

August 18, 2009

To: Tour Participants

Tour Name: Zen's Origins Tour

Tour Start Date: Sept 15, 2008 (arrive in Beijing this date – requires air departure from USA Sept 14)

Re: Basic Tour Information

Dear Tour Participants and Those Considering Joining the Tour

This letter provides basic and essential information about the referenced tour. It will be posted on our website and will be updated as needed. If there is critical updated information we will notify you immediately by email. Critical updates will also be emailed to you.

Passport Information

- 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 will not have extra blank pages left inside after you receive your visa. Check your passport to be sure you don't have to renew it.

China Visa:

China Visa Information: You must obtain a visa to travel to China. To do so either you or someone who represents you must apply in person at a Chinese consulate or embassy. We recommend using our cooperative travel partner Ananda Travel of San Francisco. They currently charge \$30.00 for this service. Call Ananda Travel at 800 833-6008 and ask for Eileen Wong. Currently the Chinese Consulate charges \$130 for a tourist visa. You can also obtain a visa through an online visa service. Visa application forms can be obtained on-line through Chinese Consulate websites. Try <http://www.chinaconsulatesf.org/eng/> or simply google Chinese Consulates USA.

Section 2:

2.1 Major Purpose of Visit: Tourism

2.2: Intended no of entries: Single Entry

2.3: Date of first possible entry: Sept 14, 2010 (or different if you come earlier)

2.4 Longest intended stay: 14 days (List tour length or your intended length of stay if different. Note that your visa will normally be issued for at least a 30 day visit and possibly up to 90 days, so don't worry that they will only give you exactly the number of days for which the tour is scheduled).

2.5: Countries, cities, and provinces to be visited: Beijing, Shijiazhuang, Dengfeng, Luoyang, Xian, Nanjing, Shanghai.

Section 4

4.7 Name of contact, inviter, or relative: Shandong China Travel Service

4.8 Phone number of contact in China: 531-82617709

4.9 Address of contact in China: 9, Second East Qianfoshan Road, Jinan, China.

4.10 Address in China: Henan Plaza Hotel, 28 Huaweili, Panjiayuan, Chaoyang District, Beijing.

- Before the trip, make two photocopies of your passport information and visa pages. **Put one of each in your luggage and bring the other one with you to give to our national guide Eric Lu.** 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 recommend you send a copy of your passport/visa/tickets/travelers checks receipts to yourself by email and leave it on your ISP. If you need a new copy of any of these things you can open them from China through a computer and print them out.

About Carrying Money in China

- Regarding currency exchange in China. Because of recent changes in China travelers' checks are very difficult or impossible to exchange at most hotels in China. 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 snacks, 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.

Terms and Conditions of Travel

- 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.

Health and Vaccinations

- Normally, no shots are required for traveling in China, but check for the latest information at the China Consular website. 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 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. Swine or poultry flu outbreaks may lead to a need for vaccinations for those diseases.

- China's tourist sites require a large amount of walking (especially the Forbidden City, the Terra Cotta Warriors, the Longmen Grottos). If you are unable to walk for two or three miles at a tourist site without serious difficulty you should not join a South Mountain China Tour. Persons who require special management/transport because they are unable to walk with the group are responsible for any charges arising from that situation.
- Vegetarian meals are available on all tours. We try to provide vegan meals to the maximum extent we can. If you are allergic to MSG please notify us in advance so we can tell the chefs.
- Please carefully check your physical condition and medical needs to make sure you are physically able to travel with the tour.
- Pack two sets of your required medications. One set should be in your luggage and one set should be in your carrying bag/pack/hand luggage. Then if you lose either luggage you will still have your needed meds.

Telephone Information

- 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/email 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 miss your international flight, please notify us immediately by email at 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 that are polyester-hand washable and light clothing that you can hang up to dry overnight are best. China summers are very hot and humid. Fall and spring are comfortable and 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.

Accommodations, Meals, Water

- 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.

Luggage

- 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).
- Domestic flights in China limit bag weights to 20 kilos (44 lbs). If you check a bag over this weight in China you may be charged overage charges.

Cancellations

Trip participants may cancel their reservations up to sixty days prior to departure without penalty. Thereafter cancellation refunds can be affected by the individual policies of refunding organizations in China (airlines, hotels, etc). Note that refunds are most often affected if you have made a reservation with a room mate and your cancellation results in that person being unable to find another room mate. In those cases a cancellation refund is affected by costs for paying for a single room for your room mate if it is impossible or too late to find a substitute.

The closer to the departure date, the more likely it will be that cancellation charges will be applied to your refund.

Travel Insurance

South Mountain China Tours does not provide travel insurance to participants of our tours. If you wish to have insurance to cover medical emergencies, emergency evacuation, lost luggage, etc we recommend you purchase such insurance from an independent company. Such insurance is also available online from companies such as “Travelinsured” and others.

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Zen’s Chinese Heritage: The Masters and their Teachings (Ferguson: Wisdom Publications)

The Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma (Red Pine:

Contact us if you have any questions about our upcoming tour at info@southmountaintours.com or call 800-952-1967.