

# China Travel Tips...Open Mind, Light Suitcase

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So—you are traveling to China this summer—either for a heritage tour or to the Olympics? Here are three little tips that can make your journey a more comfortable.

First of all put out of your mind that you are going to be tracked and under surveillance anymore than you are already accustomed to here in the U.S. The only difference is that you think of it as protection against the Big Bad Baddies here and you are worried about Big Brother there. Perhaps you will be photographed by surveillance cameras and maybe your calls will be recorded. But if you've checked out a book from your public library in the US in the last few years—you're on record with the Feds! Now that is what I call government interference in my private life. I mean why are they so interested in my mystery reading habits? If you don't plan to steal Chinese national treasures and smuggle them out or mount a giant protest of some sort—RELAX!!! The Chinese government is DELIGHTED that you're coming with your American greenbacks to spend in the markets and shops of Beijing and around the country.

Second, I cannot emphasize enough that the quality of the heat in Beijing in August is really intense. The air can be turgid—thick and stagnant with pollution. Now I live in humid, hot New Jersey and grew up even more humid, hot North Carolina, but the summers in Beijing when I lived there from 1994-1996 turned me into the limpest dishrag you ever saw. My brain felt cooked and the air was really hard to breath. So take measures to help yourself. Opt for cool, sweat-wicking clothing over

style. Get one of those gel-filled neck cloths, and get a little battery-operated or hand fan you can carry with you. Buy a parasol and use it. Drink lots and lots of water. And if your feet and legs are prone to swelling in the heat and after a long international flight, make sure you come with the proper compression hose. Cool your feet and legs off in a cold bath at night and prop your feet up on the wall. Get regular massages. Most hotels have relatively inexpensive and well-trained masseuses. These measures can make all the difference between an enjoyable trip with lots of walking and one that is really difficult.

Finally, open yourself to the delights of China. EVERYTHING will be new and wonderful—even if it's a somewhat smelly squatty potty and even if you've been before. China is changing so rapidly that if you've been before it will be all new this time as well. What I mean is, suspend your criticizing faculties and just observe, experience, taste and engage with everything. Remember, you've gone to China to go to China, not troll American malls in another country. You'd be surprised at how many people go to another country and then criticize the country, its people, and ways for not being like home. And if you start feeling overwhelmed with the strangeness of it all despite your best intentions, have a Big Mac—even if that is the last thing you would ever eat in the States. Taste is one of the most comforting senses.

So go, engage, delight, taste and rest as much as possible and Luxing Pingan (have a peaceful safe journey)!

