

TRAVEL/REVIEWS/INFORMATION/

# OVERLAND

TRAVEL

■ Premiere Issue | Spring 2013

TRAVEL /

## ASIA

China to Kyrgyzstan

Adventure in the Pamirs

FOOD /

## CHINA A CULINARY TOUR

The best dishes and restaurants in the North, South, East and West

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All you will need to know to keep out of harms way no matter where or how you travel

OFF THE BEATEN PATH /

## TIBET

A photo essay

OVERLAND MAGAZINE /

# WELCOME

EDITION 001 | SPRING 2013



## Hello and welcome to the Overland Magazine!

Travel will open your eyes and with the Overland Travel Magazine we will try to show you when, where and how to travel.

Every journey starts with the first step out of the front door... and the journey does not end when you come back.

The memories and experiences you acquire once you have set out on a journey will always be with you. Travel will change your life forever and all of us at Overland Magazine hope we will inspire you to travel to places you would not have thought of going to before. The world is such a diverse place, that there is

always something special awaiting those who go out and explore and venture to places they have not been to before.

You do not have to be Marco Polo or a Wilfred Thesiger to discover new cultures or places that no one else has experienced before, as long as you are exploring you can consider yourself an explorer, no matter how far or close to home you have gone. The journey is more than just the destination and the destination is more than just a resort where you get to sip cocktails with people from the same background you are from.

The world has in fact become a smaller place, you can travel from Italy to China in a few hours, about

as long as it took Marco Polo to set up camp... And yet the sense of adventure is still there, no matter how you travel or how long you stay away or where you go, adventure and discovery are always a part of travel.

So please come and explore the world with us... But more importantly, go and explore for yourself and become an adventurer and explorer... not a tourist!

Rolf Magener, Editor in Chief



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**SAY IT IN CHINESE**

Click the @ to hear the pronunciation

HELLO	你好	YES	是
MY NAME IS	我的名字是	NO	不是
THANK YOU	谢谢	HOSPITAL	医院
I NEED A TAXI	我需要一辆出租车	POLICE	警察
I WANT TO GO TO	我想去	MORNING	上午
HOTEL	酒店	AFTERNOON	下午
RESTAURANT	餐厅	NIGHT	晚上
AIRPORT	机场	1 PERSON	一个人
TRAIN STATION	火车站	2 PEOPLE	两个人

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t.+1 (888)707 3045

TRAVEL GEAR /

# TOP GEAR

Travel Gear that every adventure traveller should be using...

*Gear can make all the difference on your trip.... Here is gear that we recommend ....*

## *Pac Safe Daysafe 100*

The Fort Knox of backpacks! Slash-proof, tamper-proof and snatch-proof, DaySafe™ 100 is the Fort Knox of backpacks! The removable 16-liter main compartment (which may also be used as a portable safe in your hotel room or car) is constructed of eXomesh® Slashguard (stainless steel mesh laminated between two layers of nylon). It's like having a security fence around your valuables! The patented cable lock lets you anchor it to any secure fixture, and the adjustable padded shoulder strap is slash-proof. Made of black ballistic nylon, DaySafe has a removable insert for your laptop or documents, a front zippered organizer pocket with key clip, mesh exterior and side pockets, cell phone pocket on the shoulder strap, padded air mesh back support, and tamper-proof zippers.

(19 x 12 x 8"; 1500 cubic inch capacity; 3 lb, 8 oz)

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## *Teva Hurricane XLT*

The Men's Teva Hurricane XLT, you can get all of the performance and comfort that Teva is known for without breaking the bank. The Hurricane XLT's contoured drop-in EVA footbed cradles and supports your foot while providing all day comfort. This men's sandal features a nylon shank for torsional rigidity and stability and an encapsulated shock pad in the heel for shock absorption.

\$ 58.50 Available at Zappos.com and Rei.com



## TRAVEL GEAR /



### Canon Eos 5D

The Canon 2764B004 EOS 5D Mark II 21.1MP Digital SLR Camera with EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM Lens includes a the Mark II digital SLR camera that has a stunning 21.1-megapixel full-frame CMOS sensor with DIGIC 4 Image Processor, a vast ISO Range of 100-6400, plus EOS technologies like Auto Lighting Optimizer and Peripheral Illumination Correction. It supports Live View shooting, Live View HD videos, and more. It can shoot up to 3.9 fps, has 9 AF points plus 6 AF assist points, a new 98% coverage viewfinder, a 3.0-inch Clear View LCD (920,000 dots/VGA) and a rugged build. The EF 24-105 IS Lens is a standard zoom lens that can cover a large zoom area ranging from 24mm wide-angle to 105mm portrait-length telephoto. And its Image Stabilizer technology steadies camera shake up to three stops.

\$ 2550.50 Available at Amazon.com and BHPPhotoVideo.com

### Grasshopper Zip-off Convertible Pants

A quick zip at the legs, and you've got a 10" inseam short. Quick-dry nylon ripstop is super lightweight and incredibly durable. Omni-Wick® advanced repellency offers superior moisture management and UV-busting UPF 50 sun protection is built right into the fabric, so you're covered when the afternoon sun fires up. Plenty of pockets right where you need them—two front slant pockets, zip-closed side cargo pockets, and zip-closed back pockets. Classic fit.

\$ 70 Available at Amazon.com and Rei.com



### Tripp Lite TRAVELER3USB Notebook Surge Protector USB Charger

Tripp Lite's portable TRAVELER3USB surge suppressor offers complete surge suppression for laptops, electronic notepads, personal organizers and other portable electronic devices. Compact and portable, it neatly fits into laptop travel cases. Comes with an 18 inch concealable cord allowing for ease of storage without scratching expensive electronics. With the addition of 2 USB Charging Ports, the TRAVELER3USB allows Road Warriors the ability to charge cell phone, MP3 Players and other portable devices easily. TRAVELER3USB offers 3 total outlets which can accommodate a transformer, 2 USB Charging Ports and a diagnostic LED to warn of wiring problems and suppressor damage.

\$ 15.99 Available at Amazon.com and BHPPhotoVideo.com



### Kingston Data Traveler

Kingston's new DataTraveler 108 USB Flash drive is small and slim enough to fit anywhere while protecting your data. Its capless design features a USB plug protected by an aluminum key cover that flips when you need to access your data. And its handy key loop lets users transform this stylish drive into a fashion accessory with the use of a lanyard.

\$ 15.99 Available at Amazon.com and BHPPhotoVideo.com



TRAVEL /

# ASIA

THE ROAD SOUTH

TRAVEL /

# ASIA

Setting out on an overland trip in Asia can involve months of planning and preparation or simply buying a guide book and going for it...



TRAVEL / OFF THE BEATEN PATH

# TIBET

A photo essay  
by Rolf Magener

EVEREST BASE CAMP, CHINA Yak  
return to the monastery before the  
night arrives...



**LHASA, TIBET** Pilgrim lighting butter lamps, thousands of prayers in light....

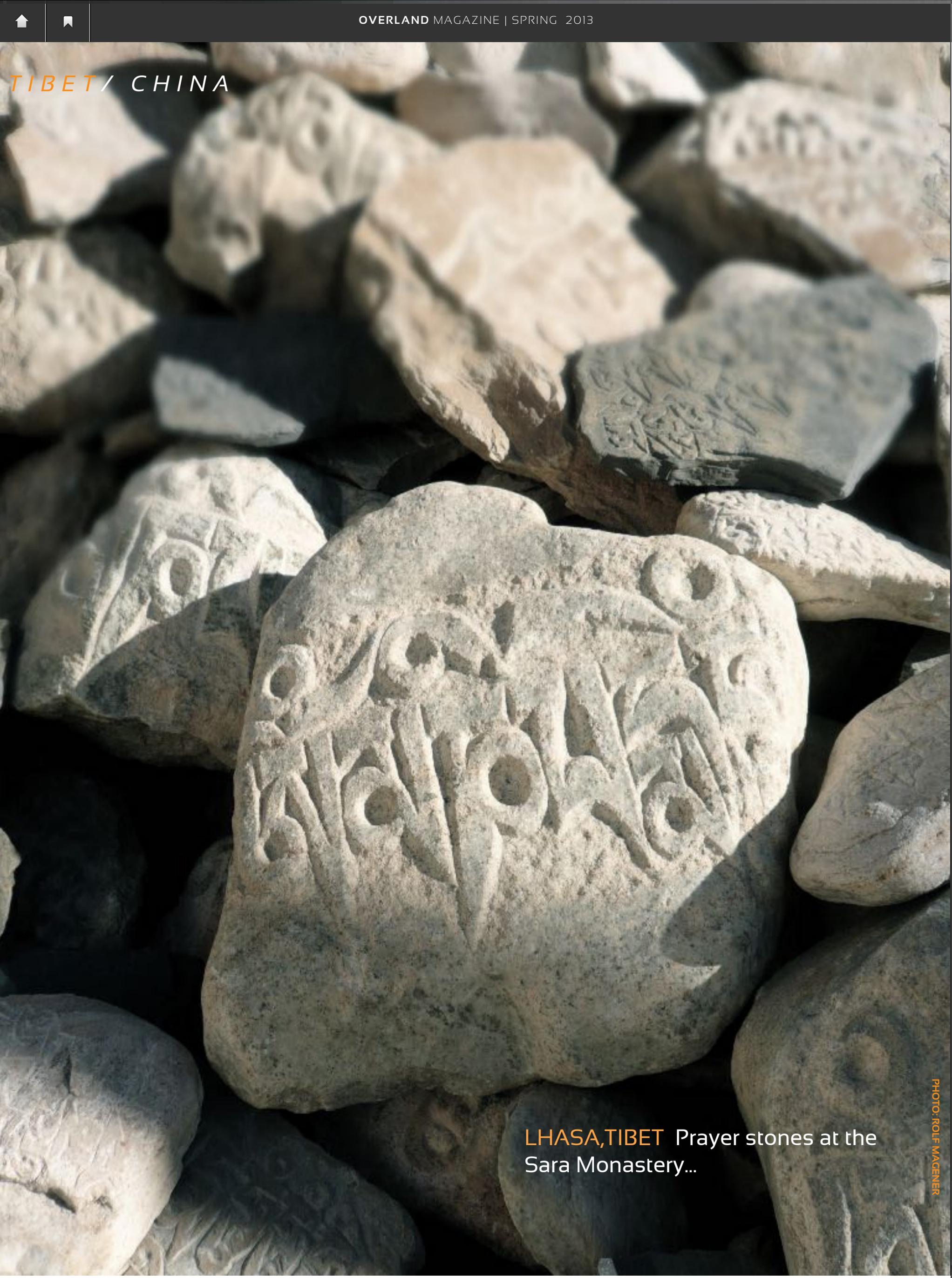


LHASA, TIBET Monks enjoying the morning sun at the Sara Monastery.....

PHOTO: ROLF MAGNER



TIBET / CHINA



LHASA, TIBET Prayer stones at the Sara Monastery...



### Train to Tibet

The first regular passenger trains started running over the new railway to Lhasa in Tibet on 1 July 2006. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway is the highest in the world, climbing from 2,829m above sea level at Golmud (Geermu) to 3,641m at Lhasa, much of it built on permafrost. Its highest point is in the Tanggula Pass, at 16,640 feet (just over 5,000m) above sea level. Because of the lack of oxygen at that altitude, all passenger coaches have extra oxygen pumped into them, and oxygen is available to passengers through tubes if they have problems. Before the railway was built into Tibet, travellers had to take a train as far as Golmud (which the railway reached in 1984) followed by a gruelling 48 hour bus journey to Lhasa. Now there are direct air-conditioned trains from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou & Xian to Lhasa.

Bookings open 10 days in advance. In the first months of operation of the new line, tickets were reported as selling out almost as soon as bookings open, with no sign of demand diminishing. However, it's become easier to get tickets, and you can now arrange tickets & tours through [www.chinatraintickets.net](http://www.chinatraintickets.net) or [www.chinahighlights.com](http://www.chinahighlights.com). Alternatively, you can try buying tickets yourself at the station, arranging a permit separately.

### Permit and Visa

In addition to a normal Chinese visa, foreigners require a special permit to enter Tibet, although there is talk of discontinuing this requirement in the near future, so please check. The only way to get a permit is through a Chinese travel agency, for example [www.chinatraintickets.net](http://www.chinatraintickets.net) or [www.chinahighlights.com](http://www.chinahighlights.com) who can arrange both trains and tailor-made tours. The permit is valid to enter Tibet and reach Lhasa, though a further permit is required to travel any further.





TRAVEL /

# EAST ASIA CHINA TO KYRGYZTAN

Adventure in the Pamirs by Lance Manion

The main road from China to Kyrgyztan crossing the Pamir mountain range..

### The Drive of My Life: From Kashi to Osh

I was six o'clock in the morning when I was picked up from QiniBagh; once a British Embassy but now a shabby hotel in central Kashgar. I had chosen to go by taxi as there was no train or bus to the China/Kyrgyzstan border, but I very quickly regretted it – within an hour into the drive, we were so lost that the driver got out of the car and crossed the four-lane highway to try and flag down passing trucks for directions. Naturally, as it was still pitch black outside, nobody stopped.

#### A long wait

I ended up arriving at the border three hours late, and just five minutes before they closed the immigration office for lunch. They took my passport, then promptly told me the other side was closed, so I would have to wait two-and-a-half hours before I could cross over into Kyrgyzstan.

Finally I was taken across the border in a mini van, and left to hike the last kilometre, past the waiting trucks, to the Kazakhstan immigration post. They were far quicker, and I was through in a flash. I hopped in a taxi heading to Osh, and managed to haggle down the journey to a price of \$80 I settled down in my seat... but I wasn't going anywhere just yet.

The taxi waited more than an hour-and-a-half for other travellers to fill its vacant seats, then spent even longer haggling a price with them. Finally, after it looked like we were ready to go, I was removed from the taxi and put into a minivan... clearly there was no longer room for me! Although a little miffed, it was 14 hours since I left Kashgar so I was simply glad to be moving.

#### A stuttering start

Of course, it wasn't that simple. Almost the moment the minibus had moved off, it stopped at a trailer house to pick up a local man bearing sheep skins. And then another, and then another, until the minibus was full to the rafters. Finally, at around 7pm local time – as it was getting dark and beginning to snow – we started our journey in earnest. Although we were packed together like sardines, and I was sitting next to a rather large woman who smelt like a wet goat, I could still enjoy the beautiful mountains; until we started climbing up them in howling wind and snow!

The higher we climbed, the worse it got, and I could hear the minibus' tyres slipping on the icy roads. Despite this, the driver was bombing along at an impressive pace. It was two hours to the first stop in Sari Tash, and while the woman next to me was screaming in my phone, the views outside and the music on the stereo made it an enjoyable journey. And at Sari Tash, she got off!

Making calculations as I went, I had estimated we'd arrive in Osh by about 11pm, but I hadn't factored in the thick fog that started to surround the minibus. The driver cut his speed to a slow hurtle and it was just in time, as when we rounded the next curve we came face-to-face with a jack-knifed truck – and the driver had to slam on the brakes to avoid him. There was just enough space to squeeze through, so after making sure everyone was okay we were soon moving again.

#### A near miss

As we made steady progress along the pass, I suddenly noticed we were being passed by the taxi I was waiting in earlier! As the taxi is a right-hand drive, and the minibus is a left-hand, the two drivers wind down their windows and start to have a conversation – on the edge of an icy foggy road! I'm biting my nails as the taxi winds up its window and pulls in front of us to turn a corner.

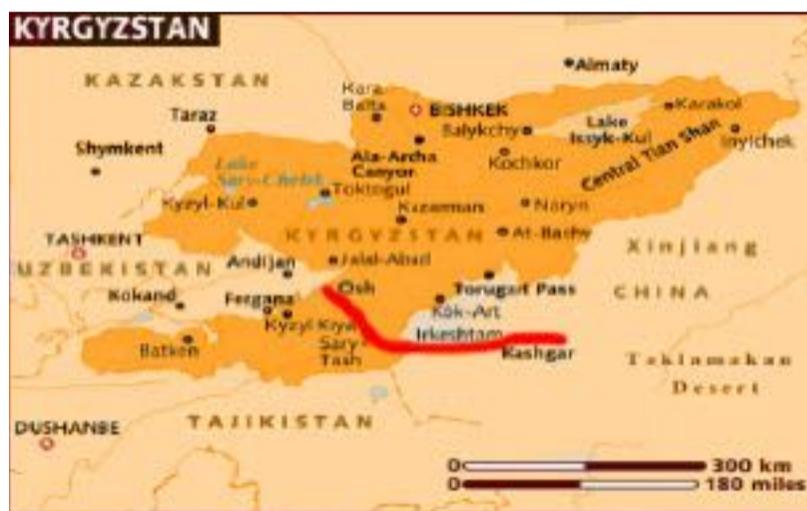
Then there's an almighty SMASH, and it veers into another jack-knifed truck on the road ahead.

Our minibus breaks and stops literally inches before we plough into the car. But we're not out of danger yet; we're sitting ducks on a sharp bend in the fog. I decide to take my chances – I run off the bus, into the darkness, skidding on the ice until I reach the relative safety of the roadside. In fact, I had almost slipped over the cliff into the blackness below, but I had just stopped in time.

I watched as the taxi driver emerged from the car to shake the hand of the truck driver. Despite the perilously twisted metal, it seemed like nobody was hurt, and before long the taxi driver was reversing to untangle himself from the truck and jumping on the hood to iron out the creases. He clearly decided it was in good enough shape to make the remaining 180 kilometres to Osh, as within five minutes he had ushered his passengers back in and set off again... leaving a long trail of radiator fluid behind. I saw my bus driver planning to do the same, so I rushed back on board.

#### A shocking discovery

Shortly after, the bus stopped for a dinner break at a strange, dimly-lit place at the side of the road. With my heart still beating and palms still sweaty from our previous exploits, I didn't have much of an appetite – which was fortunate as I didn't have any money left either! Within half an hour three of the passengers returned, but another was still busy shooting glasses of whisky. By the time he did return, he was utterly drunk, and as we set off he was repeatedly falling onto me and looking like he was going to throw up. We stopped again so the driver could relieve himself, and the drunk fell out of the minibus and into the snow. I took the opportunity to reseat myself in the front. If everything goes well from now, I told myself, we can still be in Osh by midnight!



By the time we set off again, the snow had picked up, and so the visibility was getting worse and worse. However, we continued progressing at a steady pace, passing through some very small and interesting villages along the route, until suddenly in the headlights there appeared a large lump in the road ahead. The driver swerved to avoid it, but as we skidded on the snow-covered road the lump bounced off the car bonnet anyway. My blood ran cold as I realised what it was.

#### A human being.

Without any hesitation, the driver stepped on the accelerator and started to drive off. I snapped back to my senses and screamed at him to stop – we had just hit a person! Looking back at the street behind, it was



Kyrgys people are always full of smiles and gold teeth... One of the old soviet dental procedures used by the less wealthy...

clear that he had been run over several times already, as the snow around was covered in blood – he was like regular road kill, almost certainly dead – but I still felt we had to do something! I asked the driver to pull over and call the police, which he did, but as soon as he'd made the call he ushered us back on the bus to continue. We left the man lying in the road.

#### The final stretch

The driver decided to take everybody else home before me, which meant a 50-minute detour from the road to Osh, but by now I was too emotionally fraught to really protest. The drunk guy was dropped off in a shipping container town, and we were then stopped a police checkpoint. It took them fifteen minutes to figure out my passport, and once we were cleared it took another fifteen minutes to restart the van, but by 2.30am we were finally on the home straight to Osh.

By the time we arrived in the city, it was no surprise to find that most of the hotels were closed, and those that were opened were either fully booked or unwilling to accept new guests in the early hours. But finally, after half a dozen attempts and a even more hours, I was finally offered a room in the enormous 15-storey Soviet-era Osh Intertourist Hotel. The elevator was broken, so I had to drag my stuff up five floors, and the room was like something out of a horror movie, but I didn't care. It was now 4.30am – 22-and-a-half hours – and after a nightmare journey I was finally alone in a dark room with somewhere horizontal to lay my head. This was absolute bliss!

As I flopped down onto the pillow, I tried to reflect on a crazy journey where I had seen death, and faced my own mortality. But before I could form a coherent thought, I had fallen fast asleep.

It seemed dealing with what had happened over the last day would have to wait for tomorrow... ■

### Kyrgystan at a Glance

Capital: Bishkek  
 Airport Code: FRU  
 Language: Kyrgyz / Russian  
 Currency: Som (KGS)  
 Calling Code: +996

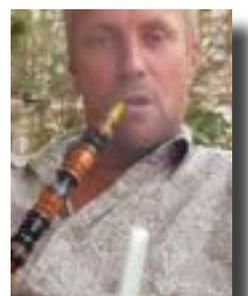


Visa Required: No  
 ATM/CC: Yes but tricky/ Only in major towns

Rail: No  
 Air Travel: Yes  
 Taxi/Bus: Yes  
 Travel Difficulty: More than usual

***“KYRGYZSTAN is not for the uninitiated, but if you want adventure this is where to find it”***

LANCE MANION - EDITOR AT LARGE



FOOD /

MINING

FOOD-DINING /

# EATING CHINA: A CULINARY TOUR...

by Joseph Reanrey

China has some of the best food in Asia. Always fresh and a variety that is hard to find anywhere else...

There are few culinary cultures as familiar, and yet as unknown, as China's. Wander the streets in any of the world's great metropolises – from New York to Melbourne, Rio to Rome – and you will soon stumble upon the bright lights of a Chinese restaurant. Yet despite such global dominance, the idea of 'Chinese cuisine' as a single concept is misguided; in this vast country, food remains a distinctly provincial affair.

## Preparing Soup in Xian's Muslim District



PHOTO: ROLF MACGEMER

### *Eating in China*

**Most visitors know Chinese food from eating it in their native country, but eating in China is quite a different experience. From its Muslim food in the West, to Cantonese in the South. China has some of the best food in Asia...**

With street vendors in Hunan adamant that a decent 'orange beef' is impossible to find in neighbouring Szechuan, let alone in distant cities across continents, I knew that my culinary tour through China would have to be thorough. I may not have had the time to visit all of China's 33 provinces, but I was at least determined to taste the country's gastronomic diversity by touching down in each of its compass points.

#### The North

I began my cuisine expedition in the country's largest northern city – and national capital – Beijing. With a climate where hot summers give way to sub-zero winters, this part of China is renowned for its hearty and nourishing fare, and unlike almost every other region of the country (or, indeed, Asia), the main staple here isn't rice, but rather wheat – whether in the form of noodles, dumplings and pancakes.

The capital itself is probably best-known internationally for its 'Peking duck'. While this is a dish that can be prepared in many ways, with variations on the fattiness of the skin or the fruit-base of the sauce, I'd heard there was one eatery renowned above all others for their version – so I caught a taxi there from the airport. I had barely settled down to my table in Xiang Man Lou restaurant in the Chaoyang district before it arrived: a whole duck, with subtly crispy skin but sumptuously tender meat, served with a range of accompaniments including hoisin sauce, scallions and pancakes. My trip was off to a good start.

Following a couple more days – and a couple more glorious meals – in Beijing, I took a brief excursion up to the northern province of Inner Mongolia. With its unusual blend of Mongolian, Chinese and Muslim influences, the region revealed a number of dishes that are not regularly served even in nearby Beijing, and I instantly fell

in love with both the deep-red roast lamb and the 'huhhot shaomai'; minced mutton and onion dumplings. I also got a taste for the local milk tea, which is served with salt rather than sugar.

My schedule forced me to leave the north before I had the opportunity to sample some other provincial delicacies. But with a unique culinary experience that had been in equal parts surprising and satisfying, the 'mu shu pork' (meat with leeks, onions and garlic in steamed pancakes) of Shandong, the 'dabing' (sour fried flatbread) of Shanxi and the 'fish banquet' of Heilongjiang could simply wait for another time.

#### The East

For my next port of call, I caught a train down the coast to Shanghai. As China's largest city, Shanghai is renowned for its wide range of fine dining options, from highly-rated restaurants to superb street food, so during my brief stay I was



determined to try a little of both. Having spoken to the local dining expert and prolific city blogger Jenny Zhu, she talked of Shanghai's "vibrant and diverse dining scene," with "all types of food from around the world and China." But when I stressed the desire to try something strictly local she also had a number of specific suggestions, including what is considered the quintessential Shanghai dish: braised pork in soya sauce. I dutifully headed to a much-lauded back-street restaurant, Lan Xin, and sampled their home-cooked version. The delectable, butter-like meat melted in the mouth.

Jenny also recommended sampling the city's most renowned delicacy, 'da zha xie' (hairy crab). "They're about the size of a fist... not very meaty compared with ocean crabs," she revealed, "but they have an amazing Umami flavour, like natural MSG". I ventured to Ling Long Ge restaurant in Minhang district, and placed my order. The crabs came steamed and tied together in string – a perfect little gift – and I unwrapped it to enjoy a sublime combination of mouth-watering meat and potent ginger. The taste was on my tongue for the rest of the night; truly a gift that kept on giving.

Naturally, I wasn't content to limit my eastern culinary experience to Shanghai, so I also jumped on the train to visit some other regional centres and sample their cuisines. Hangzhou was an obvious stop, less than an hour's journey from Shanghai, but I also headed further into the province of Zhejiang to Ningbo. Between these two cities, I tried a handful of other regional delicacies, including 'chou doufu' (literally, stinky tofu, an acquired taste), 'Song sao shredded fish soup' (soup with perch, ham and ginger) and the stuffed, wrapped and roasted 'Beggars' chicken'; a succulent specialty of neighbouring Jiangsu province.

What was most noticeable about my culinary experience in the east of China was the freshness and fine presentation of dishes. There was none of the greasiness I had previously associated with Chinese food. P 19>>



Street food in China is some of the freshest and best anywhere. Top: Soup in Urumqi. Bottom Left: Tea Tasting Shanghai. Bottom Right: Bread in Kashi.



Variety that is hard to find anywhere else... and always fresh. The fish will be swimming till you order them!



## CONTINUED //

### The South

With my perceptions of Chinese cuisine already challenged, I was looking forward to what I would find in my next stop; the southern city of Guangzhou, Guangdong province. As a centre of Cantonese cooking – the one most found in Western ‘Chinese restaurants’, as emigrants from Hong Kong introduced it to the world – I anticipated I’d find dishes I already knew. I was to be pleasantly surprised by the, well, surprise.

While the first food I sampled, ‘dim sum’ (literally ‘touch your heart’), are a staple of Chinese restaurants around the planet, this particular collection of bite-size steamed dumplings with a multitude of fillings was far nicer than any I’d had before. And everything else I tried on my single day in Guangzhou was a dish which was completely new to me. I had ‘haling’ (fried dough with noodles) for breakfast, ‘steamed frog legs’ for lunch and ‘shark’s fin soup’ for dinner. I also sampled some typical street food, ‘lou mei’ (a mix of pigs tongue and duck’s gizzard) for an afternoon snack. Of course, some better-known Cantonese dishes like wonton noodles and stir-fried beef were also readily available, though I chose to avoid these.

The next day, I hopped on a short train from Guangzhou to the similarly-monikered city of Ganzhou, just inside Jiangxi province. While most of the food here is notably similar to that found in Guangzhou, I was assured that one particular local dish – spare ribs in ‘douchi’ (fermented black soybeans) – was hard to find elsewhere, so I found a pleasant-looking restaurant and ordered these. While I can’t claim it was my favourite meal of the trip – the beans were far too salty for my taste – it was certainly a new experience.

With my scheduled time running ever shorter, I opted to swiftly persist northwest into Hunan province.

### The West

Although located in the eastern half of the country, the culinary culture of Hunan (combined with the relatively sparse population of the far west) means that the province’s food is often considered part of western Chinese cuisine. Known as ‘Xiang’, Hanan’s gastronomy is famed for its hot spicy flavour, fresh aroma and deep colour, so is often compared to the cuisine in neighbouring Szechuan. However, it uses a wider variety of cooking techniques than almost anywhere else in China, from pot-roasting to smoking.

To experience Xiang first hand, I ventured into the provincial capital of Changsha to sample ‘yuanyang huoguo’ – a special hot pot that is split into two sections, for spicy and non-spicy food. I had been told it would “heat the blood”, and my first taste of the spicy section certainly sent jolts of chilli slicing through my veins. I took a long sip of my brewed ‘pu-erh’ tea, and then decided to focus my attention on the less spicy section. It was the right choice; the rich mix of beef with peanuts and bean sprouts was delicious. I

mixed in some of the spicy half, finding my level, and then enjoyed one of my favourite meals of the trip.

After my brief stay in Hunan, I headed to Changsha International Airport to hop on a flight. Having heard that Western China’s finest food was to be found in the province of Szechuan, I had decided to end my visit in its capital of Chengdu. I was, of course, already aware of Szechuan cuisine – it has been gaining global popularity for many years now – but I was also told by many Chinese to expect some local twists.

Renowned for its street food, I spent my first day hopping between friendly-looking vendors, and soon found myself confronted by another wave of extremely spicy food. Most dishes are cooked in Szechuan pepper – a particularly fragrant spice – which meant that food I thought I already knew, like ‘deep-fried pork’, ‘dandan noodles’ and ‘kung-pao chicken’, took on an eye-watering quality. To compound matters, I was usually given ‘bai jiu’ (Szechuan brandy) to wash it down, resulting in a vehement digestive protest.

Luckily, during my recovery period I also found some delicious none-spicy options. ‘Twice-cooked pork’, in which the meat is boiled with ginger and salt, sliced and then shallow-fried with peppers, became one of my favourite dishes, while the ‘zhangcha duck’ – a marinated duck smoked over tea leaves – was also a delight. With a careful mix of the spicy and mild, I was soon considering Szechuan a culinary highlight.

I ended my trip with a final breakfast of ‘balep korkun’ – a type of Tibetan flatbread, which helped make up for my inability to make it to this lofty western province – and made my way back to Chengdu airport for a flight back home. My three weeks in China hadn’t quite covered every possible cuisine, but I’d been north, east, south and west and seen how the varying histories, geographies, climates and lifestyles have impacted how people cook their food. And now there was one thing I knew for sure. The next time I visit a Chinese restaurant back home, I will only be getting a tiny taste of a vast and varied culinary culture.

You can read more of blogger Jenny Zhu’s thoughts on the food and culture of Shanghai at:  
[www.jennyzhu.com](http://www.jennyzhu.com)

Joseph Reaney is a freelance travel journalist specialising in Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. He writes for The Tribune and Forbes Travel.

Find out more at:  
[www.josephreaney.com](http://www.josephreaney.com)



TRAVELTIPS /

# TRAVEL SAFE

Travel safely using a few practical tips and some clever gear so that you can have fun and never have to worry about losing any of your travel gear or money.



**Rolf Magener, has travelled to some of the most dangerous places of the planet. He shares some of his tips on how to avoid problems while on the road.**

Traveling safe is important, but staying safe throughout the duration of your trip is even more important. After the process of planning everything in advance and making prior arrangements is completed, you need to stay focused on staying safe during your stay. The following tips are guaranteed to make your trip a success.

#### Street Smart

The key to being safe on unfamiliar streets is to use your common sense to make judgments, and analyse different situations. When you move to and fro between places you've never visited before, it becomes essential to keep your wits about you. A general rule of the thumb is to avoid crowded dark alleys and poorly-lit streets, especially at night. In case, you absolutely have to take a short-cut to save time, stay on guard at crowded subways, market places and elevators. The chances of street crime are the highest when you least expect it, and an innocent fellow traveler asking for directions is very likely to be a pickpocket. Similarly, children in small groups could distract you by feigning an accident, but they may actually be after your cash.

An interesting tourist tip that seems to work like magic

is to pretend to be in control, even if you're lost. It's only natural to be slightly confused by new surroundings, but you must be prepared to deal with it. The most important thing to remember when you feel a little bewildered is to appear purposeful and confident. Do not give out negative vibes to people around you, and ask for direction from authorized authorities and men in uniform only.

Some parts of Europe — especially Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands — are adopting a chip-and-PIN system for their credit and debit cards. These "smart-cards" come with an embedded microchip. When making a purchase, cardholders must enter a PIN (similar to using a debit card for a point-of-sale purchase in the US). The chip inside the card then authorizes the transaction. While handy for Europeans, chip-and-PIN cards are causing a few headaches for American visitors: Some machines that are designed to accept chip-and-PIN cards simply don't accept US credit cards. This is especially common with automated machines, such as those at train and subway stations, toll roads, parking garages, luggage lockers, bike-rental kiosks, and self-serve pumps at gas stations.

As for carrying money, make sure that you're familiar with the local currency while you're out on the streets. A careless act of fumbling with a wad of currency bills makes you the most potential victim for muggers in the streets. Do remember to keep small and large bills separate, so that you do not have to take out a lot of cash when paying for coffee or soda.

Being street smart is an art which you need to muster with practice and confidence. In order to prepare yourself to encounter any situation while you're out exploring, you will want to keep a list of your nearest embassy and hotel numbers on hand. If possible, you could also learn a few basic sentences or words, in the local language, so that you can call out for help in case of a medical emergency, or a serious offense. A tourist trick that seasoned travelers swear by is carrying smaller bills of money in your front pockets to satisfy potential muggers. This keeps your "real" money safe, and reduces the risk of violence often leading to a serious life threat.

However, if despite all your efforts to keep safe on the streets, you do fall a victim to a street crime, do not panic or resist. Resisting an armed robbery often leads to violence and can jeopardize your life. So hand over your possessions, and contact the local police as soon as possible.

#### Hotel

Choosing the best hotel that you can afford automatically places you in a better position to deal with any safety threats. The reason for this is that renowned hotels take initiatives to install the latest security measures, and are properly equipped to guard you at all times. However, if you are unable to afford one of the best hotels, do opt for a hotel instead of a motel. Since most Bed and Breakfast places and motels consist of single-storey buildings, the nearness to the parking lot poses a grave security threat. It also makes it easy for a potential thief to access your room when you are not around.

On the other hand, always avoid putting the "Make up My Room" sign outside your room, as this gives out a clear message that your room is vacant. Instead, use the "Do Not Disturb" sign even when you're out, as it discourages potential burglars from raiding your room. This may seem like an over simplification, but it really works to keep you safe on your trip. A similar rule of the thumb applies to taking elevators late at night. If someone looks suspicious, or just makes you feel uncomfortable, do not ride the elevator with that particular person. While not inviting new friends over to your room for coffee or drinks may seem a little paranoid, it really is a great way to ensure your safety. However, there's no need to be unfriendly, and there really is no harm in making plans to meet new friends at the hotel lobby, or other public places and restaurants.

#### Public Transport

Traveling by trains to enjoy scenic views and breathtaking landscape is quite popular with tourists, especially when taking a trip to Europe. Although authorities always take strong measures to ensure that the passengers are safe, a few negative elements manage to plan systematic robberies on popular tourist routes especially at night. So if your

trip includes boarding an overnight train, make sure that you keep your compartment locked. As criminals have been known to drug food or drinks offered to passengers, be wary of accepting food from strangers.

Buses covering popular routes are also a vulnerable target for potential crimes. But the relatively shorter duration of the journey helps to minimize the chances of any mishaps. However, do try to steer clear of suspicious people lurking around you in the bus. In some extreme cases, buses have been held up and robbed by bandits, but fortunately that does not happen too often. Taking care of your valuables while waiting at the bus stations, is also important to ensure that you remain safe and happy throughout your journey.

The safest way to travel by taxis is to play smart while picking a cab for yourself. Official cabs may be expensive, but they offer security and safe passage to and from your destination. If possible, always pick taxis with official markings, and stay away from unmarked cabs.

Tourists are also advised to avoid revealing too much information about their whereabouts to the taxi drivers, as this may backfire in case the driver is up to some mischief.

#### Driving

Taking measures to ensure safety while driving is an integral part of traveling safe. Renting out cars to drive locally, or travelling within Europe, is popular amongst travelers who wish to make the best of their journey. However, driving on unfamiliar roads is often risky and can result in unexpected difficulties. Choosing a reliable car, which is common to the local cars of the area you're visiting, is crucial in up guarding your safety and well-being on the road. Avoid renting a fancy car which makes you stand out from the rest of the drivers on your route, and is an easy target for potential thieves. If possible, request the agency to remove any rental stickers or markings from your car, so that you blend in with the rest of the cars on the road. If available choose a car with air conditioning as this will allow you to keep your windows closed, as thieves do snatch purses or mobile phones through open windows of moving cars.

Unfortunately, victimization of motorists has become a frequent crime in most tourist places. The best way to avoid this is to ask your car rental agency for advice on how to stay safe while driving through different tourist destinations. Since carjackers and thieves usually operate at gas station, parking lots, and along the highway, do steer clear of anyone who seems suspicious, and change your route if possible. Thieves have also been known to fake "accidents" to get attention, so it's always advised not to stop for anything on the road, and avoid giving lifts to strangers no matter how "innocent" they appear to be.

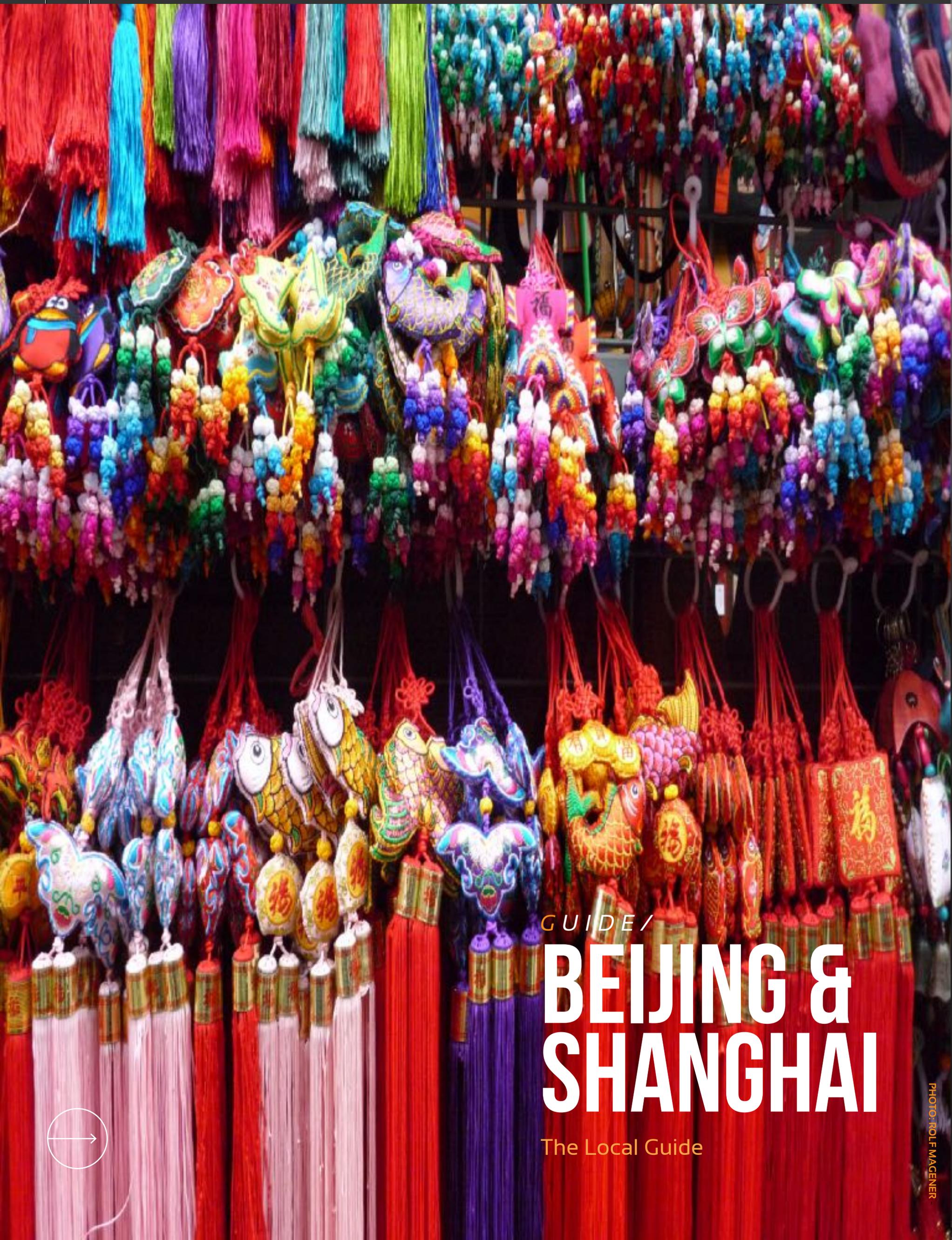
#### Money

Handling money in an efficient and safe manner is crucial to enjoying a successful trip. You must plan your trip by making a realistic budget based on the amount of money needed for hotels, food, transport, and emergencies. If you book hotels, rental cars and travel tickets in advance, do remember to carry your confirmation numbers with you to your destination.

In order to make your trip safe, you need to plan which form of money you're most comfortable carrying for longer periods of time. Discuss all the options with your bank, and opt for the ones that you feel will prove to be safe and efficient to cover all your needs. However, to avoid carrying large amounts of cash, it is strongly recommended to rely on travelers' checks and credit cards to cover your major expenses throughout your trip. You could also carry two different kinds of credit cards that work internationally such as Visa and MasterCard, to use as and when required.

As an additional precautionary measure, remember to double-check the limit on your credit cards, and the balance in your checking account before leaving for your trip. Once you reach your hotel, keep one credit card in the hotel safe to fall back on in case you lose your wallet and the other credit cards. If you use your credit cards to make purchases in the

Continued on page 32 >>



GUIDE /

# BEIJING & SHANGHAI

The Local Guide





The Temple of Heaven and its parks are a great place to spend the afternoon.



Beijings Oprea House part of the changing face of the capital city.

## Beijing Guide

### Best time of the year to go:

Beijing has four seasons, of course, however, locals would only consider it as two seasons, which are the summer and winter. The spring and fall are too short to really consider a season.

The hottest season for travelling to Beijing will be the Summer time which everything will be more green and you can visit a mass of places easier. However, it will also be a very touristy season which means, things will be much more expensive compare to the Winter time.

The best time to travel to Beijing is sometime between Sept. to Oct, but ignore the dates from Oct 1 – Oct 7 National Holiday as there will be many people traveling within China.

Keep in mind Beijing will be HOT/COLD in the Summer / Winter.

### Best places to stay on a medium and low budget:

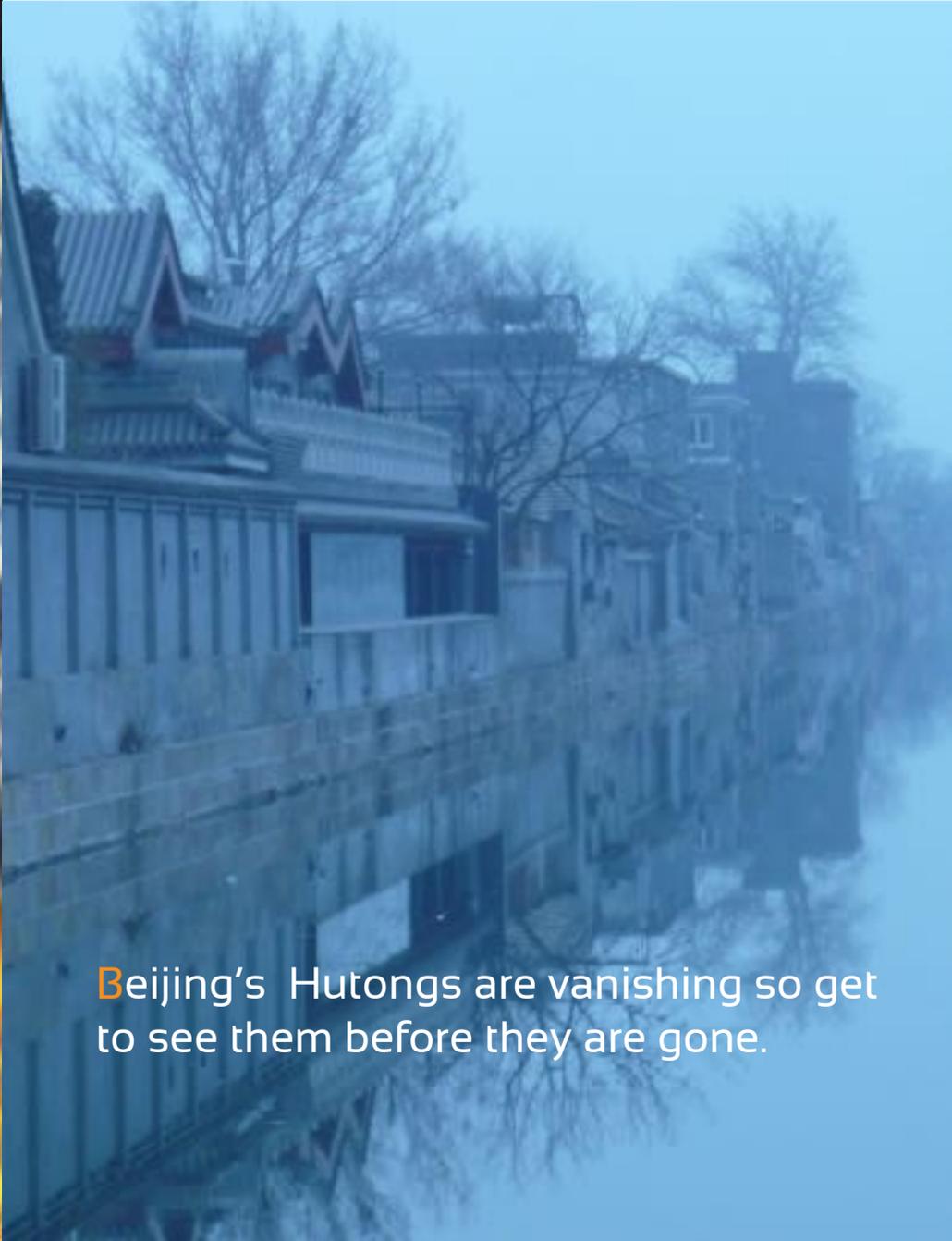
There are plenty of medium budget places where you can stay in Beijing. As far as Medium Budget goes, we recommended places rated as 2-3 stars hotels in Beijing and they usually cost somewhere between \$60–80. Low budget may not be a great living situation but usually come with a great location for travellers. The medium budget will be tricky depending on where you will be staying.

Hotel Recommendations:

RED Hotel:

<http://www.red-hotel.com> It is a nice location close to the popular side of town with a reasonable price.

The Orange Hotel: <http://www.orangehotel.com.cn/beijing/>



Beijing's Hutongs are vanishing so get to see them before they are gone.

Their quality is a little bit better than just a motel and with a nice location as well. Tricky part of this place is you may need a person who can help you with Chinese to book the hotel since it is really for the locals.

Hotel G: <http://www.hotel-g.com>

The price is a bit tricky with this place. You may get cheap rates somewhere around \$80 per night, however, you may also need to pay somewhere around \$100 just depends on where you can find a good rate to book this hotel! Fantastic location with great service, and if you are the person who is looking for a taste, this one would satisfy you just fine!

### Best places to stay on a high budget:

There are plenty of places, because you are visiting the capital of China. I don't think I will need to explain to you why those places are so great or why they are so expensive, because you will understand once you check in those places. So I will just go ahead and give you some links and please feel free to check it out :

The Raffles Beijing: <http://www.affles.com/beijing/>

Peninsula Wangfujing: [http://www.peninsula.com/Peninsula\\_Hotels/sc/default.aspx](http://www.peninsula.com/Peninsula_Hotels/sc/default.aspx) Aman at the Summer Palace: <http://www.amanresorts.com/amanatsummerpalace/home.aspx?LangType=2052>

China world Summit Wing – Shangri-la Hotel: <http://www.shangri-la.com/cn/beijing/chinaworldsummitwing>

Opposite House: <http://www.theoppositehouse.com>

### What to see or do?

I will say here are things that you really can't miss, even though they are touristy. The Great Wall, The Forbidden City and the Tian'anmen Square is going to be on your MUST SEE list. Then we comes down to what type of the traveller you are and what kind of things you would like to do. Here are some places I would recommended you to check out:

Nanluoguxiang (The Hutong Area of Beijing where you get a sense of the old side of Beijing)

798 Art District (If you are the art lover, then I would recommended you to visit that place for sure!

Temples of Beijing has a lot of temples, but here are some places you shouldn't miss: Temple of Heaven / The Summer Palace/ Lama Temple / The Confucius Temple)

### Where to eat great local food:

If this is your first visit to Beijing, there are a few things you can't miss for China: Pecking Duck (I would highly recommended you to visit a place called The King Roast Duck ([http://www.bjywky.com/intro\\_en.asp](http://www.bjywky.com/intro_en.asp)) or the Dadong Duck. Trust me, those two places are much better than any of the guidebook!

Hot Pot: Fall/Winter time is the best time to have it, however, if you are coming in the Summer, it won't be a problem to try those delicious hotpot. Here are two types of Hotpot and one I would recommended you to go is located right next to the South gate of Temple of Heaven and it is called the 南门涮肉. It is a more of a traditional Beijing hotpot. The other type is actually from Sichuan area and is a very spicy hot one called Haidilao! Those two, please don't miss it!

### Best way to get around town:

As far as you are planning on to visit downtown area, Metro will probably the best way for you to go. It is very easy to figure out and cheap. It

doesn't matter where to go, as long as it is within the downtown area, it will be always 2RMB per ride.

### Best places for drinks:

You will be reading some famous places called the Bar Street or the Houhai Street of Beijing. My suggestion is, please don't go there! It used to be good with a reasonable price, but it is only for people who read from guide books. Therefore, I would suggest you to visit the modern side of town, which is called The Village (Sanlitun, right across from the Bar Street). They have a lot of Modern Restaurants and good bars there with good standard of drink menus. There are also some good bars around the Hutong area and as far as you are avoiding the Houhai area, then it should be good. One suggestion is called the Salud, which is located in both Nanluoguxiang and The Village area. You can try that out. However, there is always a bar I often take my friends to and it is located in the highest building of Beijing for the current moment called The Atomphere. You would want to go there when it is a clear day and make sure you dress up nicely as they have a dress code now.

### Must see... Not touristy:

If it is your first time to visit Beijing, then you will have to visit the famous Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Square, and The Great Wall. As long as you are planning on to visit that place, then you will have to meet with a lot of other tourists. However, I would also suggest you to visit place such as The Temple of Heaven, The Summer Palace, Hutong Areas (Nanluoguxiang, Wudaoying, Yandai Xiejie, etc.)

### Other tips.....:

You MUST bargain with the vendor. However, it will depend on where you are. Most people, even including myself, sometime go to a store called Yashow Market, Pearl Market or the Silk Market to get the goodies for my friends from the States. If you ever get a chance to come across to any of the places, you MUST bargain with them. If they offers you 500RMB, then you need to at least start with them from 100RMB and just meet your final price somewhere between. Please keep in mind they usually charge you two or three time what they are supposed to charge you!

## Shanghai Guide

### Best time of the year to go:

Most enjoyable is spring because of all the blossoms. Summer is extremely hot and muggy. In winter it may snow, but never accumulate. Chinese New Year is truly enjoyable LOTS of fireworks and celebrations.

### Best places to stay on a low budget:

Older areas of Shanghai like Huangpu, away from the Bund \$20-\$75

### Best places to stay on a medium budget:

Pudong away from the river, near Century Park, Science and Technology Museum, and Big Thumb Plaza \$100-\$175

### Best places to stay high budget:

Downtown Pudong district, near the Pearl Tower, Jinmao Tower, and the river Near the Bund, or Nanjing Road \$175+



Beijings Hutongs where life still goes on as if Mao were alive...



### What to see or do:

Market Shopping in the Metro Line 2 station at Shanghai Science and Technology Museum. Practice the art of negotiation, pick up some good souvenirs. All bags, coats, etc. are knock-offs – don't let them fool you. You can find great deals for tailors if you have time. Sam's is the place to go.

Also: go up World Financial Centre or the Pearl Tower on a clear day – great views of the city, see the Bund, East Nanjing Road for shopping, Yuan Garden (with lots of shopping in that area), Shanghai wild animal park, Shanghai ocean aquarium, Century Park (especially if you go in the spring), Tiger Hill, Confucian Temple, Humble Administrator's Garden, and the bird and flower market), make a trip to Carrefour (a grocery store) and the mall in Pudong, and if you have time to travel a little Zhouzhuang Water City.

### Where to eat great local food:

Yang's Fry Dumplings. Off of Metro Line 2, West Nanjing Rd. 2/F, Huang Pu Hui, 269 Wujiang Lu near Maoming Bei Lu

You can also find street vendors and local restaurants all over on the west side of the river. If you are brave enough to try a restaurant where they don't speak English, stick to the menu items that have pictures.

### Best way to get around town:

Metro and Taxis [avoid busses] if it is a longer or walk if the weather is nice – just watch out for scooters and taxis. Watch for the Taxi drivers – use small bills (some have been known to return counterfeit bills if given a large one) or a metro card and know where you are headed or use your hotel doorman for assistance. Some are not very honest and can take you for a ride.



Shanghai is one of the most modern cities on the planet...

尽享滑翔





The Metro is easy to use, signs and announcements are in English and Chinese. Google maps shows the metro lines as well, so if you have an address, you can look up, it is pretty easy to find your metro route. I would recommend getting a metro card as you can use it for taxis and the metro. There is a small deposit to pay when you get it, but you can turn it back in for a refund before you leave. <http://www.shmetro.com/EnglishPage/EnglishPage.jsp>

#### Best places for drinks:

West Nanjing Road and the French Concession are the happening places. Lots of upscale restaurants and bars. Also go to Big Thumb Plaza in Pudong, there are a few bars and restaurants there.

#### Must see... "not touristy":

Shanghai Opera House  
Carrefour Supermarkets (for a good laugh)  
Creative art district on Moganshan Lu  
Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center

#### Other tips:

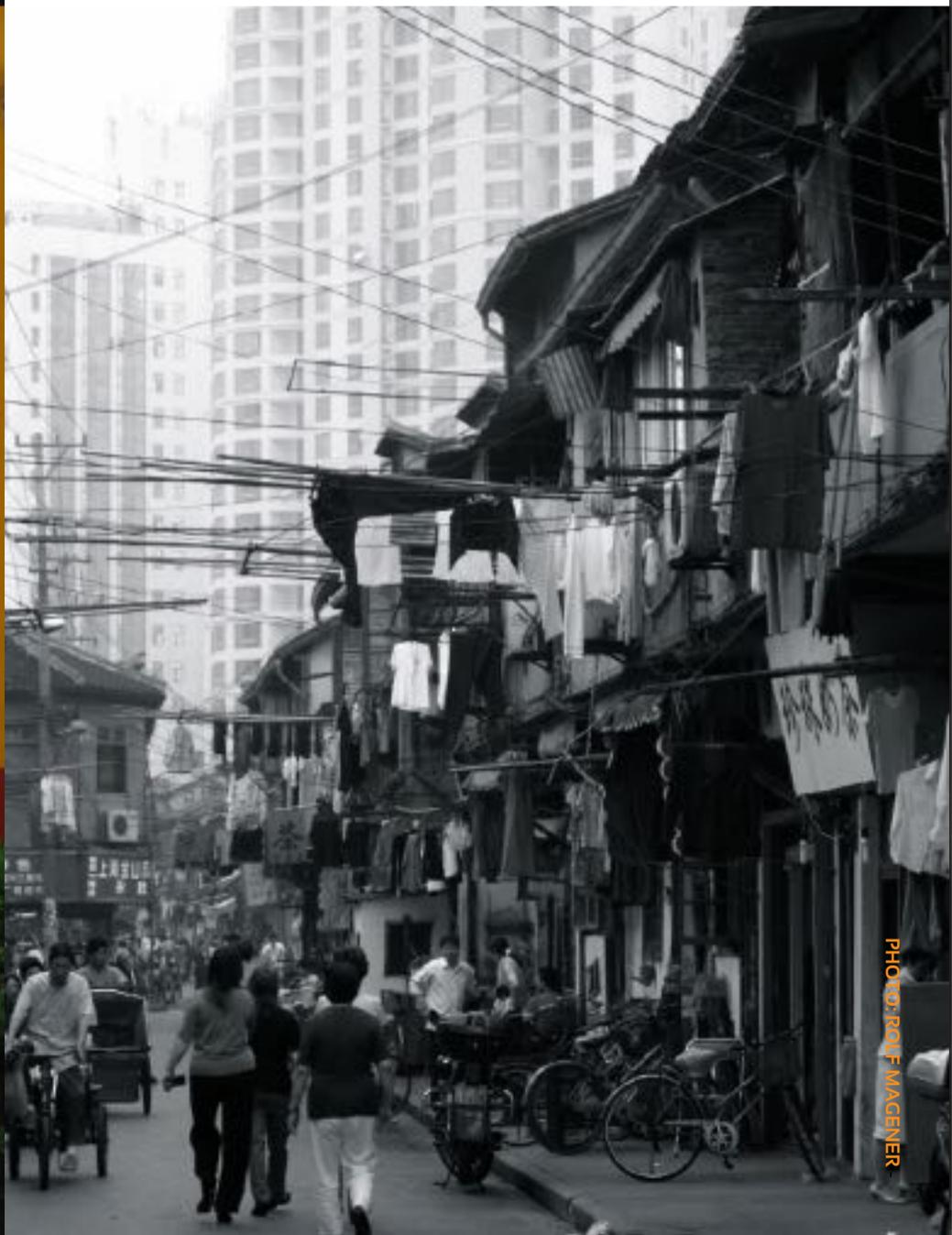
Watch out for pickpockets. If you carry a backpack keep it in front of you.

Watch out for scooters and BAD drivers.

Don't wear flip-flops or mesh shoes for walking around. The locals use the rest room just about anywhere. ■



The old Shanghai can still be found if you look for it, but it is disappearing at an alarming speed.



## TRAVEL TECH/

# ALL YOU NEED TO STAY CONNECTED

No matter where you are today you can always stay connected, when on the road.

All tablets can browse the Web, check e-mail and run apps. Some are better at some things than others, but the difference in screen size does not fundamentally change the nature of the machine.

Apple's third-generation iPad offers the best detail and most accurate colors we've ever seen on a tablet. The 4G version now tops our latest Ratings (available to subscribers).

Apple pumped the camera on the new iPad up to 5 megapixels. The broadband version now offers 4G Internet access, which in our informal tests was very fast and dependable. Finally, the battery lasts about as long as the iPad 2's. Both exceed any other tablet's battery life. Far more apps exist for it than for its competitors, and many of those are cutting-edge apps. The iPad also remains the best tablet for reading e-magazines and e-newspapers, with its large display and the most access to magazines designed for the tablet experience.

You can save about \$100 by choosing the still-available iPad 2, which starts at \$400 for the 16GB Wi-Fi version.

If you've been waiting for a lower-priced tablet that could challenge the iPad, take a look at the Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0 (\$250). It's a viable competitor to two other smaller tablets, the Amazon Kindle Fire (\$200) and Barnes & Noble Nook Tablet (\$250). They've got 7-inch screens instead of the iPad's 9.7-inch display, but all offer lots for the money. They differ in how they provide content. With the Kindle Fire, you can stream, rent, or buy movies, and borrow a book a month via Amazon Prime (\$80 a year). There's also an Amazon music store. Multimedia content on the Nook Tablet comes from Netflix, Pandora, and other sites. You can load your music onto both tablets. The Galaxy Tab also offers music and movies from its own music and media hubs.

Before you start shopping, consider your priorities. If price and portability are tops, those 7-inch models are great, budget-oriented alternatives. Other factors to consider include the availability of a 3G/4G version, the existence of built-in ports, and the operating system.

## Apple iPad Mini

*The screen's resolution is 1024x768, which sounds good until you realize the Nexus 7 and the Kindle Fire HD have higher resolutions.*

Available at : [Apple.com](http://Apple.com)



## Amazon Kindle

*1280x800 HD display with polarizing filter and anti-glare technology for rich color and deep contrast from any viewing angle*

*World's first tablet with dual-band, dual-antenna Wi-Fi for 40% faster downloads.*

Available at : [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



## Google Nexus

*Nexus 7 is now more powerful and portable than ever. With up to 32GB of storage and the option to add mobile data, you can take even more of your favorite content from Google Play with you anywhere.*

Available at : [WalMart.com](http://WalMart.com)



TRAVEL TECH /

# TRAVEL APPS

These 10 apps should be on your phone /tablet if you are traveling.

Though most iPhone owners may view their device as a critical tool for handling the details of their everyday lives, thanks to a bevy of incredibly useful applications, this pocket-size wonder can also be a tremendous help whenever it's time to get up and go. Spanning the entire gamut of the trip -- from packing to making your flight to finding a hotel to changing money -- these 10 apps will, without question, improve your overall travel experience. In fact, we're willing to bet that after one trip you'll start to wonder how you ever managed to travel without them.

## Flight Tracker

There is nothing more frustrating than making an hours-long commute to your airport only to find out your flight has been delayed for half a day or cancelled altogether. Well, the Flight Tracker app aims to make this a thing of the past. Now, you can track flights with amazing maps, and receive real-time info on departure info, delays and gate assignments.



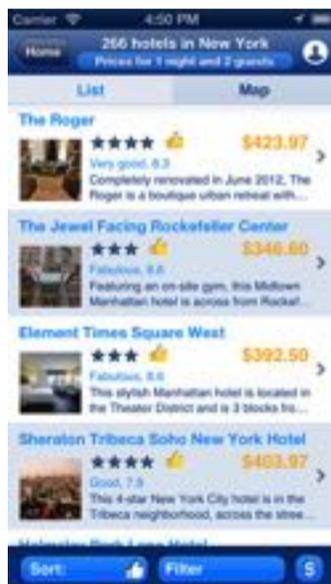
## XE Currency

XE Currency is a useful tool for converting money from all over the world, helping users to better understand just how much cash they should expect to receive in the event of an exchange (before fees) calculations stay up to date with the changes in the international currency markets.



## Bookings.com

This app is what all apps should be. Easy, convenient way to make a hotel reservation at over 250,000 hotels.



## National Geographic World Atlas

National Geographic Atals Maps are some of the best. Best of all, these maps can be viewed offline when there is no internet connection. Also includes detailed country information.

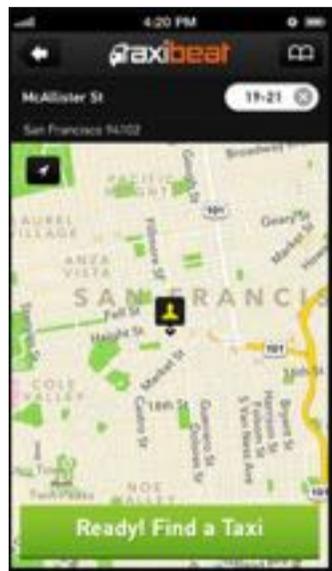


TRAVEL TECH/

# TRAVEL APPS

## TaxiBeat

TaxiBeat enables you to hail a taxi wherever you are, whenever you want, at no extra cost. Tap for the map, pick your driver, hop in and get where you're going. Instead of flagging down a stranger, you get a trusted taxi driver rated by other TaxiBeat users. Get a taxi in two taps: One for the map and the other for the driver you want: choose the nearest cab, the nicest vehicle or the most recommended driver.



## Sky Scanner

Need a cheap flight, fast? Compare over 1000 budget and scheduled airlines in seconds with the free Skyscanner iPhone app; saves money, saves time. Buy air tickets direct from airlines or travel agents and get the best deals. It's simple, independent and finds the lowest fares with a few quick taps, wherever you want to fly.



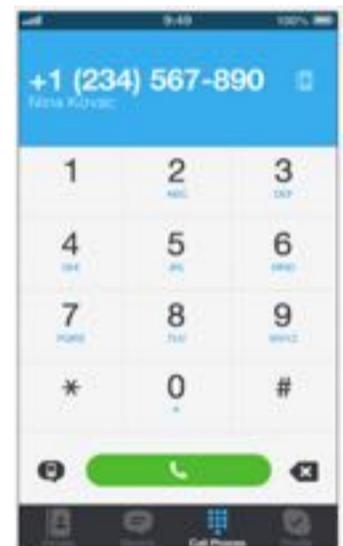
## TripAdvisor

One of the Web's most popular travel review websites has made its way to the iPhone. This Web-based app pairs your GPS coordinates with content from the TripAdvisor website, so you'll need a data connection to use it. You can see ratings, read reviews and book hotels directly from the app, making it an excellent resource for last-minute planners.



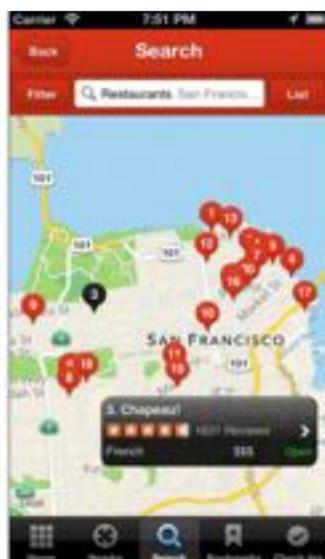
## Skype

Skype transforms your WiFi connection into a virtual cellular network, enabling calls to anywhere in the world for pennies on the dollar. And it sounds great too, assuming you're able to find a high-speed WiFi connection abroad. You can also use the app stateside to place calls to destinations abroad, starting at 2.6 cents per minute. Skype to Skype calls are always free.



## Yelp

Yelp has become a priceless resource for consumers. Looking for a new dentist? Search for their name on Yelp to pull up dozens of recent user reviews. The same goes for restaurants, and virtually any type of business imaginable.



## Google Translate

Google Translate allows you to translate text between 60 languages, receive translation by speaking into the phone for 15 languages, display translations so that they are easier to read, and much more.



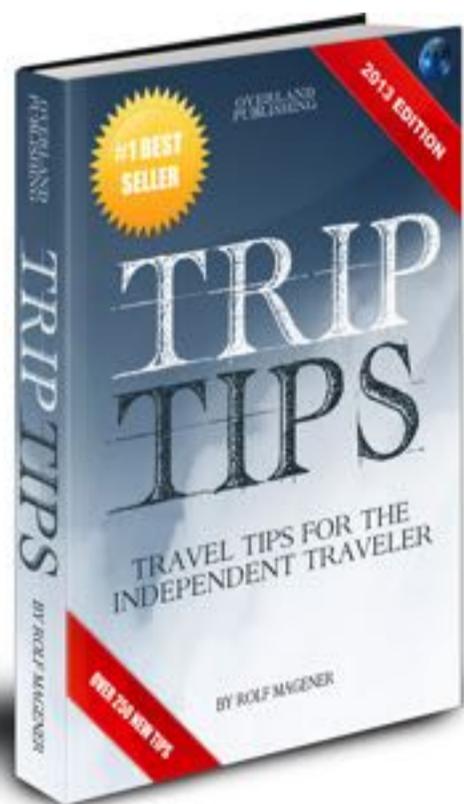
## BOOKS / AUDIO

# KEEP TRAVELING WHILE AT HOME

The Overland Podcast is a monthly country / city travel guide podcast that has interviews and travel tips. From Armenia to Zimbabwe we will cover them all, with tips on how to get from the airport to the best restaurants. This month the PodCast covers Beijing.



Click on the bar to play>>>



TRIP TIPS 2013 the latest book from Overland Travel Media, covers hundreds of trips that any independent traveller should know, from booking hotels rental cars down to packing lists so that you have a great trip no matter where you go or how much you have travelled.

It is available in as Paperback or Kindle download at Amazon.com  
 \$6.99 for the Paperback [Click Here to Purchase](#)  
 \$0.99 for the Kindle Download [Click Here to Purchase](#)



***"PODCASTS keep me out there in the travel world while I am back at the office"***

CHRIS BURKIL - OVERLAND SUBSCRIBER

*CONTINUED // from page 21*

local market, make sure that your card is handed back to you after each transaction.

When you reach your destination, keep in mind to deal with authorized dealers to exchange money, and avoid changing money on the black market. Withdrawing money from the ATM each day to have some cash on you is also a good idea to ensure that you do not carry extra cash with you. If you're travelling internationally, withdrawing cash from ATMs will give you a decent exchange rate, and is much safer than flashing money while exchanging from black dealers in an open market place.

Seasoned travelers suggest that it's beneficial to make photocopies of all your credit and debit cards, and leave them with a trusted family member at home. This will come in handy if you lose your wallet or purse, as the photocopies will provide you with the necessary information to contact your bank, or credit card company, and get faster results to sort everything out in lesser time.

#### Legal Complications

It's extremely important to familiarize yourself with the laws and customs of the land you're planning to visit. When you are in a foreign country, you are subjected to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. It becomes obligatory for you to follow the laws, customs and sometimes even trends, of the place you're visiting. Do remember that a certain kind of behaviour or attitude, may be considered absolutely "normal" in your part of the world, but it can have adverse connotations in other places across the globe. Since this could mean anything from specific laws to certain gestures, care must be taken to abide by the local laws for the entire duration of your stay.

Drug offense is the most common form of violation charges pressed against tourists travelling abroad. The main reason for this is that the perception of "drugs" is different in each part of the world. In a broader category, even some tranquillizers and sleeping pills can be labelled as "drugs" and care must be taken to carry proper prescriptions for any sleep-inducing medicines or pills.

It is also important to consider that some countries do not differentiate between possession and trafficking of certain drugs. Hence, small quantities of "regular" drugs which are accepted in certain countries are very likely to be illegal in others. As a precautionary measure, it is important to do your homework about the legality of any prescription medicine that you wish to carry on your trip. Do remember that alcohol or medicines containing alcohol may also be illegal in some countries, and care must be taken before carrying any of these with you while you travel. In case of any doubt about the drug laws of a certain place, do not hesitate to ask the local authorities, or consult your embassy or consulate for relevant information about drug practice and laws.

If you are planning to take a trip to Egypt, Turkey or Mexico, be cautious about the legality of your purchases. There have been instances when tourists were arrested or detained at the local airport for possessing "national treasures" which they had innocently bought from flea markets as exquisite pieces of antiques. In countries with strict control of antiques, document your purchases as "replicas", or if they are authentic, secure the necessary export permit issued from the national museum, to make it legal for you to carry them through customs.

Photography is another common area of conflicting tourist laws and customs. Many countries have rules against photographing security-related institutions including government buildings, police and military installations and border areas. In order to avoid any unpleasant situation where you may be detained for violating the local photography laws, always ask for permission before taking pictures of sensitive areas, and respect their need for privacy and discretion.

On the other hand, a trip to Mexico, Canada or the Caribbean, may sound exciting, but it can have dire consequences if you intend on carrying firearms. As a general rule, a firearm license of your country is often obsolete

in other countries, and you may be arrested for carrying "illegal" arms. The best way to avoid this is to seek prior permission for a permit from the embassy or consulate of the country you're visiting, and make sure that your firearm is registered with foreign authorities on arrival.

#### Traveling with Children

Travelling with children poses an additional concern for their safety and well-being. If you're a parent who's planning to take your child on a trip, you need to adhere to a lot of safety and precautionary measures to ensure that they remain safe and healthy.

Arranging for your child's travel documents is the first step towards planning your trip. Since passports are now required for all the children including infants for an international trip, make sure to apply well in advance. In case of local travelling when passports are not required, make sure that you keep a copy of your child's birth certificate to show if needed. If you're a single parent, you should be able to produce an authorization letter or a custody paper allowing you to take the child on a trip. While this may not be required in all the countries, it's a great safety measure which puts you in control of any possible situation.

The most important thing to consider even before you finalize your plans is the medical condition of your children. If your child happens to suffer from a specific medical condition such as asthma, you need to carry the inhaler or any other medical aid that may be required in case of an emergency. In case you're flying to your destination, choose an airline which is child-friendly, and do not forget to carry special equipment such as a stroller which comes in handy while sightseeing.

It is also recommended that you carry your child's essentials in the carry-on bag, instead of booking it with your checked luggage. Carrying all your child's essentials with you including extra diapers and food items, will ensure that you do not fall a victim to any inconvenience during your flight. To ensure your piece of mind, remember to check with the flight attendant if they have sufficient emergency equipment, such as life preservers, designed to fit small children. When it comes to seating, the ideal thing to do is to place an adult on either sides of a child. But if that's not possible, try to talk your child out of taking the aisle seat, as they can get hurt by the serving cart passing down the aisle.

Young children are often fond of a particular toy which provides them with a sense of security and familiarity. On long journeys, your child is going to need his comfort toy even more than usual, so make sure that you carry that special teddy bear or a worn-out doll with you. However, try to avoid bringing toys that are too heavy and sharp since they might hurt or bruise your child. If your child has a video game, make sure that it's only allowed during the cruise period of the flight, as electronic games can interfere with an aircraft's navigational system.

On the other hand, if you're planning to take a road trip with your children especially toddlers and infants, remember to pack your car seats. If you plan to camp or hike during your road trip, keep a map or activate GPS to ensure that you have a back-up plan in case you get lost. It is also advisable to keep some cash in the form of the local currency of the area you'll be visiting to pay for minor emergencies. Children tend to become cranky while travelling and it will help to have some cash at hand to comfort them with food or toys along the way.

#### Women Traveling Alone

If you're a woman travelling alone, there is no reason for you to not enjoy your trip, but some precautionary measures will keep you safe and comfortable in foreign lands. Acquainting yourself with the culture of the place you're planning to visit, is the first step towards an incident-free journey. Consider the fact that some cultures find it offensive for women to dress in an "immodest" way, and this could mean anything from wearing a short skirt, to keeping your head uncovered. So to prevent harassment and even physical violence, dress for the culture you are visiting, and pack accordingly. In case you still find yourself in a difficult situation, ask the local women for guidance, and try your best to blend in with the crowd.

On the other hand, opting for registered taxis is also a good way to

stay out of unnecessary trouble. If you think you're being followed, do not hesitate to ask for help from the local authorities, and avoid confronting your suspect on your own. It also helps to stick with a group, especially while sitting at airports and other public places, so that you do not give the impression of being alone and vulnerable. While it may be tempting to chat up with strangers and fellow travelers, try to maintain a polite but reserved demeanour. This will help to keep your travel plans from leaking out, and you will be free to enjoy your trip without any safety threats.

#### Traveling in Groups

Escorted trips can take the anxiety and worry out of planning a vacation, as the responsibility of creating the "perfect" trip for you, falls on the tour operators. This is the reason why travel agencies and companies organizing travel tours, have gained immense popularity and emerged as successful businesses across the globe. However it's important to choose a well-reputed tour which caters to all your travelling needs, without compromising on your safety. The best way to make this possible is to decide what kind of a trip you want, even before you start searching for the best travel package. If you intend to have a high-end trip, with no financial restrictions, choose a tour operator who provides the best services from booking fancy hotels to ensuring that all your sightseeing is done from the comfort of an air-conditioned bus. On the other hand, if you are short on money, invest some time in choosing a tour, which aims to cater to all your travelling needs on a restricted budget.

A good way to determine quality is by finding out how a particular tour group is regarded by its former customers. It always helps to ask family or friends who have taken escorted trips, for personal experiences with travel groups. You can also ask the operator for previous customer reviews, or check their websites for any comments left by people, who have traveled with them. Do remember that the bottom-line for your trip is to enjoy the way you want to, and there must not be any compromises on fun or safety.

#### Students

If you are a parent or a teacher, planning an escorted tour for your children or students, remember that the safety of their trip lies in your choice of the tour group. There are a few important questions that you need to consider in order to determine the safety of the trip. It is important to know whether the company recommends or requires adult chaperones in the form of faculty or volunteering parents. Adults accompanying students on travel expeditions, is essential in ensuring that there is someone to take care of possible emergencies or difficult situations.

It also helps to know whether the company offers to provide its own representatives to accompany the travelling students. In case this option is not given and adults are asked to volunteer for travelling with the students, make sure that the travel company screens and trains these adults before allowing them to leave for the trip. It is also your responsibility to find out if the tour company has any rules or guidelines, for both the adult chaperones and the student to follow. It is also beneficial to discuss the nature of "emergencies" in advance with the director of your tour company, so that you can understand if they are capable of handling emergencies while your children travel with them.

#### Miscellaneous Tips

- Travel security is a serious issue. Sadly, too many travelers are victims of theft, because of being too carefree or simply for not planning properly. If you have street smarts, don't be afraid to get lost in a foreign land. It might be the most rewarding experience. Smile and be open and honest with everyone, they will be your next solution. Say Hello, to all other travelers and locals. You never know when you need help.

- Always take a taxi, or bus, etc. from airport or station to hotel. Never take a taxi that seems just to be hanging around, offering its services when there is a taxi queue available. Also it is better to take a taxi that has just dropped off someone than one that has been waiting. Taxis that are waiting usually want more money...

- Do not look rich, dress, jewellery, tourist clothes. Dress conservatively and try to blend in. You are most likely to get robbed when:
  - Walking around with camera around neck.
  - Cleaning people steal from your hotel room.
  - Putting things in the compartment above the seat in the bus.
  - Walking from the bus to the hotel with your backpack.
  - Walking away from the automatic teller machine.

#### Most physically dangerous:

- Getting hit by cars.
- Having sex with the locals.
- Walking home very drunk after midnight.
- Walking through groups of drunk people.
- Tours, with bad guides. That is the job of a guide to protect you.
- Getting involved with religious concerns.
- Getting involved in political causes.
- Complaining to the police.
- Electricity in showers.
- Military coup situations / or demonstrations. ■

## TRAVEL SAFETY GEAR



### Magallanes Secret Compartment Belt

This belt has a secret... A secret compartment, that is. To the unsuspecting eye, it looks like a handsome leather belt, which it is. But on the reverse side, there's a hidden zippered compartment to safely stash your cash. Made of rich brown distressed leather with a brass buckle. 1½" wide.

Available at Amazon.com \$32



### Undercover Hidden Pocket by Eagle Creek

The pocket hangs from your belt inside your pants along my hip. You can also position it to hang in front of one of your thighs. Use it to carry my passport, medical vaccination records, emergency cash (or excess cash, if you've just visited the ATM and don't want to have a lot of money in your standard wallet), and emergency credit cards.

Available at Amazon.com \$13.50



### Pac Safe Daysafe 100

The Fort Knox of backpacks! Slash-proof, tamper-proof and snatch-proof, DaySafe™ 100 is the Fort Knox of backpacks! The removable 16-liter main compartment (which may also be used as a portable safe in your hotel room or car) is constructed of eXomesh® Slashguard (stainless steel mesh laminated between two layers of nylon). It's like having a security fence around your valuables! The patented cable lock lets you anchor it to any secure fixture, and the adjustable padded shoulder strap is slash-proof. Made of black ballistic nylon, DaySafe has a removable insert for your laptop or documents, a front zippered organizer pocket with key clip, mesh exterior and side pockets, cell phone pocket on the shoulder strap, padded air mesh back support, and tamper-proof zippers. (19 x 12 x 8"; 1500 cubic inch capacity; 3 lb, 8 oz)

Available at Amazon.com and Rei.com \$ 110.50

SAY IT IN / AUDIO

# SAY IT IN CHINESE

Click the  to hear the translation.

 HELLO	你好	YES	是	
 MY NAME IS	我的名字是	NO	没有	
 THANK YOU	谢谢!	HOSPITAL	医院	
 I NEED A TAXI	我需要一辆出租车	POLICE	警方	
 I WANT TO GO TO	我要到	MORNING	上午	
 HOTEL	旅馆	AFTERNOON	下午	
 RESTAURANT	旅馆	NIGHT	夜	
 AIRPORT	机场	1 PERSON	一个人	
 TRAIN STATION	火车站	2 PEOPLE	两个人	
 METRO STATION	地铁站	MEAT	肉类	
 MUSEUM	博物馆	BEEF	牛肉	
 EMBASSY	使馆	PORK	猪肉	
 PASSPORT	护照	CHICKEN	鸡	
 VISA	签证	FISH	鱼	
 WHERE IS	在哪里	VEGETARIAN	素	
 EXIT	出口	WATER	水	
 ENTRANCE	入口	I WANT TO PAY	我想支付	



NEXT ISSUE /

# NEXT ISSUE AFRICA

ETHIOPIA / THE HIDDEN JEWEL OF AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA / SAFARIS AND LUXURY

MOZAMBIQUE / WHERE AFRICA MEETS CUBA