

To South Mountain Tour Participants

Re: Basic Tour Information

This letter provides basic and essential information about South Mountain tours. It will be posted on our website and will be updated as needed. If there is critical updated information we'll send it again to participants by email. It will be sent to everyone by email prior to trip departure, or mailed to you if you do not have an email address. In any case, check our website if you want to get another copy.

Here is some important tour information:

- It is advisable to carry your passport securely on your person while traveling in China, but this is particularly true on days when the group will travel on domestic airlines. Airport security will require you to present your passport as identification before entering the departure area, so you should be sure to not pack it in your checked baggage on days when we will take domestic flights.
- Domestic airlines in China allow only one piece of checked baggage weighing no more than 20 kilograms (44 pounds). Excess baggage weight can result in an extra charge. Please consider this when packing and do so wisely. As I mention below, you should pack with interchangeable travel clothes, preferable made from light fabrics that can dry overnight, such as light polyesters. Chances for having the hotel do your laundry are very limited.
- Regarding currency exchange in China. Because of recent changes in China travelers' checks are difficult to exchange at many hotels in China now. Moreover, trying to change them at banks is extremely time consuming and difficult. Therefore, the best way to carry money is via your ATM card, credit cards, and cash. Bring a basic amount in cash, like \$200 or more, depending on how much you plan to spend on souvenirs etc. China is not dangerous, but prudence carrying cash is needed. We recommend using travel clothes with hidden zipper pockets for keeping wallets. Hidden money belts are okay but more cumbersome.
- Our tours are subject to our terms and conditions. By registering for a South Mountain tour you confirm that you have reviewed these terms and conditions and accept them in full.
- No shots are required for traveling in China. The USA health department makes a series of recommendations about shots that you can either follow or ignore at your own discretion. We don't make formal recommendations since one never knows what might be encountered. However, up to now we have not encountered malaria, typhoid, encephalitis, hepatitis or SARS. What we have commonly encountered are garden variety stomach and digestive problems. We recommend you have your doctor give you a

prescription for a suitable antibiotic for such problems. Cipro is a common choice for this but rely on your doctor.

- If, for any reason, you get separated from the group in China, you can call our guide Eric Lu on his cell phone in China at the following telephone number: 13805310727. Note that this number will be on the bottom of the name tag you will receive from us, so if you get lost during a tour you can call him by referring to it.
- **Instructions for dialing China telephone numbers:** If you called the Henan Plaza Hotel, our hotel in Beijing, from the USA you would dial the international access code 011, then the country code for China which is 86, then the area code for Beijing which is 10, then the number 67745691. (011-86-10-67773099). If you were calling the hotel from inside Beijing you dial 67773099. From inside China but outside of Beijing you'd include the 010 area code.
- If anyone needs to urgently call you in China they can contact you using Eric's cell phone number, which from the USA would be dialed as 011-86-13805310727. Please use this for important matters only. There is usually internet/emaill service available at the business centers of the hotels where we stay. Sometimes we can also find local internet bars that are very inexpensive to use. Most hotel rooms have Ethernet Internet connections available for laptops though there is sometimes a charge for using this connection.
- If you have not already obtained a visa for travel in China, note that it normally takes about 7-10 days to do this and you should plan accordingly. Note especially that your passport must be valid for six months after you leave China and also that the Chinese will not accept a passport that does not have extra blank pages left after you receive your visa. Check your passport to be sure you don't have to renew it.
- Before the trip, make two photocopies of your passport information and visa pages. Put one in your luggage and bring the other one with you to give to our national guide Eric. Each time we check into a hotel this information must be presented, so if we all give a copy to Eric he can take care of this and save us all a lot of time. I often send myself a copy of my passport/visa/tickets/travelers checks receipts/ by email and leave it on my ISP. If I need it I can open it there no matter where I'm at.
- If you miss your international flight, call our office at 800-952-1967 and notify us immediately. We will notify Eric accordingly. If you can't reach our office call Eric directly on his cell phone shown above or email me, andyf@southmountaintours.com or andyf@sonic.net.
- Traveling light is very helpful because it reduces the luggage we must carry and also provides room for all the things you buy that you hadn't planned on. Clothes should be polyester-hand washable, and light clothing that you can hang up to dry overnight is best. The weather in April should not be too cold. A light waterproof jacket and sweater should be enough for out of doors. Bring a sun/rain hat. Don't bring an umbrella as

these are extremely cheap and plentiful in China. Personal wipes are always useful for hygiene. Mosquito repellent is sometimes needed in spring and fall, although insects have not been a notable problem in the past.

- You can not get most western prescription medicines in China. Pack vital medicines in both your hand and checked baggage so if you lose a suitcase or carry-on you'll still have vital medicines.
- Note that we customarily order vegetarian food for a portion of the travelers and this isn't a problem. However, veganism and other special diet requirements are impossible to comply with. While we make an effort to provide the best food available, some places always use too much oil for western tastes. If you are allergic to MSG you must tell us in advance so we can make sure it isn't used. Happily MSG has been used less and less in China in recent years and usually this isn't a big problem any more.
- We normally stay at four-star hotels. In some places when four stars are not available we stay at good quality three-star hotels. Most hotels offer Ethernet connections in the rooms for laptop computer internet connections. Some hotels charge extra for this service and some offer it at no charge.
- At all meals you will be provided with hot tea at no charge. If you want to purchase a soft drink, beer, wine, or other beverage they are available at a (normally small) extra charge.
- You will need to purchase some bottle water for drinking in China. Normally the hotels provide bottled water for guests which you can bring with you during the day. However, a few hotels charge for bottled water. Their prices are higher than you'll find in the convenience stores and small shops on the street. There is a supermarket very near our hotel in Beijing where you can buy water, all types of western and Chinese snacks, toiletries, etc.
- When traveling by plane in China you should lock your bags. If you don't have a luggage lock these can be purchased very cheaply in China (about \$1.00 for a key lock).
- Our hosts and guides throughout China are highly experienced and dependable. We will provide you with a unique look at China with our special DVD education about China prior to your visiting the country.

Contact us if you have any additional questions about our China tours.

See you in China!

South Mountain