

BTS TOURISME – LOISIRS

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**Exercice de compréhension
ANGLAIS**

L'usage du dictionnaire n'est pas autorisé.

Untangling a Chinese Puzzle

Travel to a Once Forbidding Land Still Takes a Bit of Effort

Now that the way has been cleared for China to enter the World Trade Organization and Beijing has won its bid to host the 2008 Olympics, China is on the travel map for the ordinary traveller and business person, not just the intrepid.

But how does one go about planning a trip to the world's most populous country, a place both exotic and quixotic⁽¹⁾, and one that has spent much of history keeping itself apart from the West ?

It takes a bit of effort to discover much in the way of traditional Chinese landscape and villages once out of Beijing and Shanghai. Vast stretches of the interior have become depressing factory landscapes, pocked with ugly high-rises and smothered with pollution. Indeed, China's largest city, clocking in at 30 million people, is Chongqing, located on the Yangtze River. One needs to make peace with the fact that it is difficult to escape the masses anywhere in China. In spite of this, it is possible to seek out the unique qualities that make the country so fascinating.

It is also easy to become frustrated with an emphasis on paperwork, rules and protocol. But despite such inconveniences and its status as a developing nation with over-stretched resources, China has hundreds of three-, four- and five-star hotels and a culture of social cohesiveness that make travel for the foreigner remarkably safe.

ORGANIZED TOUR VERSUS INDEPENDENT TRAVEL That said, it is not simple to travel independently, especially if you are not fluent in Mandarin. So it is worth considering an organized tour, even if you see them as anathema to interesting travel. Or you could consider independent travel options offered by many tour companies, including hotel transfers, private cars and personal guides. The China International Tourist Service closely monitors all travel in China by foreigners and all guides must be registered with this government agency.

TRANSPORTATION It is not possible to rent a car in China unless you have a resident's permit and a Chinese driver's license. In Beijing and Shanghai it is very easy to get around by taxi or subway as long as you have the name of your destination and your hotel written somewhere in Chinese. The more adventurous may also want to rent a bicycle and join the hordes of locals on two wheels. English-language maps are readily available in hotel gift shops and Friendship Stores. It is safe to walk around on your own, so long as you have a good sense of direction. You cannot count on being able to find people to give you directions in English.

When travelling further afield, it is important to remember just how large a country China is; France fits into it 17 times. Because of the distances involved, the most common way to travel between significant sites is by plane. Overnight " soft sleeper " trains, the top of the line, are another option. Book tickets well in advance for both plane and train travel. Trains allow you to immerse yourself more in the local scene, but be prepared for hordes of people.

Plan your trip so it does not coincide with the main public holiday: the Chinese New Year, which usually falls in February, the May 1 Labor Day holiday and the Oct. 1 National Day. Each of these tends to be extended to an entire week's vacation and it seems the populace decamps to other places around the country. Airports, train stations and terminals become completely over-extended and hotels are fully booked. The best times to travel are during spring and autumn when temperatures are pleasant.

⁽¹⁾ quixotic : mythique

ACCOMMODATION There is a huge range of choice in Shanghai and Beijing, with many of the international hotel chains such as Sheraton, Hyatt, Shangri-La, Novotel, Hilton, and Holiday Inn, being well represented. While there are two pricing systems, one for foreigners and one for local Chinese, the foreign price is still below what an equivalent hotel would cost in North America or Europe. In Beijing, many hotels are undergoing refurbishment; be sure to request a renovated room when booking. Most international hotel chains also operate hotels in outlying regions. Don't cut corners when choosing a hotel outside Beijing and Shanghai. Go for the top of the range – still modestly priced while providing some added comforts. Of course, all over China there are high-quality Chinese hotels that also cater to foreigners. But while many are charming, there is not a tradition of small, distinctive hotels that might reflect the regional culture. The best Chinese hotels in Beijing, for instance, are virtually indistinguishable from medium-sized hotels in the West, and generally do not have sophisticated phone connections.

MONEY Travellers' checks tend to get better exchange rates than currency. Always have small bills since many people don't carry change. Tipping is not a Chinese custom but bargaining in markets is expected. Keep your exchange receipts if you want to convert notes back into foreign currency when leaving the country.

Adapted from Susan Gough Henly
International Herald Tribune

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TRAVAIL À EFFECTUER EN FRANÇAIS

Répondre aux questions suivantes en vous inspirant du texte ci - dessus :

1. Quelles recommandations feriez-vous à un voyageur indépendant partant découvrir la Chine ?
(150 mots ± 10 %)

2. À quelles difficultés ce même touriste risque-t-il de se heurter en Chine, en dépit des précautions prises ? (150 mots ± 10 %)

Indiquer le nombre de mots utilisés.