THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

CHINA

A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

January 2009


RUSSIA
KAZAKHSTAN
MONGOLIA
Ulaanbaatar
KYRGYZSTAN
XINJIANG
NEI MONGOL
HEILONGJIANG
NORTH KOREA
P'yongyang
SOUTH KOREA
GANSU
QINGHAI
Yellow Sea
XIZANG (TIBET)
SICHUAN
East China Sea
NEPAL
INDIA
BHUTAN
Kathmandu
Taiwan
BURMA
LAOS
VIETNAM
South China Sea
PHILIPPINES
Luzon
Manila
THAILAND
Rangoon
Bangkok
China
International boundary
Province-level boundary
National capital
Province-level capital
Railroad
Road
500 Kilometers
500 Miles

A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join Peace Corps/China. By becoming part of Peace Corps, you are joining 195,000 people from our country who have served all over the world since the Peace Corps was started in 1961. On a more local level, you are joining the 540 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in the People's Republic of China since 1993.

China, with one of the oldest continuous civilizations on Earth, faces huge challenges based on the sheer number of people. With a population of 1.3 billion, nearly 20 percent of the world's population lives in China. China has 200 million children of primary and middle school age; which is almost two-thirds of the total population of the United States. Because China has a shortage of 500,000 English teachers, the Peace Corps was invited to work with Chinese colleges and universities to prepare future English teachers. In urban areas, China has almost reached its goal of providing nine years of schooling for every Chinese child, but there is still a ways to go in the rural areas where 80 percent of the population lives.

In addition to English teaching, the Peace Corps has two other equally important goals in China. The first of these is for the Chinese people to get to know you as a person who lives and works with them and who lives a lifestyle that is consistent with the way they live. Most of you will live on campus in the same apartment buildings where your Chinese colleagues live. The second of these goals is to use all the knowledge and experience that you gain in China to take back to the United States to help explain China to people in the U.S. The ability to speak the Chinese language is vital to carrying out these

two objectives. The Peace Corps will provide you with intense Chinese language training during your pre-service training; you will also receive resources to continue your language study at your site

You are about to embark on what in all likelihood will be one of the most unique experiences of your life. Every part of you will be called upon as you come to live and work in a society that is fully as self-assured as your own. You will stretch yourself in ways that you could never have imagined. Even though you will leave the Peace Corps someday, your Peace Corps experience will never leave you.

Again, congratulations. I want to thank you for your commitment to come to serve in China. Through your English teaching, your living style, and your ability to speak Chinese, you can go a long way toward promoting greater understanding in an anxious world. I hope this *Welcome Book* will begin to answer some of your questions.

I look forward to meeting you.

Bonnie Thie
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS/CHINA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in China

In March 1988, the Chinese foreign minister and then-Secretary of State George Shultz agreed in principle to place Peace Corps Volunteers in China. A year later, an exchange of letters signed by the U.S. ambassador and the secretary general of the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and the Peace Corps opened the way to establish a Peace Corps post in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province.

In June 1989, the first group of trainees for Peace Corps/China began training in the United States. However, following the Tiananmen Square incident, the training was canceled; the China program was temporarily suspended and the trainees were offered assignments in other countries.

The first group of 18 Peace Corps Volunteers to be sent to China arrived for their training in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in June 1993. Following training in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), Chinese language, and cross-cultural issues, the 18 trainees swore-in as Volunteers in August 1993. They were posted to Sichuan Province, which at that time also included what later became the separate political entity known as the municipality of Chongqing. This group was viewed by the Chinese as a two-year experiment to determine whether Peace Corps was appropriate for China. Those Volunteers completed their service and returned to the United States on schedule in the summer of 1995. The Peace Corps country agreement was not signed until June 29, 1998.

In 1999, the Peace Corps program moved in Guizhou Province. In 2000, the program moved into Gansu Province. The Chinese government decided to hive together what became known as the Municipality of Chongqing in 1997. This change in political status had the effect of creating a fourth political jurisdiction in which the Peace Corps operates. In April 2003 the Peace Corps pulled out of China during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) crisis. Volunteers returned to China in July 2004. From the start of the program in 1993 through September 2008, there have been 540 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in China. As of November 2008, there were 98 Peace Corps Volunteers serving in-country.

Since the Peace Corps began work in China in 1993 up until today, TEFL has been the main program area. From 2000 until 2006, the Peace Corps also had an environmental education program.

At the national level, the Peace Corps comes under the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), which is affiliated with the Ministry of Education. CEAIE is the largest nongovernmental organization (NGO) in international educational exchange in China. Founded in 1981, CEAIE has a mission of promoting Chinese educational development and enhancing understanding and friendship between Chinese and international educational communities through international exchange and cooperation. Since its establishment, it has developed cooperative linkages with more than 100 educational organizations and institutions in approximately 30 countries and regions.

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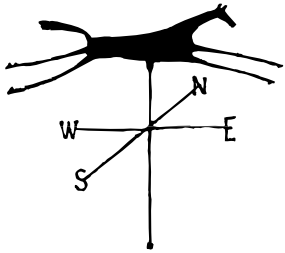
COUNTRY OVERVIEW: CHINA AT A GLANCE



History

China is the oldest continuous major world civilization, with records dating back about 3,500 years. Successive dynasties developed a system of bureaucratic control that gave the agrarian-based Chinese an advantage over neighboring nomadic and hill cultures. Chinese civilization was further strengthened by the development of a Confucian state ideology and a common written language that bridged the gaps among the country's many local languages and dialects. Whenever China was conquered by nomadic tribes, as it was by the Mongols in the 13th century, the conquerors sooner or later adopted the ways of the "higher" Chinese civilization and staffed the bureaucracy with Chinese.

The last dynasty was established in 1644, when the Manchus overthrew the native Ming dynasty and established the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty with Beijing as its capital. At great expense in blood and treasure, the Manchus over the next half century gained control of many border areas, including Xinjiang, Yunnan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Taiwan. The success of the early Qing period was based on the combination of Manchu martial prowess and traditional Chinese bureaucratic skills.

During the 19th century, Qing control weakened, and prosperity diminished. China suffered massive social strife, economic stagnation, explosive population growth, and Western penetration and influence. The Taiping and Nian rebellions, along with a Russian-supported Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang, drained Chinese resources and almost toppled the dynasty. Britain's desire to continue its

illegal opium trade with China collided with imperial edicts prohibiting the addictive drug, and the First Opium War erupted in 1840. China lost the war; subsequently, Britain and other Western powers, including the United States, forcibly occupied "concessions" and gained special commercial privileges. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking, and in 1898, when the Opium Wars finally ended, Britain executed a 99-year lease of the new territories, significantly expanding the size of the Hong Kong colony.

Early 20th Century China. Frustrated by the Qing court's resistance to reform, young officials, military officers, and students—inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen—began to advocate the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and creation of a republic. A revolutionary military uprising on October 10, 1911, led to the abdication of the last Qing monarch. As part of a compromise to overthrow the dynasty without a civil war, the revolutionaries and reformers allowed high Qing officials to retain prominent positions in the new republic. One of these figures, General Yuan Shikai, was chosen as the republic's first president. Before his death in 1916, Yuan unsuccessfully attempted to name himself emperor. His death left the republican government all but shattered, ushering in the era of the "warlords," during which China was ruled and ravaged by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders.

In the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary base in south China and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With Soviet assistance, he organized the Kuomintang (KMT or "Chinese Nationalist People's Party") and entered into an alliance with the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After Sun's death in 1925, one of his protégés, Chiang Kai-shek, seized control of the KMT and succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule. In 1927,

Chiang turned on the CCP and executed many of its leaders. The remnants fled into the mountains of eastern China. In 1934, driven out of their mountain bases, the CCP's forces embarked on a "Long March" across some of China's most desolate terrain to the northwestern province of Shaanxi, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan'an.

During the "Long March," the communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). The bitter struggle between the KMT and the CCP continued openly or clandestinely through the Japanese invasion (1931-45), even though the two parties nominally formed a united front to oppose the Japanese invaders in 1937. The war between the two parties resumed after the Japanese defeat in 1945. By 1949, the CCP occupied most of the country.

Chiang Kai-shek fled with the remnants of his KMT government and military forces to Taiwan, where he proclaimed Taipei to be China's "provisional capital" and vowed to re-conquer the Chinese mainland. Taiwan still calls itself the "Republic of China."

The People's Republic of China. In Beijing, on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The new government assumed control of a people exhausted by two generations of war and social conflict, and an economy ravaged by high inflation and disrupted transportation links. A new political and economic order modeled on the Soviet example was quickly installed.

In the early 1950s, China undertook a massive economic and social reconstruction program. The new leaders gained popular support by curbing inflation, restoring the economy, and rebuilding many war-damaged industrial plants. The CCP's authority reached into almost every aspect of Chinese life. Party control was assured by large, politically

loyal security and military forces; a government apparatus responsive to party direction; and the placement of party members into leadership positions in labor, women's, and other mass organizations.

The "Great Leap Forward" and the Sino-Soviet Split. In 1958, Mao broke with the Soviet model and announced a new economic program, the "Great Leap Forward," aimed at rapidly increasing industrial and agricultural production. Giant cooperatives (communes) were formed, and "backyard factories" dotted the Chinese landscape. The results were disastrous. Normal market mechanisms were disrupted, agricultural production fell behind, and China's people exhausted themselves producing what turned out to be shoddy, unmarketable goods. Within a year, starvation appeared even in fertile agricultural areas. From 1960 to 1961, the combination of poor planning during the “Great Leap Forward” and bad weather resulted in one of the deadliest famines in human history.

The already strained Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated sharply in 1959, when the Soviets started to restrict the flow of scientific and technological information to China. The dispute escalated, and the Soviets withdrew all of their personnel from China in August 1960. In 1960, the Soviets and the Chinese began to have disputes openly in international forums.

The Cultural Revolution. In the early 1960s, State President Liu Shaoqi and his protégé, Party General Secretary Deng Xiaoping, took over direction of the party and adopted pragmatic economic policies at odds with Mao's revolutionary vision. Dissatisfied with China's new direction and his own reduced authority, Party Chairman Mao launched a massive political attack on Liu, Deng, and other pragmatists in the spring of 1966. The new movement, the "Great Proletarian

Cultural Revolution," was unprecedented in communist history. For the first time, a section of the Chinese communist leadership sought to rally popular opposition against another leadership group. China was set on a course of political and social anarchy that lasted the better part of a decade.

In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his "closest comrade in arms," National Defense Minister Lin Biao, charged Liu, Deng, and other top party leaders with dragging China back toward capitalism. Radical youth organizations, called Red Guards, attacked party and state organizations at all levels, seeking out leaders who would not bend to the radical wind. In reaction to this turmoil, some local People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders and other officials maneuvered to outwardly back Mao and the radicals while actually taking steps to rein in local radical activity. Gradually, Red Guard and other radical activity subsided, and the Chinese political situation stabilized along complex factional lines. The leadership conflict came to a head in September 1971, when Party Vice Chairman and Defense Minister Lin Biao reportedly tried to stage a coup against Mao; Lin Biao allegedly later died in a plane crash in Mongolia.

In the aftermath of the Lin Biao incident, many officials criticized and dismissed during 1966-69 were reinstated. Chief among these was Deng Xiaoping, who re-emerged in 1973 and was confirmed in 1975 in the concurrent posts of Politburo Standing Committee member, PLA chief of staff, and vice premier.

The ideological struggle between more pragmatic, veteran party officials and the radicals re-emerged with a vengeance in late 1975. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and three close Cultural Revolution associates (later dubbed the "Gang of Four") launched a media campaign against Deng. In January 1976, Premier Zhou Enlai, a popular political figure, died of cancer.

On April 5, Beijing citizens staged a spontaneous demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Zhou's memory, with strong political overtones of support for Deng. The authorities forcibly suppressed the demonstration. Deng was blamed for the disorder and stripped of all official positions, although he retained his party membership.

The Post-Mao Era. Mao's death in September 1976 removed a towering figure from Chinese politics and set off a scramble for succession. Former Minister of Public Security Hua Guofeng was quickly confirmed as party chairman and premier. A month after Mao's death, Hua, backed by the PLA, arrested Jiang Qing and other members of the "Gang of Four." After extensive deliberations, the Chinese Communist Party leadership reinstated Deng Xiaoping to all of his previous posts at the 11th Party Congress in August 1977. Deng then led the effort to place government control in the hands of veteran party officials opposed to the radical excesses of the previous two decades.

The new, pragmatic leadership emphasized economic development and renounced mass political movements. At the pivotal December 1978 Third Plenum (of the 11th Party Congress Central Committee), the leadership adopted economic reform policies aimed at expanding rural income and incentives, encouraging experiments in enterprise autonomy, reducing central planning, and attracting foreign direct investment into China. The plenum also decided to accelerate the pace of legal reform, culminating in the passage of several new legal codes by the National People's Congress in June 1979.

After 1979, the Chinese leadership moved toward more pragmatic positions in almost all fields. The party encouraged artists, writers, and journalists to adopt more critical approaches, although open attacks on party authority were

not permitted. In late 1980, Mao's Cultural Revolution was officially proclaimed a catastrophe. Hua Guofeng, a protégé of Mao, was replaced as premier in 1980 by reformist Sichuan Party Chief Zhao Ziyang and as party general secretary in 1981 by the even more reformist Communist Youth League Chairman Hu Yaobang.

Reform policies brought great improvements in the standard of living, especially for urban workers and for farmers who took advantage of opportunities to diversify crops and establish village industries. Literature and the arts blossomed, and Chinese intellectuals established extensive links with scholars in other countries.

At the same time, however, political dissent, as well as social problems such as inflation, urban migration, and prostitution emerged. Although students and intellectuals urged greater reforms, some party elders increasingly questioned the pace and the ultimate goals of the reform program. In December 1986, student demonstrators, taking advantage of the loosening political atmosphere, staged protests against the slow pace of reform, confirming party elders' fear that the current reform program was leading to social instability. Hu Yaobang, a protégé of Deng and a leading advocate of reform, was blamed for the protests and forced to resign as CCP general secretary in January 1987. Premier Zhao Ziyang was made general secretary and Li Peng, former vice premier and minister of electric power and water conservancy, was made premier.

1989 Student Movement and Tiananmen Square. After Zhao became the party general secretary, the economic and political reforms he had championed came under increasing attack. His proposal in May 1988 to accelerate price reform led to widespread popular complaints about rampant inflation and gave opponents of rapid reform the opening to call for

greater centralization of economic controls and stricter prohibitions against Western influence. This precipitated a political debate, which grew more heated through the winter of 1988–89.

The death of Hu Yaobang on April 15, 1989, coupled with growing economic hardship caused by high inflation, provided the backdrop for a large-scale protest movement by students, intellectuals, and other parts of a disaffected urban population. University students and other citizens camped out in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to mourn Hu's death and to protest against those who would slow reform. Their protests, which grew despite government efforts to contain them, called for an end to official corruption and for defense of freedoms guaranteed by the Chinese constitution. Protests also spread to many other cities, including Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou. Martial law was declared on May 20, 1989. Late on June 3 and early on the morning of June 4, military units were brought into Beijing. They used armed force to clear demonstrators from the streets.

Following June 4, economic reform slowed until given new impetus by Deng Xiaoping's dramatic visit to southern China in early 1992. Deng's renewed push for a market-oriented economy received official sanction at the 14th Party Congress later in the year as a number of younger, reform-minded leaders began their rise to top positions. Deng and his supporters argued that managing the economy in a way that increased living standards should be China's primary policy objective, even if "capitalist" measures were adopted. Subsequent to the visit, the Communist Party Politburo publicly issued an endorsement of Deng's policies of economic openness. Though not completely eschewing political reform, China has consistently placed overwhelming priority on the opening of its economy.

Third Generation of Leaders. Deng's health deteriorated in the years prior to his death in 1997. During that time, President Jiang Zemin and other members of his generation gradually assumed control of the day-to-day functions of government. This "third generation" leadership governed collectively with President Jiang at the center. In March 1998, Jiang was re-elected president during the Ninth National People's Congress. Premier Li Peng was constitutionally required to step down from that post. He was elected to the chairmanship of the National People's Congress. Zhu Rongji was selected to replace Li as premier.

Fourth Generation of Leaders. In November 2002, the 16th Communist Party Congress elected Hu Jintao, who was designated by Deng Xiaoping as the "core" of the fourth generation leaders, the new general secretary. A new Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee was also elected in November.

In March 2003, General Secretary Hu Jintao was elected president at the 10th National People's Congress. Jiang Zemin retained the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission. At the Fourth Party Plenum in September 2004, Jiang Zemin retired from the Central Military Commission, passing the chairmanship and control of the People's Liberation Army to President Hu Jintao.

China is firmly committed to economic reform and opening to the outside world. The Chinese leadership has identified reform of state industries and the establishment of a social safety network as government priorities. Government strategies for achieving these goals include large-scale privatization of unprofitable state-owned enterprises and development of a pension system for workers. The leadership has also downsized the government bureaucracy.

The Next Five Years. The next five years represent a critical period in China's development. To investors and firms, especially following China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China represents a vast market that has yet to be fully tapped and a low-cost base for export-oriented production. Educationally, China is forging ahead as partnerships and exchanges with foreign universities have helped create new research opportunities for its students. China hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008 and viewed this as an opportunity to showcase to the world China's development gains of the past two decades. International coverage of the relief efforts following a substantial earthquake in the summer of 2008 displayed the nation's willingness to make some internal events more transparent. ever to the world. The new leadership is committed to generating greater economic development in the interior and providing more services to those who do not live in China's coastal areas, goals that form the core of President Hu's concepts of a "harmonious society" and a "spiritual civilization."

Government

Chinese Communist Party. The more than 66-million member CCP, authoritarian in structure and ideology, continues to dominate government. Nevertheless, China's population, geographical vastness, and social diversity frustrate attempts to rule by fiat from Beijing. Central leaders must increasingly build consensus for new policies among party members, local and regional leaders, influential non-party members, and the population at large.

In periods of greater openness, the influence of people and organizations outside the formal party structure has tended to increase, particularly in the economic realm. This phenomenon is most apparent today in the rapidly developing coastal

region. Nevertheless, in all important government, economic, and cultural institutions in China, party committees work to see that party and state policy guidance is followed and that non-party members do not create autonomous organizations that could challenge party rule. Party control is tightest in government offices and in urban economic, industrial, and cultural settings; it is considerably looser in the rural areas, where the majority of the people live.

Theoretically, the party's highest body is the Party Congress, which is supposed to meet at least once every five years. The primary organs of power in the Communist Party include:

- The Politburo Standing Committee, which currently consists of nine members;
- The Politburo, consisting of 24 full members, including the members of the Politburo Standing Committee;
- The Secretariat, the principal administrative mechanism of the CCP, headed by the general secretary;
- The Central Military Commission; and
- The Discipline Inspection Commission, which is charged with rooting out corruption and malfeasance among party cadres.

Economy

Economic Reform. Since 1979, China has reformed and opened its economy. The Chinese leadership has adopted a more pragmatic perspective on many political and socioeconomic problems, and has reduced the role of ideology in economic policy. China's ongoing economic transformation has had a profound impact not only on China, but on the world. The market-oriented reforms China has implemented over the

past two decades have unleashed individual initiative and entrepreneurship. The result has been the largest reduction of poverty and one of the fastest increases in income levels ever seen. Today, China is the fourth largest economy in the world. It has sustained average economic growth of more than 9.5 percent for the past 26 years. In 2005, its $2.26-trillion economy was about one-seventh the size of the U.S. economy.

In the 1980s, China tried to combine central planning with market-oriented reforms to increase productivity, living standards, and technological quality without exacerbating inflation, unemployment, and budget deficits. China pursued agricultural reforms, dismantling the commune system and introducing a household-based system that provided peasants greater decision-making in agricultural activities. The government also encouraged nonagricultural activities such as village enterprises in rural areas, and promoted more self-management for state-owned enterprises, increased competition in the marketplace, and facilitated direct contact between Chinese and foreign trading enterprises. China also relied more heavily upon foreign financing and imports. These reforms led to average annual rates of growth of 10 percent in agricultural and industrial output. Rural per capita real income doubled. China became self-sufficient in grain production and rural industries accounted for 23 percent of agricultural output, helping absorb surplus labor in the countryside. The variety of light industrial and consumer goods increased. Reforms began in the fiscal, financial, banking, price-setting, and labor systems. By the late 1980s, however, the economy had become overheated with increasing rates of inflation. At the end of 1988, in reaction to a surge of inflation caused by accelerated price reforms, the leadership introduced an austerity program.

China's economy regained momentum in the early 1990s. During a visit to southern China in early 1992, China's paramount leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, made a series

of political pronouncements designed to reinvigorate the process of economic reform. The 14th Party Congress later backed Deng's renewed push for market reforms, stating that China's key task in the 1990s was to create a "socialist market economy." The 10-year development plan for the 1990s stressed continuity in the political system with bolder reform of the economic system.

China's economy grew at an average rate of 10 percent per year during the period 1990-2004, the highest growth rate in the world. China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 10 percent in 2003, and even faster, 10.1 percent, in 2004, and 9.9 percent in 2005, despite attempts by the government to cool the economy. China's total trade in 2005 surpassed $1.4 trillion, making China the world's third-largest trading nation after the U.S. and Germany. Such high growth is necessary if China is to generate the 15 million jobs needed annually—roughly the population of Ecuador or Cambodia—for new entrants into the job market.

Nevertheless, serious imbalances exist behind the spectacular trade performance, high investment flows, and high GDP growth. High numbers of nonperforming loans weigh down the state-run banking system. Inefficient state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are still a drag on growth, despite announced efforts to sell, merge, or close the vast majority of SOEs.

Social and economic indicators have improved since reforms were launched, but rising inequality is evident between the more highly developed coastal provinces and the less developed, poorer inland regions. According to World Bank estimates, more than 152 million people in China in 2003—mostly in rural areas of the lagging inland provinces—still live in poverty, living on less than $1 a day by U.S. standards.

Following the Chinese Communist Party's Third Plenum, held in October 2003, Chinese legislators unveiled several

proposed amendments to the state constitution. One of the most significant was a proposal to provide protection for private property rights. Legislators also indicated there would be a new emphasis on certain aspects of overall government economic policy, including efforts to reduce unemployment (now in the 8 percent to 10 percent range in urban areas), to rebalance income distribution between urban and rural regions, and to maintain economic growth while protecting the environment and improving social equity. The National People's Congress approved the amendments when it met in March 2004. The Fifth Plenum in October 2005 approved the 11th Five-Year Economic Program, aimed at building a "harmonious society" through more balanced wealth distribution and improved education, medical care, and social security.

People and Culture

Chinese culture is unique not only from the perspective of Western countries, but also from the perspective of other Asian countries. During the course of its long history, China has created its own language (including calligraphy), instruments and music, painting, philosophy, religion, medicine, architecture, and cooking—all of which differ remarkably from their Western equivalents. Despite these cultural differences, Peace Corps Volunteers continually report that one of the most positive aspects of their service in China is experiencing the warmth and friendliness of the Chinese people.

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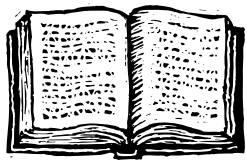
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and China, or to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: On these sites people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience service in the same way.

General Information About the Countries:

www.countrywatch.com
On this site, you can learn anything, from what time it is in Chengdu (the capital of Sichuan province) to information about converting from the dollar to the yuan. Just click on China and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations
Visit this site to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov
The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find China and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm
This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm
This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background information.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp
This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com
This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees:

http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps
This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pcchina/
This Yahoo site is for current Volunteers, returned Volunteers, and invitees to find various practical information on living and teaching in China.

www.rpcv.org
This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the webpages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries.

There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

www.rpcvwebring.org
This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring to see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org
This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About China:

www.chineseculture.about.com
This site offers general information on China and a news section that is updated daily.

www1.chinadaily.com.cn/news/index.html
This online news site, published in both English and Chinese, includes links to several English language newspapers in China.

http://search.asia.com/China
This site has a little of everything about China and a good list of links to other China-related sites.

www.scmp.com
The site of the *South China Morning Post*, one of Hong Kong's English language newspapers.

www.feer.com
The site of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

International Aid Organizational Sites About China:

www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org
This website of an independent publication established in 1996 to report on aid to China highlights the work of international and Chinese nongovernmental organizations.

www.china-un.org/eng
The website of China's mission to the United Nations.

www.adb.org/china
The China section of the Asian Development Bank, a multilateral development finance institution dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific.

Recommended Books:

1. Gittings, John. *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
2. Hu Wenzhong. *Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for Americans.* Yarmouth, Me.: Intercultural Press, 1999.
3. Jang Chung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China.* New York: Anchor Books, 1992.
4. Salzman, Mark. *Iron and Silk.* New York: Vintage Books, 1987.
5. Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.
6.. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze.* New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
7. Hessler, Peter. *Oracle Bones.* Harper, 2007

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps.* Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go.* Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience.* Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place.* Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village.* New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999
6. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps.* Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
7. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle.* Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The telephone number for the Office of Special Services in Washington, D.C., is 800.424.8580, ext. 1470. After working hours, they can call 202.638.2574 and ask for the Peace Corps duty officer. The Office of Special Services will immediately contact Peace Corps/China. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, ext. 2416.

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service considered normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for some frustration. Mail takes a minimum of 10 days to arrive in China from the United States. Some mail may not arrive (fortunately, this is rare) or may arrive with clipped or torn edges because someone has tried to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include "Airmail" on their envelopes.

Your address, for the first two months (i.e., during pre-service training) will be:

"Your Name"
U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers
Sichuan University – Mail Box 278
No. 29 Wang Jiang Road
Chengdu, Sichuan 610064
China (PRC)

You should limit the number of packages sent to the above address during pre-service training. Do not have packages sent that will be difficult for you to move to your site or expensive for you to mail within China. Wait until you know what your permanent site address will be and then have your packages sent directly there. Trainees may be responsible for picking up their own packages at the PC office. Packages received during training will not be forwarded to your permanent site.

Telephones

Every Volunteer will have a land-line telephone in his/her apartment. Long-distance telephone service is generally good, with connections available to most parts of the world without major delays. If you are calling from outside a major city, it may take longer to get a line. Overseas operators speak and understand basic English and should have little difficulty placing a call. AT&T, MCI, and Sprint direct-dial operators can be reached from Chengdu and from many other sites by dialing a local number. Domestic direct-dial long-distance calls are also very easy. Calls to China can be placed inexpensively using calling cards, often for around 2 cents a minute. Most Volunteers also use local cards that are widely available and cost about 10 cents a minute. Many Volunteers use Skype or other VOIP options to make and receive calls from inside and outside China.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

All Peace Corps/China Volunteers will have access to email and the Internet. Although some Volunteers will have access from home, others use department office or Internet cafes near the school campus. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to set up and pay for any Internet service. Funds are provided in the living allowance for limited Internet usage. If you decide to bring a computer or any other expensive electronic equipment, we strongly recommend that you purchase personal property insurance.

Housing and Site Location

Volunteer sites in China are located from within Chengdu, where the Peace Corps office is located, to up to 1,200 kilometers (744 miles) away. Many Volunteers live on the campus of the college/university to which they are assigned and the school provides housing. All sites have hot water heaters for showering. However, in the winter, there is an occasional water shortage when water may not be available for hours at a time. Electricity is fairly constant, but power failures do occur, especially in winter. Volunteers live in local faculty housing or in apartments. These residences have a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen, and sometimes a study.

Living and Leave Allowances and Money Management

All Volunteers will receive a living allowance that is designed to allow Volunteers to live modestly by the standards of the people they serve, yet not in a manner that would endanger their health or safety. The current monthly living allowance is 1,410 yuan (equivalent to about $200). The living allowance is intended to cover the purchase of food, replacement clothing, local entertainment and travel, and other incidental expenses.

You also receive the equivalent of $24 per month for leave allowance, which is paid on the same schedule as the living allowance. You will be separately reimbursed for official travel (Peace Corps conferences, medical checkups, etc.). As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you are not allowed to accept any other paying positions during your term, nor can you accept bonus payments from schools or other amounts from individuals or institutions. Any secondary projects such as tutoring or giving lectures must be done without compensation.

A debit card is extremely useful to have in China. A debit card tied to a U.S. account is the easiest way to receive money from the U.S. Amounts can be deposited into the account in the U.S. and you can then withdraw the funds directly in local currency at your site. Credit cards are rarely accepted in most parts of China, but can be of use for travel while on leave.

Food and Diet

Chinese food varies greatly from the Cantonese-style food that is typically found in major cities in the United States. Sichuan, Chongqing, and Guizhou dishes are much spicier and may take some getting used to, though mild dishes are also available. Gansu dishes are more plain-flavored.

The staple in Sichuan, Chongqing, and Guizhou is rice. Pork is also served at almost every meal. Although vegetables abound, eating in restaurants can be difficult for vegetarians because meat is often mixed in with dishes featuring tofu or vegetables. The staple in Gansu is noodles, and beef and mutton are the major meats. Sichuan and Chongqing dishes also tend to be oily. Cooking your own food is cheaper and healthier than eating in restaurants. Every Volunteer in China has access to a kitchen with a refrigerator and a stovetop.

Transportation

Daily travel in many parts of China, including many, but not all, of the areas where Volunteers serve, is often by bicycle. Although Peace Corps/China does not provide bicycles, many Volunteers use them as their regular means of transportation. The Peace Corps requires every Volunteer to wear a bicycle helmet and will issue one if needed. You are not allowed to drive any motorized vehicle during your service in China or when you travel to other countries where there is a Peace Corps program. You are not allowed to ride on the back of motorcycles or other motorized vehicles.

Buses and minibuses are also a common form of transportation, and bus service is available within and among all cities and small towns. Bus transportation, due to the poor condition of some roads, lack of regular vehicle maintenance, and schedule changes, is not always reliable, so contingency planning is important. Taxi service via cars is available in every city.

Long-distance travel occurs by air or by train. Although there is regular air service to most cities in China, official travel is almost always by train. Train service is reliable and there are sleeper car options for overnight trips.

Geography and Climate

China is subject to extremes in weather, from bitterly cold to unbearably hot. All Volunteer sites are cold in the winter, and several weeks of sustained temperatures in the 32- to 38-degree Fahrenheit range can be uncomfortable for Americans used to central heating. Although heat is provided, rooms may still be cooler than some people would prefer. Also, Chinese generally believe that artificial heat and closed-in areas are unhealthy. Be prepared to wear several layers of clothing, especially when away from your residence (including when you are teaching).

Summers in western China, on the other hand, can be hot and extremely humid, with temperatures reaching into the 90s for many days. Most Volunteers' residential apartments have air conditioners and most classrooms have electric fans, but the heat can be challenging for some people.

Social Activities

The Chinese are generally friendly and pleasant people, but it is sometimes difficult for foreigners to integrate into Chinese society. Until fairly recently, social contact between Chinese and most foreigners was limited to business relationships. Despite the increased opportunities for interaction, because of markedly different expectations about friendship roles, it can be challenging to become friends with a Chinese person in a way that Americans typically define friendship. Intimate relationships between Chinese and foreigners, depending on the nature of the relationship, the location, and the parties involved, can be sensitive and potentially controversial.

Life in western China is generally much slower than life in the United States. Current Volunteers recommend taking the initiative in joining activities outside of work, such as learning Chinese calligraphy, kung fu, mah-jongg, or go (*weiqi*); joining a sports club; or inviting friends and colleagues to go out for karaoke. Your Volunteer experience will be much richer and fulfilling if you readily look for cultural-sharing opportunities at site.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Great importance is likely to be attached to neatness and proper dress, particularly in professional fields. Volunteers should dress suitably both on and off the job and respect host country and community attitudes toward personal appearance.

Based on accepted norms for teachers in China, Peace Corps/China has adopted the following dress and appearance code for Volunteers, which is required during pre-service training, teaching time, office hours, important social activities, and while visiting the Peace Corps office in Chengdu. When participating in athletic activities, you are encouraged to wear modest sports clothes.

Appropriate dress includes collared shirts (not T-shirts) and pants for men (short-sleeve shirts are recommended); blouses, knee-length skirts, dresses, or dress slacks for women; and sturdy sandals or closed shoes (not rubber thongs). Additionally, no hats should be worn during sessions or while teaching; no earrings for men and only one earring in each lobe for women; no body piercings for men or women; and any tattoos must be kept covered at all times. Male teachers are expected to have neat hair. Thus, short haircuts that are neat and well-kept are strongly recommended.

Short shorts, revealing or tight clothing, military-style clothing, spaghetti straps, or flip flops should not be worn. Walking shorts (knee length) or culottes, clean jeans and T-shirts, and sandals are acceptable casual dress.

Use of Alcohol

Peace Corps/China has a policy regarding the use of alcohol by Volunteers and staff. That policy requires moderation in consumption and holds Volunteers and staff responsible for behavior that could harm the reputation of the Peace Corps, disrespect local cultural traditions, or compromise the personal health and safety of Volunteers or staff. Should you have personal concerns about the issue of alcohol use and your interest in being assigned as a Volunteer to the China, please feel free to discuss this with your recruiter, the China country desk officer, or a Peace Corps medical staff member.

Websites and Blogs

Volunteers and trainees who create their own websites, or post information to websites that have been created and maintained by others, should be reminded that (unless password-protected) any information posted on the Internet can probably be accessed by the general public, even if that is not intended. They are responsible for discussing the content in advance with the country director to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with general guidelines, as well any country-specific guidance. Volunteers and trainees are responsible for ensuring that their IT use meets Peace Corps general guidelines.

Photographs

Volunteers are required to take extreme care in taking, or avoid taking, photographs of what are clearly or could be perceived as sensitive areas, including, but not limited, to military installations, government buildings, police stations, airports, and airplanes. If you are unsure, it is safer to refrain from taking the photograph.

Personal Safety

Becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most China Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security.

These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in China. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer may be the most rewarding thing you do in your life, and living in China is likely to be an extraordinary experience. But many Westerners find that they have to adjust to living in China, and that day-to-day life here presents some challenges.

Not feeling accepted by Chinese is a common experience. Staring, name-calling (e.g., *waiguoren or laowai*), and seemingly impolite shouts of "Hello!" followed by giggling are all things you may face on a daily basis. This is by no means considered acceptable behavior by most Chinese, but at times it may seem that way. Although staring is unnerving to most Americans, it is not meant to be offensive. In China, it is OK to stare intensely at anything or anyone. This can be a source of frustration and even friction as you begin to feel more integrated into Chinese culture. You may always stand out in a crowd, so you will have little of the anonymity you might get in other places where you are unknown. You might be asked very personal questions (e.g., about your age, weight, or income) by Chinese, but that is a way for them to show a friendly interest in you. The American desire for privacy is not always understood and, therefore, not often honored. At some campuses, officials have keys to on-campus housing and may feel free to enter your apartment to check on things while you are out.

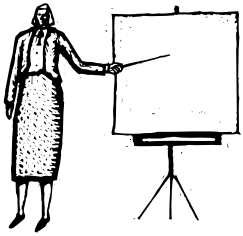
Casual dating is not common and is generally discouraged. High school students are forbidden to have a boyfriend or girlfriend, and relationships between college students are

everyone's business. Serious dating is bound to be noticed because of the general lack of privacy. Gaining a bad reputation in China is not desirable, and a Westerner who wants to date a Chinese must realize that such dating may be a delicate matter for the Chinese person involved.

Volunteers may also become frustrated with aspects of Chinese cities such as a seeming lack of traffic regulations, restrooms and other public facilities that do not meet American standards of cleanliness, and a general lack of building and equipment maintenance.

NOTES

PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Your first weeks in-country will be an intense period of transition. It may be your first time outside of the United States. Regardless of your background and experience, you will be making a leap of faith and putting yourself in the hands of several individuals whose job is to prepare you for Peace Corps service. During pre-service training, all trainees live with host families. Many individuals find this experience to be the best part of their training. Host families provide invaluable lessons in cross-cultural and language areas that Peace Corps staff cannot begin to teach. Some Volunteers remain close to their host families throughout their service and spend some Chinese holidays and vacations with them.

Pre-service training is designed to provide you with the tools necessary to operate independently and effectively as a Peace Corps Volunteer in China. You will participate in a structured learning situation that is center-based with a host family component. You will be required to attend all training sessions, learn and demonstrate proficiency in the language, and observe cultural mores. Your progress will be assessed by others, but you will also be asked to take responsibility for your own learning and to gradually decrease your reliance on the Peace Corps training and office staff. You will be encouraged to assess your own progress, as well as your commitment to serving in Peace Corps/China for the next two years.

A trainee-assessment process helps the staff monitor trainee progress in meeting the required competencies in the areas of language, cross culture, technical, safety, and security. Likewise, trainees have the opportunity to assess their own performance and meet periodically with staff to discuss

their progress in meeting the competencies. Toward the end of PST, trainees meet with senior staff to discuss their commitment to service before they are sworn-in.

Pre-service training consists of language instruction; cross-cultural orientation; job-specific technical training; orientation to China's institutional processes; health, medical, and safety orientation; and orientation to Peace Corps policies. The particular design of the training depends on the size and makeup of your group. PST will not give you everything it takes to be a successful Peace Corps Volunteer. Volunteer service is a process and requires continual learning and application of what is learned. Even though pre-service training is a good foundation, what you bring in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, and motivation, combined with what you acquire during PST, will determine the quality of your experience as a Volunteer.

TEFL Training

Technical training, which will be Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), will prepare you to work in China by building on the skills you already have and by helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs and issues of the country. The Peace Corps staff and current Volunteers will conduct this component of the training program, which places great emphasis on learning how to become an effective TEFL teacher in a Chinese classroom setting. The core of technical training is a three-week model school practicum with Chinese students. Former Volunteers have said this is the hardest yet most rewarding experience of technical training.

You will be supported and evaluated by experienced Chinese trainers, current Volunteers, and Peace Corps staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you will need to undertake your work as a TEFL teacher and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that well-developed language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills will often be critical to your job performance, they will help you integrate into your host community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to become a Volunteer. Experienced Chinese language culture facilitators (LCFs) provide formal language instruction in small classes of two to five trainees. The Chinese language is also integrated in the health, safety, culture, and technical components of training.

Your language training will incorporate a competency-based approach. You will have classroom time and will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family to learn the language. Our goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop linguistic skills more thoroughly. Furthermore, you will be provided guidelines on how to effectively design, implement, and monitor an individualized learning program, as well as how to identify a suitable tutor and negotiate a reasonable rate during your two years of service. This policy attempts to provide the maximum possible flexibility to Volunteers to determine how to best meet their language needs.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Chinese host family. The experience of living with a host family is designed to ease your transition into life in the countryside. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in China. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-culture and community entry will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation. Community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are some examples of the topics that will be covered.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic health training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in China. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service. There will be extensive training in the Peace Corps/China emergency action plan to familiarize you with procedures during any emergency.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills.

During your service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training:* Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Mid-service conference (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service):* Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference:* Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service; and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN CHINA

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. Peace Corps/China maintains a clinic with full-time medical staff members who take care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in China at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to a medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in China

Living abroad can be a significant life-changing experience and requires taking care of both physical and mental health. The Peace Corps/China preventive health care program includes immunizations for hepatitis A and B, rabies, Japanese encephalitis, typhoid, influenza, meningitis, diphtheria and tetanus, polio, and mumps, measles, and rubella. If you have had any of these immunizations, please bring documentation from the providers who administered the vaccines. Without such documentation, the Peace Corps must give you the vaccines again to ensure that you are properly immunized. These immunizations are not optional.

Avian influenza is endemic among the fowl population of southeast Asia and south and southwestern China. Even though there have been no confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission of avian influenza, the World Health Organization (WHO) believes the spread of infection has become consistent with human-to-human transmission. WHO is monitoring the

situation very closely in Vietnam where most cases have occurred to-date. Peace Corps/China and other Peace Corps programs in Asia provide Tamiflu as a precaution. You should avoid contact with any types of birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, to minimize risk of exposure to avian influenza. You should avoid all poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. Peace Corps headquarters will continue to monitor avian influenza and will keep the post advised.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in China, you will receive a medical handbook and a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic first aid supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in China will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in China, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in China is to take preventive measures for the following:

Stress. Successful strategies for stress management include exercise, writing, listening to or playing music, talking to peers, and reading.

Respiratory infections. These are common occurences. To prevent them, you are encouraged to get enough sleep, maintain good eating habits, not smoke, get a moderate amount of exercise, practice stress management, and wash your hands frequently. Also, do not share a dish (using chopsticks) with someone who has a cold.

Diarrhea. Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in China during pre-service training. It is also important to pay close attention to the sanitary conditions of restaurants, wash your hands frequently, and carry potable water with you at all times.

Air Pollution. China has many of the world's most polluted cities. It is important to be honest with the Peace Corps about any history you may have of asthma, reactive airway disease, or other respiratory conditions that could be affected by high levels of air pollution.

Dental problems. The best way to avoid broken fillings, receding gums, and other dental problems is to maintain a regular regimen of brushing and flossing correctly. Always check rice that you eat or prepare for foreign bodies such as small pebbles.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report any significant illness and injuries to your medical officer.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards for continued service can be met. Volunteers who become pregnant are typically medically separated.

Feminine hygiene products are available for you to purchase on the local market, so the Peace Corps medical unit does not provide them.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a first aid kit that contains basic nonprescription medications and supplies to treat common illnesses that might occur during service.

First Aid Kit Contents

Ace bandage
Adhesive tape
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health--physical, mental, or dental--since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for their cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in China. You do not need to take malaria medication prior to departure. The Peace Corps does not place Volunteers in any of the malarial areas of China. If you wish to travel to any of these areas during your vacations, your medical officer will provide you with malaria medication at that time.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service.

While awaiting shipment, which can take several months, you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pair with you--a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care, from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 83 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2008 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify, minimize and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime incidents that Volunteers experience are thefts. Frequently these occur in crowded locations, such as markets or on public transportation, or are due to Volunteers leaving items unattended. More serious assaults, however, do occasionally occur. Based on

information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2007, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for crimes against Volunteers, many of which can be avoided with appropriate actions. Assaults consist of physical and sexual assaults committed against Volunteers; property crimes include robbery, burglary, theft, and vandalism.

- Location: Most assaults (53 percent) occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 36 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites. Most property crimes occurred in the Volunteer's residence or another Volunteer's residence, followed closely by public areas. 48 percent of property crimes occurred when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time: Assaults usually took place during the evening, between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.— though the single hour with the largest percentage of assaults was 1:00 a.m. (8 percent). Property crimes were more common in the middle of the day, from noon to 9 p.m.
- Day: Assaults and property crimes were more commonly reported on weekends (48 percent and 49 percent, respectively).
- Absence of others: Assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 53 percent, respectively) occured more frequently when the Volunteer was alone.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 85 percent), the Volunteer did not know or could not identify the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: 23 percent of all assaults and 4 percent of all property crimes involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Risk factors can vary within countries throughout the world that are served by the Peace Corps. A Volunteer in (Country name here) may face risks specific to this country in addition to risks associated with living in a developing country.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Purchase the Peace Corps recommended personal property insurance
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone trusted by your community whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

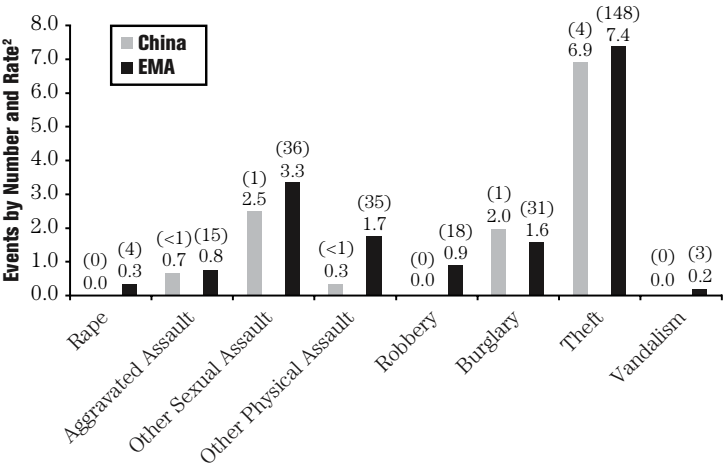
Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to "foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps' safety and security efforts." The new office is led by an associate director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes divisions which focus on Volunteer safety and overseas security and crime statistics and analysis.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff members provide support by reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart on the following page shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in China as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

Incidence Rates and Average Number[1] of Reported Incidents in China and EMA Region, 2002-2006[3]



1 The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

2 Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

3 Data collection for China began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 07/16/07.

To fully appreciate the collected data above, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way

to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and, naturally, crimes that occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, it is up to you if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. The Office of Safety and Security, through our regionally-based Peace Corps safety and security officers, will work with the security officer at the U.S. embassy and the staff at the Peace Corps office in-country to coordinate with local police and prosecutors.

One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. We are here to provide support and assistance every step of the way. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so we can get you the help you need

Security Issues in China

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in China. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are the favorite worksites for pickpockets. Most pickpocketing has occurred while Volunteers were traveling or shopping near their sites. Prevention requires extreme vigilance when on public transportation and wearing an inside money pouch or belt.

Theft from Volunteer lodging has occurred, but is uncommon. Making sure your windows are secure and always locking your door are usually sufficient to protect against such theft. It is not wise to display expensive items such as computers, cameras, or CD players when you have visitors.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to China, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in China may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers tend to attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are more likely to receive negative attention in highly populated centers, and away from their support network ("family," friends, and colleagues) who look out for them. While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. And always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in China

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes

the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. China's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/China office will keep Volunteers apprised of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through information sharing. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so that they are capable of informing you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in China. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's

arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/China's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in China at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race, and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In China, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in China.

Outside of the largest east coast cities, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is advertised as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may also be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of China are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in China, you may need to make some fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in China

The Peace Corps staff in China recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Some female Volunteers in China have experienced "body image" issues relative to the Chinese cultural definition of ideal feminine beauty. Few Western women are small or thin enough to achieve that narrow ideal, which may be frustrating for some Volunteers, as is the possibility that their attractiveness may also be defined by this standard.

Additionally, despite the outward appearance that women are equal to men in China, women still struggle to be considered and treated as true equals in the workplace.

Volunteer Comment

"While people's attitudes toward gender roles are changing, traditional views still prevail. The differential gender treatment can be frustrating, especially because you view yourself as equal in your relationships but some Chinese do not. For example, a man may be assumed to be the better teacher (and asked to teach more classes), be asked to participate more in sports, be invited to more social gatherings, be asked for his opinion more often, and receive equal credit for projects or activities a woman did by herself."

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

It is difficult to generalize about how Chinese may perceive Volunteers of color. Americans of Asian descent will have a very different experience than those of African descent, who will have a very different experience than those of Hispanic descent. Still, some Volunteers of color may be evaluated as less professionally competent than white Volunteers and may not be perceived as being North American. Asian Americans may be identified more by their cultural heritage than by their American citizenship. Current or historical Chinese relations with other Asian countries, such as Korea or Japan, may have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived. Additionally, Asian Americans may have to deal with people's higher expectations of their language-learning ability or cross-cultural adaptability.

A Volunteer of color may be the only minority trainee or Volunteer in his or her group or may be working and living with individuals with no experience or understanding of their background.

Volunteer Comments

"As an Asian American, I find my experiences of living in China to be quite different from those of many Peace Corps Volunteers. For instance, when I walk out in the streets, I do not get stared at or called laowai (foreigner). Actually, many of the people in my community think I am one of them. Because I am Chinese, they feel closer to me and, thus, it is much easier for me to make friends. The question of whether or not I can use chopsticks is rarely asked. Moreover, I am quite familiar with Chinese culture, and I also have prior knowledge of Mandarin. These advantages have allowed me to further understand the Chinese part of myself. Every day that I am in China, I realize how Chinese I am in some ways and how American I am in others. This has had a profound effect on my search for the Chinese-American identity that I have been struggling with."

"Living in China, I do have my ups and downs. Being away from home for such a long time was one major obstacle I had to overcome. Even though I still miss my family and friends, I realize that the Peace Corps staff and the Volunteers are a great support group. Even though I had prior knowledge of Mandarin, I was still not able to communicate with locals because the people here speak their own dialect, Sichuanese. They may understand me when I speak standard Mandarin, but when they respond, I look at them with a confused face because I have no idea what they are talking about. Sometimes I even get mad because the local dialect is spoken so harshly, like they are yelling at me. After being here for almost six months, I am becoming more familiar with the Sichuan dialect, and I regard their loud voices as their normal speaking tone.

"The greatest part about being Chinese American in China is my ability to share my own unique culture with my students and my peers. They are extremely interested in me—

my ability to speak English as well as Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), my life in America, and my Chinese-American culture. It feels great to be able to share that part of me with them. It is also very fulfilling to know that I am opening their eyes and allowing them to see that not all Americans are blond with blue eyes—that America is, in fact, very diverse."

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The Chinese people pay great respect to age. As a senior Volunteer, you may not experience some of the issues that younger Volunteers face because of the appreciation for seniors in Chinese culture. However, senior Volunteers may not receive adequate personal support from younger Volunteers and may feel inclined not to participate fully in order to "give the young folks their turn." Additionally, senior Volunteers may be more reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns with other Volunteers.

Learning Chinese has historically proven to be extremely difficult for senior Volunteers. They are encouraged to develop an effective individual approach to language learning in and after PST.

Volunteer Comments

"One of the biggest issues I faced as a senior Volunteer came early during pre-service training. I had just sold my car and home, had closed my business, and, like everyone, was taking on the challenge of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. But I was doing it at a different point in my life than most of the people in my group. I have to admit there were times when I just longed to talk to someone with some miles on them, if you know what I mean.

"Another big issue for me was my difficulty with learning the language. I had never learned another language before.

I was the slowest in the group and often felt stupid. My ancient brain just struggled to learn and retain enough for daily survival tasks, and that was hard. I was accustomed to thinking of myself as a competent businesswoman with a pretty good brain, but now I felt so inadequate and embarrassed in front of my younger classmates. Of course, they never made fun of me, but I worried that I would be seen as that old woman who can't seem to get even the simplest language phrases. I was my own worst enemy with this. During this experience, it would have been nice to talk with another older person who might also be struggling so that we could both laugh about how our brains just blank out and give us those senior moments.

"Now that I'm at my site, I find my biggest lesson is in learning to be dependent. I have lived alone since I was 24 and prided myself in being able to take care of myself. Now I must ask for help almost daily as I try to communicate and be OK with accepting it when it's offered. That's a big adjustment for me. So if you have become accustomed to functioning quite competently in the United States as an independent person, it could be hard to allow yourself to be dependent. I'm still uncomfortable with it, but I'm working on it. Of course, I've also gotten myself a Chinese language tutor who is willing to patiently spend two hours twice a week with me.

"But don't let what I have said here stop you from coming. I'm delighted that I am here in China to offer my life experience and continue to live and learn. By the way, China values age and that's a neat feeling. For the first time in my life, people now frequently carry things for me, and I've yet to have to stand on a crowded bus. I've discovered that people really do want to help and are really happy to give. So now I'm practicing learning how to graciously receive and just say *Xie Xie* (thank you).

"There is some truth to the belief in China that age confers wisdom. I have found myself often consulted by teachers and students while the younger Volunteers are ignored. One good aspect of this is that the teachers are more willing to be your friends in a social sense because they see you as a peer, not a younger, inexperienced person. I can also get away with more joking and kidding than a 'junior' Volunteer.

"Another consideration is that senior Volunteers constitute a small portion of the total number of Volunteers, so having a senior Volunteer as a friend may be difficult. The question of loneliness must be faced, and you must consider what coping skills you have in this area."

"In my first 3½ months in China, one thing often deflated my self-esteem—the Chinese cultural trait of respect for the elderly. I was continually confronted by Chinese insisting that I take their seat on the bus, that they carry my packages or books, or that I be careful getting into and out of a car or stepping off the curb or down a step. I am a lively, agile 73-year-old retired infantry airborne soldier and PE teacher, and I have had some comical and stimulating encounters by refusing to adhere to this particular Chinese custom. Many times, I will retaliate by offering a seat on the bus to a female Chinese. That stumps them.

"Other than that, I have had no problems as a senior Volunteer and am enjoying and looking forward to whatever they throw at me here in this vast sea of people, half of whom seem to be always cooking food and the other half of whom seem to be eating food."

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Generally speaking, the Chinese culture does not accept or understand homosexuality or bisexuality and can be extremely prejudicial. Gay Volunteers grapple with the question of whether they can confide in host country friends, but usually do not. There may or may not be sufficient support for a homosexual or bisexual lifestyle within Peace Corps/China. Gay Volunteers might serve for two years without meeting another gay Volunteer or staff member. Lesbians will have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex (as do all women). Most Volunteers are posted in cities that are less open than the large cities along the coast of China. Relationships with homosexual host country nationals can happen, but as with all cross-cultural relationships, they are not likely to be easy. AIDS has only recently become an issue in the local news and is terribly misunderstood as a disease widely contagious among homosexual or bisexual people.

Volunteer Comment

"For me, the intolerance in China is most difficult to handle at the personal level. I can accept that it is inappropriate for me to follow up the inevitable 'Do you have a boyfriend?' question with 'No, but I *do* have a girlfriend!' I can accept that it is not my place in the community to 'take on' traditional Chinese values and replace them with my own. What is much more difficult for me to accept, however, is that I cannot share a significant part of my life with a trusted host country national friend. When my friend pours her heart out to me about her love life, I can't relate to what she says with experiences of my own. When she promises to set me up with a Chinese boyfriend, I cannot explain that I am already quite happy with my girlfriend, thank you. The decision not to share your sexuality with close friends can greatly contribute to the loneliness and feelings of misunderstanding that already come with adapting to a new culture."

Possible Religious Issues

Although there are some churches in China, all of the services are in Chinese. Peace Corps Volunteers in China are free to practice their religion but not to proselytize to the Chinese, as it is against Chinese law and Peace Corps policy. Previous Volunteers have advised active believers to bring their own holy books and religious readings and to be prepared to worship alone. Most members of the Chinese younger generation (under 50) are non-believers, and you should not be surprised if the students tell you that all religions are superstition and they want no part of it. Conversely, do not be surprised if you are asked curious questions by students regarding the religious significance of major holidays or questions about the Bible. Although all religions suffered enormous setbacks during the Cultural Revolution, the majority of believers are Buddhists. There is a Muslim minority (the largest minority in China), mostly in northwest China, and Sichuan does have a number of Islamic mosques.

Volunteer Comment

"A while back, three of my best students came to me during my office hours and asked me what the difference between religion and superstition was. It's tough to explain, I said. One person's religion is another person's superstition. They told me that all superstitions were outlawed in China because in the past people had been exploited and abused as a result of superstitious beliefs. 'Many people,' one student said, 'would go to a faith healer and get medicine for a sick relative. The healer would just take a bowl of water and say words into the bowl. Words have energy, they believed, and the energy in the healer's words turned the water into medicine. They paid a lot of money for this, and a lot of sick people died because they didn't get the care they needed. That's why superstition is not allowed in China."

"Many of Christianity's most sacred tenets do seem silly and irrational to an outside observer. If your Christian faith means a lot to you, you may very well be extremely offended if you ever discuss the topic with your students. Most of them have been raised with the idea that religion is a superstition, and it's hard for them to get past that. As with so many things about living in Sichuan, a healthy sense of perspective and a good dose of patience are priceless in helping you deal with situations like these."

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in China, you may face a special set of challenges. In China, as in other parts of the world, some people hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. Very little support exists within Chinese culture for anyone with disabilities, and Volunteers with nonvisible disabilities may encounter a lack of understanding, and therefore support, concerning their disability.

Nevertheless, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services, as part of the medical clearance process, determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in China without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/China staff work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, jobsites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

NOTES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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to China?
Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag. Accompanied baggage in excess of 80 pounds in two bags shall be carried at personal expense.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Regulations with regards to prohibited items are constantly changing and you will need to check with the airline(s) for changes right up to the day you depart for staging. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm.

What is the electric current in China?
China's residential electric system is 220 volts, 50 hertz. Appliances and electronic equipment manufactured for the U.S. market are usually rated for 100 to 120 volts and 60 Hz.

To use this equipment in China, you must have a step-down transformer (a device that lowers the incoming voltage of 220 to 240 volts to 110 to 120 volts). Most computers will run on both 110 and 220. Plug adapters are available in China.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live modestly by the standards of the people they serve. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries or to purchase items they were unable to bring with them. The easiest way to access funds from the U.S. while in China is through an ATM card tied to a checking or savings account. Although credit cards and traveler's checks can be used easily in some countries where you may travel for vacation, they are not widely accepted in China other than major hotels in larger cities. It is also good idea to maintain your checking account in the United States and to bring your checkbook.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Once you are sworn in as a Volunteer, after pre-service training, you will earn two days per month of annual leave. Annual leave may not be taken during the first three months or the last three months of service. Additionally, China Volunteers may not take annual leave while school is in session. Volunteers do not get American holidays off, only Chinese holidays. Volunteers will also be conducting summer training for teachers or offering summer courses for three to four weeks.

It is best to make plans for travel and visits from family and friends after you finish pre-service training and have been at your site for several weeks. The university breaks (there are several) vary from year to year, and knowing these dates, as well as those for in-service training, summer projects, and other events, will ease a lot of frustration for you and those who plan to visit you. Changing airline tickets can be costly.

Extended stays by visitors at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from the country director. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with travel or medical assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?
The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

What should I bring as gifts for China friends and my host family?
This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

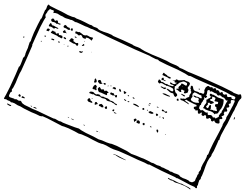
Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?
Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites prior to their arrival in-country. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical, language, and cross-cultural skills prior to assigning sites. Many factors influence the process and Peace Corps staff members make the final decision on all site placements. Some Volunteers will have a site-mate serving at the same school or might be alone but with other Volunteers at nearby institutions.

Some Volunteers serve alone in smaller cities far away from other Volunteers.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

Although many Chinese have cellphones, it is not practical to bring a cellphone from the United States. Many Volunteers choose to purchase one locally. Peace Corps/China does not provide funds for the purchase or maintenance of personal cellphones, so those interested in a cellphone should plan on covering those costs.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM CHINA VOLUNTEERS

I can honestly say that my first impressions of China did not even come close to what I had expected my Peace Corps service to be like. When I first arrived in China and joined my host family, I moved into the nicest apartment I had ever lived in. I had three of the most wonderful meals per day and the best family a Volunteer could have asked for. After swearing in, my wife and I moved to the small capital city of the Guizhou Province (3.5 million people). Although Guiyang is still considered underdeveloped, we were quite surprised to find KFC and a Wal-Mart within five minutes of our house. We have seen more buildings be demolished and constructed in the year we have been here than we have seen in our entire life in the United States. We also see extreme wealth and extreme poverty side-by-side on a daily basis. I must say, my wife and I were a little bit disillusioned and wondered what exactly we had signed up for.

However, after living here for over a year, we have come to find our place in China. We work at an educational college, which enrolls mostly teachers from the countryside who are returning to school to improve their English. Our students range from 18 to 54 years old and, for the most part, work very hard at improving their English. We teach oral English, writing, and British and American culture. We spend the majority of our free time going on outings with our students, sharing meals together, and helping them come up with creative activities for their classroom. If it wasn't for Peace Corps, our school could not afford to have foreign teachers. We have made some great friends (co-workers, students, and community members) who motivate us to continue our study of Chinese language and culture. Despite our initial disappointment and apprehension, at this point, we can't imagine being anywhere else but here.

—James and Joslyn Carney

China, a land of seashores, mountains, valleys, and rivers, a land with awesome vistas that take your breath away, awaits your arrival. China is a beautiful land bulging with people of different and distinct language dialects, religions, and cultures. Large ultramodern cities sit alongside primitive rural villages where the land is tilled with hand tools and the use of water buffalo and pigs that are, many times, raised in the back rooms of a house. Your time here as a Volunteer may very well be the highlight of your life. You are a modern-day Marco Polo. You will find the people very friendly and helpful. The Chinese are hard working, proud of their country, and were proud to host the 2008 Olympics. Children are always smiling and happy. Middle school and university students are enthusiastic and dedicated with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge about America and the Western world.

The packing list of what to bring with you is quite complete. I can only find men's deodorant in the large cities. In my lesson planning, teaching, etc., I use manila folders and 5-by-8 notecards a lot and cannot find these here, so I have them sent. I brought a laptop computer with me, as did many other Volunteers, and I make good use of it. I also bought a cellphone after I got here and it is very, very useful.

Welcome to China!

—Don Smith

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Food, food, food. If you love food, you'll love China! You'll find every corner, every street filled with street vendors and small restaurants wanting to cater to your Chinese food cravings. Of course, you'll notice that once you get here, Chinese food that you've known all your life isn't quite like the authentic Chinese food in China. The food in China is much spicier, fresher, and stranger, and it's served quicker. It's awesome!

I am one of the few Korean Americans serving in China. In many circumstances, I am mistaken for Chinese. This has its advantage when I want to buy "stuff." Being thought of as Chinese, I will not be overpriced as much as a foreigner might be.

Also, being treated as one of them, many Chinese people don't hold back on their responses, which are usually harsh. I get to see the "real" Chinese people in action, not just their polite side, which they usually display for the foreigners. I think overall, I like the dual experiences I get from being able to blend in because of my Asian looks and stand out because I am an American.

My site mate and I hold our office hours at a coffee shop. We started to do this because many wouldn't come when we held it in an actual office. Once we announced that we would be at the coffee shop, many flocked there, wanting to talk to us. Being surrounded by my college students conversing, sharing, and laughing is one of the most pleasurable experiences I've had. I usually feel very tired afterwards, but it's a good tiredness because this is among the reasons I'm here in China: making relationships, sharing my ideas and concepts while learning from them, and having fun.

Truth be told, China was not on my list of countries that I wanted to serve for two years. But here I am, learning about the language and the culture, laughing with my students, sharing ideas and thoughts, exploring the land, watching my little elementary students repeat English words, and making friendships. My first year here has been a good learning experience, and I hope my second year will be even more full of life.

Wishing you a speedy journey,

—Sung Pak

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When my wife and I decided to join the Peace Corps, we spent a long time discussing our goals and hopes. Would we save the world? Would we become superheroes of equality, raising entire villages out of poverty? Would we help prove Ghandi's belief that "there is no way to peace; peace is the way"? As we prepared to move to China, we were overwhelmed by these grandiose ambitions. In fact, they began to drive us a bit crazy since we knew they were impossibly large. Luckily, we were able to temper our idealism with more tangible, realistic expectations. We tried to remember that China would be a unique Peace Corps experience: no huts, outhouses, or cisterns would be in our future;

no rain forests or jungles; Starbucks and Wal-Mart were, quite possibly, part of the deal. With this in mind, we made the ideals of volunteerism and service the heart of our commitment.

I have been particularly happy with the service element of my year in China. There are many ways do service (to one's country or one's values), but I have never experienced anything nearly as fulfilling as teaching in China. I teach at Guizhou University, the largest school in the country's poorest province. Despite the province's relative poverty, all of my students have had foreign teachers in the past. Some of them even come from wealthy families. For these reasons, I occasionally feel that I am not needed at Guizhou University. I am not a superhero, adventuring where no American has gone before.

But my presence is still vital, for while other Americans work, learn, and teach in China, often they leave a tremendous negativity in their wake. A major element of my service in China has thus been to show the people here that not all Americans are arrogant and self-centered. My students and colleagues have met Americans with thinly-veiled ulterior motives (related to business or religion), and have not met Americans interested in listening, learning, or integrating. But they tell me there is something different about Peace Corps Volunteers. Peace Corps Volunteers come with open minds and open hearts. We are trained to speak the language, enjoy the culture, and fulfill the community's needs, rather than asking it to fulfill ours. This often comes as a relief and delight for the members of our new communities.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to represent the best aspects of America: our tolerance, diversity, and curiosity. The longer I am here, the more I am convinced that China needs us. And America needs us, for that matter: we have a lot of negative baggage to help our Chinese friends unpack.

China just might be the world's next superpower. If so, a peaceful future will require us to understand Chinese culture, and more Chinese to have a positive impression of the United States. Peace Corps Volunteers in China are working to fulfill this requirement.

—Mike Levy

Rock star, foreign dignitary, street-side oddity, or average Chinese schoolteacher. The adventure lies in never quite knowing who you will be next as a Volunteer for Peace Corps/China.

Volunteers find that living in China is not as materially challenging as they had expected. Most likely situated in a city, apartments provide all the comforts of home with the exception of some spices for cooking, English reading material, and your favorite whatever-it-is. Choose something for each season that makes you feel good—your favorite summertime sandals, apple cider for fall, a cushy wintertime sweater, seeds for the flowers that you love most in spring—and bring it. It is much easier to adapt to an unfamiliar environment when there is a little piece of home to turn to. If your build is not much different from the average Chinese, you will be able to purchase whatever you need to wear for each season here, but bring the sweater anyway.

It is important to have a professional wardrobe for training and teaching, but be aware that in some parts of China, blue jeans are in the same league as khakis in terms of dressiness. The clothing you choose can serve to isolate or further integrate you into your community. Many Volunteers have said they dislike shopping for clothing in China, and your living stipend only allows for replacement clothing. Still, it would be good to keep an open mind when the knee-high leather boots and long underwear come out in winter.

Each Volunteer's lifestyle is different, and the reasons for that are freedom and final site placement. All of us are here making a difference in the lives of students in less well-served universities in China. All of us are perceived as different from our neighbors and co-workers, with the resulting mix of rock-star and oddity treatment mentioned above. Aside from those things, your individual experience will be the product of location and your own choices. The limits placed on your extracurricular activities are not much different than those you might have encountered studying or working in the U.S.

One of the highlights of the Chinese economy is the availability of services. Well-qualified instructors offer lessons in just about anything you might desire: musical instruments,

ballet, ballroom dancing, calligraphy, kung fu, yoga. Earning approximately what the average local teacher makes each month, lessons in as many things as you have time for are affordable. In addition to adding variety and spice to your life, activities like this give you a secondary role in your community. No longer just the foreign teacher, you become the foreign teacher who likes dancing. Lessons are a direct route to local friends with common interests, improved Chinese language skills, and a more rewarding service.

At school, students are open to activities designed to enhance their learning. "English Corner" is the most common, wherein students and teachers come together outside of class just to chat, practicing English skills learned in the classroom. Some Volunteers have gone further, by starting running clubs or creating an English-language library. As with your life outside of school, what you do will depend in large part on your inspiration and the circumstances at your individual site.

Living and working in a different culture can be a challenge. The more involved you become in your community and at school, the less daunting those challenges will seem. Service in China provides an unparalleled opportunity to learn about the country, make a difference in the lives of your students, and to experience the kind of personal growth that only comes from trying out new things.

—Melissa Gardner

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Dear Future China Volunteers,

Congratulations on your opportunity to come serve in China!

One of the best features of Peace Corps/China is the chance to live and work in a university community. Being part of an exciting college campus in northwestern China, I have been able to develop relationships with my students both inside and outside the classroom. During class, I get to watch my students' minds open to new ways of thinking and examining the world. Using English as our vehicle, we practice critical thinking by studying important issues like the environment, culture, health, and diversity. Outside of class, my students welcome me into their

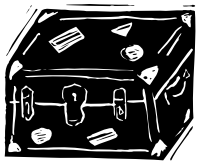
lives, inviting me to their dorm rooms, sharing meals with me, and giving me a glimpse of what life is really like for a young person in China. We connect at our weekly running club, while playing basketball, chatting at "English Corner," and just by seeing each other around campus. By far, my most meaningful experiences have been those that I have shared with my students.

While you have much to look forward to during your service, the beginning of your Peace Corps journey can be overwhelming, particularly when it comes to deciding what to bring with you. Like many other Volunteers, I found that I could have gotten by with far less than what I actually brought. You can find just about anything you need here—household items, personal-care items, electronics. Clothing can be difficult because of size and style differences, so bring clothing that you really like, as you will certainly see enough of it over the next two years. Some of my most coveted possessions that I brought have turned out to be those materials I can use in my classroom—photos from home, my college viewbook, travel brochures from my hometown, interesting newspaper articles, and magazine advertisements. The Peace Corps office has many good teaching resources and books you can use once you get here, so there's no need to weigh your bags down with heavy teaching materials. Aside from that, it never hurts to choose some comfort items to bring with you—your favorite music, a couple of good books, or a favorite decoration to hang on your wall. Pack it all in very sturdy luggage. You have an amazing journey ahead of you.

Welcome to China!

—Devon Van Dyne

PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in China and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! **You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally.** You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in China.

General Clothing

- SmartWool socks
- Good cotton underwear
- Two-three pairs of khakis and two pairs of comfortable pants for leisure and travel (one pair of jeans and one pair of pants with zip-off legs)
- Four to six business casual shirts (men should have at least one shirt with a collar that can be worn with a tie)
- One dressy outfit (a sport coat and a tie for men, a dress/skirt for women)
- A good raincoat (a light raincoat, since it rains more in the summer)
- Two pairs of long underwear (light/medium)
- Winter coat, gloves, hat, and scarf
- One or two heavy wool sweaters
- Two to four long-sleeved shirts for layering
- Shorts for sports/leisure
- Two to four casual shirts for travel/leisure (shirts with a little spandex are great since your clothes will stretch out)

- Pantyhose or tights (thick cotton or wool tights are important if you plan to wear skirts or dresses in the winter)
- Easy-care skirts (not too short, at least knee-length), and maybe a wool skirt for winter
- One or two short-sleeved or sleeveless dresses (no spaghetti straps) for summer

Shoes

Note that good shoes are available in China, but only in smaller sizes (up to size 8 for women and up to size 9 for men).

- One pair of sneakers (brand names are available locally, but at American prices)
- One pair of teaching shoes (sturdy, comfortable, warm for winter)
- One pair of sturdy sandals (leather is recommended) to wear in the warm season
- One pair of waterproof hiking boots
- One pair of dress shoes
- One pair of "kick-around" shoes

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Deodorant (can be difficult to find in China)
- A three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take (to have while the medical office orders your medication)
- Contact lens solutions (available locally; note that the Peace Corps does not recommend wearing contact lenses, but most Volunteers who choose to have been able to wear them. You should still bring two pairs of glasses)
- Any special makeup, facial soaps, or lotions you might want
- Tampons (hard to find in-country)

Kitchen

Most cooking supplies are available in-country, including eating and cooking utensils.

- Spices: basil, thyme, sage, or other Western seasonings you use (can be purchased in Chengdu, but are nice to bring if you have favorites)
- A nonelectric coffeemaker if you drink coffee (available locally but American prices); a French press is a good alternative and can be bought in Chengdu and at some other sites
- Baking pans and measuring cups (if you love to bake and want to buy a toaster oven in Chengdu—or maybe a former Volunteer left you one—you might need some supplies!)

Miscellaneous

- Locks for travel and to keep valuables secure in your residence
- Money belt or neck pouch
- Sleeping bag that packs small for travel/warmth in winter
- Swiss army knife or Leatherman tool
- Watch (durable, water-resistant)
- Camera, filters, and extra lens cap; batteries are available locally but may be difficult to find
- Small gifts such as stickers, stamps, coins, maps, key chains, etc.
- Headlamp (great for travel and working in the dark when you need both hands)
- Duct tape
- Musical instruments if you play (also available locally at fairly reasonable prices)
- Stain stick for laundry (your clothes will get filthy, so bring a few)
- Earplugs (for the loud 6 a.m. wakeup call on campus)

- Fitted sheets and pillowcases (schools provide sheets, but they are not fitted); perhaps flannel for winter
- Pictures of clothing from catalogs if you plan to have clothes made
- Games such as Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, Taboo, Scattergories, and chess
- Frisbee
- *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide to China*
- Mandarin Chinese phrase book
- Checkbook (note that checks written from your U.S. bank account can take 40 days to clear at the local bank)

Books to supplement those assigned by the college. These might include:

- *The ESL Miscellany: A Treasury of Cultural and Linguistic Information: New 21st Century* by Raymond C. Clark (Pro Lingua Associates, revised edition 2004)
- High school history books
- Books about your city or area
- Children's books (the pictures can be useful)
- Books about U.S. holidays or customs
- Literature anthologies
- General references like a world almanac
- A writing and grammar handbook
- Activity books for English conversation and environmental classes

Note: Books are really heavy to pack. The Peace Corps Information and Resource Center (IRC) is a great resource, as well as the Book Aid International program. Many reference materials are also available online. It may be more effective to bring a flash disk with your favorite handouts and lessons, and to print those things in-country. Family and friends can also send books from home if needed.

- Pictures or slides of your family, hometown, and "typical" America (supermarkets, schools, street scenes, historical sites, weddings and other celebrations)
- World atlas and maps of the world, United States, your state, etc.
- Restaurant menus, job application forms, sales announcements, product catalogs, college brochures, recycling handouts, and sightseeing brochures to use in classes
- A key chain with a small flashlight attached
- Copies of your diploma and teaching certificates (universities may ask for these)
- Calendar (hard to find here)
- Picture frames (also hard to find; if you like frames for your family pictures, etc., bring some)
- Documents from home (if you are considering a future move, such as graduate school, etc. It will make your life much easier if you bring certain documents or copies from home [e.g., GRE scores, an unofficial transcript]; if you own a house and are renting, bring a copy of your lease, and if you may sell your house, pack a copy of deed information)
- Laptop
- iPod or MP3 player, CDs, speakers
- Contact information for former employers, references, schools, election office (to request an absentee ballot), bank
- Hard and electronic copies of resume
- Checkbook and ATM card tied to account
- Credit card
- Power of Attorney

You may consider having some things, like heavy and bulky winter clothing, sent to you after you have arrived at your site, or you may consider bringing funds to purchase clothing (depending on your size). The key is to bring what you love and don't bring too much!

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST 

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- ❒ Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; 24-hour duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- ❒ Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- ❒ Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- ❒ Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- ❒ Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- ❒ Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- ❒ If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- ❒ Arrange to bring a six-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Health Insurance

- ❒ Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- ❒ Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- ❒ Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- ❒ Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- ❒ Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- ❒ Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- ❒ Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- ❒ Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- ❒ Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- ❒ Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- ❒ Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- ❒ Place all important papers–mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds–in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters
Toll-free Number: 800.424.8580; Press 2, then Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:
Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement East Asia and Pacific Region	Ext. 1856	202.692.1856
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: china@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2416	202.692.2416

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 *(24 hours)*

Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · www.peacecorps.gov · 1-800-424-8580