While in the orphanage city, you might be asked to buy a “chop” with your child’s name. They cost \$25 and are a nice keepsake. At the end of every tour you will be taken to a gift shop. Do not feel obligated to buy. The best prices are in China, but some items can only be found in Hong Kong. You can bring \$400 worth of items into the U.S. duty free.

If you buy anything remember that you’ll need to carry it with you on the trip and claim it at customs. The airlines are rough on bags so a carry-on is generally needed. Shipping is not recommended.

Sightseeing is recommended before you get the kids as it becomes more difficult after the kids arrive.

Gifts for Officials

We collected money for a gift for our guides while in China, but I think it would be nice to bring some small regional (to you) gifts that you could give to the guides and others who are helpful. It’s recommended that a box of chocolate is a nice gift, as well. None of this is mandatory of course, but nice gestures are always appreciated.