



▼ Get ready
Over there

Matchmaking Trade Mission Tip Sheet

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Attire

The rule of thumb for dress code is to look the best you can - although you may find a lot of the Chinese themselves underdressed, but they look up to people who are well dressed, esp. Westerners. But that doesn't mean you have to bring a lot of suits. One or two (plus a sport coat for men) should suffice. Just bring a variety of shirts and ties and do 'mix-and-match'. For women, see below...

People in China used to dress as formally (or informally) at home as at work. When it was just becoming fashionable to wear Western suits (late 80's to early 90's depending on which part of China), people used to wear them on all occasions - shopping, going to the movies, touring... Nowadays, although business casual wear starts to catch on, most businesspeople are still fond of their suits, especially those from large companies and/or from more Westernized metropolises such as Shanghai and Beijing.

However, you may still see a lot of Chinese male attendees to our meetings wearing a shirt with or without a tie (or simply wearing a polo shirt) with dressy pants and shoes. Just as in the US, these 'under-dressed' folks tend to be those from less 'sophisticated' places, from more entrepreneurial or manufacturing-oriented businesses--note that many workplaces, esp. factories, in China do not have air-conditioning (cooling or heating). If you see a person dressed like that, he may be either a business owner from a remote township (tell-tale signs: darker skin, patterned polo shirt, oftentimes a strapless leather handbag not big enough to hold any catalogs

but big enough to hold a wad of cash and a cell phone) or a lower-ranking executive such as an 'Assistant to the Chairman or GM' (plain shirt with or without a tie with a briefcase). Then there are also government officials in charge of foreign investments and trade from smaller cities... However, the ladies are usually much better dressed regardless (perhaps with the difference in style and makeup)...

But in any case you should dress the best you possibly can. Most Chinese do judge others by what they wear (a 'legacy' from the days when nobody owned any asset). Thus first impression here counts as much as anywhere else, if not more. Since you won't be meeting with the same people everyday, you don't have to bring a lot of suits - one or two fancy ones should be sufficient. For men, just bring a couple of shirts with varying styles and a lot of different ties as they are the elements that make the difference in a man's suit anyway. If you are a women, perhaps you can try some 'mix-and-match' with your different pieces. Just keep in mind that even if it meant you'd have to wear something more than once during the trip, the only people who could possibly notice it would be your fellow US delegates. I am sure they'd understand as everybody would be in the same shoe anyway. We do spend time outdoors in between our meetings, so do bring plenty of casual wear. Our online itinerary usually provides weather links for the places we visit. They are similar to those US regions of equivalent latitudes. In any case, it is important to pack light--Chinese domestic airlines usually allow people to check only 20KG of baggage for free. Another reason: try imagine what is like to visit 4 to 5 or even more cities in a couple of weeks...

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Business Cards

Bring plenty, at least 200. They are usually given great importance in China/Asia, whether it is a business or social situation. It would not be surprising if you see people exchange biz cards first before shaking hands (if they ever bother to do the latter, that is). When you meet someone new, it would almost seem rude not to give him or her your biz card. If you happen to be without one, let them know that you forgot to carry one or you have run out of them and, apologize. (Tip: If somehow you find yourself about to run out of cards and you still have many people to meet, just paste about 10 to a page and make photocopies on regular paper - you'd be far better off giving people a make-shift card like that than giving them nothing at all...)

Marketing Collateral

Bring only what you absolutely need and save them for the most important/deserving parties. Otherwise just give out your biz cards - that is why you should load up on your biz cards. And vice versa with regard to other people's marketing collateral offered to you. Because paper is very heavy. American airlines are relatively generous about the weight of the baggage you check. But Chinese domestic airlines are not so. So if you need to fly outside of the group itinerary on your own, be mindful about that, otherwise you may be fined dearly. (The Chinese domestic weight limit for checked baggage is 20KG, i.e., about 44 pounds per person).

Internet and Email Access

For many of the major hotels (3-star or above) built in the past few years in China, one will likely find one or two computers at the hotel business center linked to the internet (although a sanctioned one with many Western sites blocked by the government). Most likely they will allow their hotel guests to use them, for a small service charge (compared to US rates).

It is a little tricky for checking emails - if your email account is a POP account, you may want to check with your ISP first before you leave for a local access number in China, if any. Otherwise you'd have to pay for an international call to connect to your ISP's access number in the US (Note: US toll-free 1-800 numbers will be charged as a regular none toll-free phone number to a caller from China). If your email account is web-based (like hotmail) or if your ISP also provides web-based access for your POP account, then it would be much easier and cheaper - All you'd need is to find an internet ready computer... (Tip: if your ISP doesn't provide a web-based interface for you, open a free account with hotmail or yahoo and have all your emails forwarded to that free account during the trip so you can easily check it on the road.)

Luxury hotels will usually have a second phone jack or even better, a broadband jack, in the rooms. You'd just need to go to the front desk and have it activated for a fee (sometimes a flat fee for the day). They would give you a cable for the broadband if you don't have one. Then you'd just go back to your room, plug your laptop in and type in the room number as the password and you'd be on...So carrying a laptop around does pay off some times.

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Long-distance phone calls

I have found long distance phone rates reduced among all the new star hotels (read - business minded) in China over the years. Perhaps due to two reasons: competition and the advent of VoIP technology. Thus it is very common to see them charge \$0.5-1 (from \$2 to \$3 before) a minute for calls to the US and 1/10 of that for domestic long distance calls. But the best bet would be IP phone cards - \$0.30/minute to the US and \$0.04/minute domestic which you could purchase locally, such as at airports or hotels. They usually come in two face-values: ¥100 (~\$12, see exchange rate below) and ¥50 (~\$6). You may ask about them once there.

Water

Please do NOT drink tap water anywhere. Drink bottled water or canned beverages only.

Gifts

Gifts are usually unnecessary for those you meet for the first time, unless you are given something first and you feel like reciprocating the favor, or unless this is somebody fairly

important, such as a customer.

Bring something that can't be possibly made in China, such as commemorative dollar coins or something that is unique to the region where you are from. (Tip: the Chinese aren't making cigar yet if you are looking for some impressive gift for a big boss-type of guy :-). For women, relatively inexpensive brandname (American or European) cosmetics such as creams and lotions are proper gift choices, too. If you can find any, nicely packaged health supplement products such as multi-vitamins, minerals and fish oils would be fairly desirable as well. The key is, they are usually not made in China for this or that reason (e.g. lack of certain raw materials or ingredients).

Promotional business items (such as pens, shirts, caps and wallets) bearing your corporate logo could make nice gifts, but you'd need make sure that it doesn't say "Made in China" on a label somewhere (Tip: cut it off if it does, as long as doing so wouldn't affect the overall presentation of the item). If you want to give somebody something but you feel it may not be a perfect fit, for example, a baseball cap to a middle-aged female government official or executive, just say "well, this is something I hope your kid (note: usually one) will like."

Electric

The voltage is 220 in China (vs. 110 in the US). If your electrical appliance cannot handle the higher voltage, please ask the hotel for an adaptor/converter. Most of them will likely supply such.

Currency & Cash

The local currency, RMB, comes in the following major denominations: 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 Yuan (¥). US\$1 is about RMB¥8.1. Please exchange money only at legitimate establishments, i.e., hotels, banks, travel agencies, airports, etc. Get some bills in smaller denominations to avoid getting large changes back - there are a lot of counterfeit bills in circulation in China.

You may want to bring a few hundred US dollars as pocket money. From our past experience, most people end up having to buy another suitcase in China to hold the stuff they bought during the trip. (Tip: you may be able to buy many of the personal items very cheaply in China, such as suitcases, shirts, and socks, etc.)

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Credit & ATM Cards, Travelers Checks

Credit cards are usually only accepted at large hotels and other Western-owned or managed establishments. There are a couple of luxury hotels in Beijing and Shanghai (such as the [Galaxy Hotel](#)) that take US ATM cards and give you RMB bills. Both will convert the currencies automatically according to their own rates (usually a worse rate than 8.2 but close).

The situation is similar for Travelers Checks. So make sure you have some RMB handy before you go out on your own. You may simply exchange money at the hotels we are staying.

Air Tickets

Although some airline companies may not require you to re-confirm your return flights with them, it is always advisable to do so once you land in China just to make sure. This is especially necessary if you are flying Northwest (NWA) as suggested by our travel agent. If you need to change your departure date for any reason, try to do so in China to minimize the penalty fees. In fact, if you can get a doctor's letter, then the fees can be waived there.

It is advisable to provide your full name as in your passport when booking tickets.

Cell Phone Service

Usually you may ask your US service provider to activate the roaming service in China. An option (recommended by many US friends and associates over there) - esp. if you plan to return to China in the future - is to buy a cell phone in China from \$50 up depending on the model, and purchase/use air time minutes as you go, like a prepaid phone card. You can easily buy 'replenishing' PINs on the street in any Chinese city, and you can call from virtually any Chinese city to any other cities in the world. All the calls are reasonably priced in no small part due to the fierce competition in the market. The truth is, the wireless industry in China (in Asia in general) is years ahead of the US; the cell phones are much more advanced - smaller and lighter with color screens and many more features. There is no long-term plan to commit to, fewer restrictions on phones vs. carriers. You can just buy the equipment (phone) and pick up air time minutes as you need them, like any other commodity product...

The beauty for doing this? After you are done with it at the end of the trip, you could either leave it with somebody in China to use (they could buy their own minutes) or bring it back and use it again next time you are there. Just like a film camera, if you will...

Business Etiquette

Here is an interesting site on this topic <http://chinese-school.netfirms.com/businessculture.html>. Let us know if you have other sites to recommend. **[top]**