

What to Expect in China

General advice

- Chinese people arrive on time for meetings and other occasions (and sometimes 5 or 10 minutes in advance). It is considered rude to arrive late for engagements of any kind. Travelling from one point to another in many Chinese cities can be extremely time-consuming due to traffic delays. Make sure you leave early enough to make it to your destination on time.
- Take time to get to know your counterparts. You will need to establish a high level of trust in your partner. Business style in China relies on personal relationships based on trust rather than legalized, impersonal obligations. Don't rush things.
- China may be a developing country, but be prepared for prices which in some cases exceed those for comparable goods and services in Canada. Doing business in China is not cheap. Accommodation, meals, entertainment, rent, business services and other necessities are expensive. Look into the costs before you go.
- Physical conditions in China's cities can be difficult, with heat, cold, dust, crowding, noise, traffic, and their sheer size. Be prepared for this. China's best foreign hotels afford a wonderful refuge from the stress of such an environment, as well as providing business centers with modern computer and communication facilities.
- For serious transactions and information-gathering, you will require a guide or an interpreter. (These may be provided by your Chinese hosts for sightseeing and shopping, but for business you should find your own.) China-based consultants can help you in this respect. Local guides can also provide important cultural guidance on an on-going basis as they accompany you during your stay.
- Most Chinese are honest. That said, corruption and dishonesty exist. Westerners are immensely rich and privileged by average Chinese standards. This disparity in wealth inspires some to take advantage of others' vulnerabilities. Be aware of this. In small things, you can expect to get "taken" now and then. In your business transactions, seek expert advice. "Tax farming" (the collection of taxes by successive levels of the bureaucracy, each taking a cut as the revenue passes upward) is an ancient activity in China. But not all the taxes so collected actually exist!