

Getting here and advice about your stay

Entry requirements

Visas

British nationals need a visa to enter mainland China, but not Hong Kong or Macao. For mainland China, you must get a visa prior to arrival, including for Hainan Island, although some exemptions may be available for tour groups travelling to certain parts of the country, see: http://www.visaforchina.org/LON_EN/generalinformation/visaknowledge/263904.shtml for more information. For details of entry requirements to China contact the Chinese Embassy or the China Visa Application Service Centre in the UK well before your proposed trip, see: <http://www.visaforchina.org/>. You may be asked to provide your previous passport in support of your visa application.

It is your responsibility to check your visa details carefully. Do not overstay your visa or work illegally. The authorities conduct regular checks and you may be fined, detained or deported (or all three) for not complying with the conditions of your visa or work permit. If you remain in China longer than six months, you may need to get a residence permit.

Transiting China

Under certain circumstances, if you are transiting China, you may be able to enter without a visa. Some airports, including Beijing, Guangzhou, and Chongqing, have a visa waiver programme that allows you to stay for 72 hours visa-free. Others, including Shanghai, allow you to stay for 144 hours. There are restrictions on where you can go while you are in China, and you must be travelling on to a third country afterwards (i.e. not back to the country that you entered China from) to be eligible.

In all other circumstances, if your stopover requires you to leave the airport terminal you will need a transit visa for both the outward and any return journeys. If you are staying within the airport for up to 24 hours, you do not need a transit visa.

Check with the Chinese Embassy in London at: <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/visa/> or the Chinese visa application service centre at: http://www.visaforchina.org/LON_EN/ for further information.

Passport validity

Your passport must be valid for at least six months when you enter China. There is no requirement for it to be valid for six months at the time of exit.

Travelling to Hong Kong

British nationals do not need a visa to travel to Hong Kong or Macao. If you visit Hong Kong from the mainland of China and wish to return to the mainland, you will need a visa that allows you to make a second entry into China.

Fingerprinting

China has recently introduced a requirement for all foreign passport holders aged 14-70 years to have their fingerprints taken on arrival in China. This new process was introduced at Shenzhen Airport in February 2017, and will be gradually rolled out at other points of entry around the country.

Yellow fever certificate requirements

Check whether you need a yellow fever certificate by visiting the National Travel Health Network and Centre's TravelHealthPro website: https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/49/china#Vaccine_recommendations.

UK Emergency Travel Documents

UK Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs) are accepted for entry, airside transit and exit from China. You may be required to show a police report indicating how you lost your full passport.

If your ETD has been issued in China, you will need an exit visa from the Public Security Bureau before you can travel out of China. This process can take up to 5 working days. The ETD can be used for a return journey back to China providing you have evidence of residence within China.

Registering with the Chinese authorities

You must register your place of residence with the local Public Security Bureau within 24 hours of arrival. Chinese authorities enforce this requirement with regular spot-checks of foreigners' documentation. If you are staying in a hotel, registration is done on your behalf as part of the check-in process.

Stays of more than six months

If you are entering China for employment, study or private purposes for a stay of over six months, you must produce a health certificate, which includes a blood test for HIV, legalised by the Chinese Embassy.

Working in China

You should research your prospective employer before coming to China and get the correct visa to allow you to work legally. You can only work if you have a Z visa – tourist and business visit visas do not allow you to do so. You must also hold a valid work

permit. The local police regularly carry out routine checks on companies/schools. Violation of Chinese immigration laws can result in severe penalties, including imprisonment, fines, deportation, a travel ban preventing you from leaving China, and an exclusion order, which prevents you from returning.

Although your employer/agency may submit the application on your behalf, it is your responsibility to make sure you abide by Chinese immigration laws and that your visa, work permit and any other necessary documents are valid. You can do this by contacting the Chinese Embassy at: <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/visa/> to check visa requirements and making sure you (rather than an employment agency) research the institution you are going to work for before you leave the UK. When submitting your visa application, and when you receive your work permit, check that the details are correct i.e. the name of the company and your job title and location match your role and city you are working in. If they do not, you can be detained.

If you intend to change employer you should check with the Chinese authorities whether a new visa and work permit is required.

Teaching appointments

Teaching in China can be a rewarding experience but it is important that you research the school or university thoroughly before you travel. There have been increasing incidents of teachers being arrested and detained (which could lead to deportation) for working on the wrong visas. Some have also got into disputes with their employers, who have refused to pay their salaries.

You can help avoid this by making sure you (rather than an employment agency) research the institution and visa regulations properly before you leave the UK.

Money

The official Chinese currency is the Chinese Yuan Renminbi (CNY), also referred to in the abbreviation Renminbi (RMB), or by the Yuan symbol ¥.

China remains largely a cash economy, although in major cities many people prefer to use other means of payment. Outside major cities, credit cards are not always accepted and the availability of ATMs is limited. It is not possible to exchange Scottish or Northern Irish bank notes.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Safety and security

Local laws and customs

The Chinese criminal justice system differs greatly from the UK's. Police have the power to arrest, detain or withhold your passport if you are suspected of a crime. Suspects may be detained for weeks or months before charges are laid or given a travel ban preventing them from leaving China. Courts do not generally grant bail to foreigners. Travel bans can also be imposed on people involved in private or commercial disputes.

There is a list of English-speaking lawyers on the Embassy's website. Some lawyers may be reluctant to accept cases involving foreigners. Contact the British Embassy or Consulate if you experience such difficulties.

The Chinese authorities undertake random drug testing on foreign nationals including on entry to the country. If a foreign national tests positive, the Chinese authorities can prosecute regardless of where or when the drugs had been consumed. There have been a number of recent incidences in Beijing of police raids on clubs and bars. The police have asked individuals to give urine samples to check on consumption of illicit substances. There are extremely severe penalties for drugs offences, including the death penalty. A British national was executed in China for a drugs offence in December 2009. Other foreign nationals have been sentenced to death for drugs offences since then. On 1st January 2014, Khat (or Qat) was classified as an illegal drug in China and now carries the same penalties as other illegal drugs.

China does not recognise dual nationality. If you enter China on a Chinese passport or identity card, the British Embassy may not be able to offer consular assistance. Any person born in China to a Chinese national parent will be considered by the Chinese authorities to have Chinese nationality. Travellers holding British passports who also hold Chinese citizenship may be regarded by the Chinese authorities as a Chinese citizen, even if you travel to China on a British passport. If you have formally renounced Chinese citizenship, you should carry clear evidence that you have done so.

Foreign nationals over 16 years of age must carry their passport with them at all times. Police carry out random checks, especially during periods of heightened security and major sporting or political events. Failure to produce your ID can lead to a fine or detention. If you renew your passport while you are in China, you must register your new passport with the authorities promptly or face a fine.

The Chinese authorities maintain controls on internet access. Websites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are blocked. Other websites or e-mail services (especially Google and Gmail) are blocked from time-to-time.

Gambling is illegal in mainland China.

There are restrictions on certain religious activities, including preaching and distributing religious materials. The Falun Gong movement is banned in China.

Homosexuality is not illegal although there are no specific laws in place to protect the rights of LGBT people. You can find information on LGBT life in China on the British Embassy website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-china#lgbt-rights>.

China has its own laws and regulations on endangered wildlife trade and transportation, and is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and Flora (CITES). Anyone who intends to move wildlife products into or out of China must check with the relevant Chinese authorities or a lawyer first. Carrying, transporting, posting endangered wildlife and its products including ivory without permission could violate CITES or relevant Chinese laws and result in a fine, confiscation of property, detention and/or imprisonment.

Crime

Foreigners can be targeted for passports, laptops, mobile phones, purses and handbags. Major tourist sites and areas frequented by foreigners attract thieves and pickpockets. You should take extra care at major tourist sites, on shopping streets, at street markets, Beijing International Airport, major international events and conferences and popular bar areas after dark. The number of thefts can increase in the weeks leading up to Chinese New Year. If your passport is lost or stolen, report it to the nearest police station or Public Security Bureau, who will issue a 'confirmation of loss' report.

Serious crime against foreigners is relatively rare, but incidents do occur. There have been incidents of sexual assault and robbery of foreigners, particularly when travelling alone in a taxi late at night in major cities. Where possible, take an 'official' taxi, make sure someone knows where you are and try to take a note of the taxi's number.

There are occasional incidents with taxi and pedicab drivers who insist the passenger misunderstood the fare. Avoid travelling in unmarked or unmetered 'taxis' and insist on paying only the meter fare. Ask the driver for a receipt (fapiao), on which the taxi number should be printed. You can take this to the police to lodge a complaint.

Counterfeit bank notes (especially CNY 100) are increasingly common. They are generally crumpled to avoid detection but you may also receive them from ATMs. Banks will not replace these. Unscrupulous traders may try to switch your genuine bank notes for counterfeits. Check carefully before accepting notes. It is quite normal to do so.

Do not trek alone in isolated areas, including those that follow parts of the Great Wall. If you do, always leave your itinerary, mobile number and expected time of return at your hotel or with a third party.

The areas bordering on Siberia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Laos and Burma are poorly policed. In Yunnan Province, drug smuggling and other crimes are increasing. There is a risk of attack from armed criminals in remote areas.

Scams

Beware of scams in popular tourist areas. A common example is the 'tea tasting' scam or 'massage' scam. These usually involve a foreign national being invited to visit a bar, shop or cafe – for example to practice English or meet a girl – or invited for a massage, but results in demands for an exorbitant fee, often payable by credit card. This can result in threats or actual violence, and credit card fraud.

You should exercise caution when hiring a rental bicycle using a QR code as there have been cases of the legitimate barcode being replaced with another, false, code which redirects money to a different account. Check QR code stickers carefully.

Fire precautions

Fire protection standards in Chinese accommodation are not always the same as in the UK. Check fire precautions including access to fire exits. Make sure your accommodation has a working fire alarm and regularly check that the fire exits are not blocked.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

There have been incidences of carbon monoxide poisoning due to incorrectly installed gas equipment. One incident caused the death of a British national. If you live in China, make sure your home has a working carbon monoxide alarm. The 'Be Alarmed' campaign gives practical advice on how to stay safe, and lists the symptoms to look out for. See: <http://www.co-bealarmed.co.uk/how-to-stay-safe/>.

Commercial disputes

Commercial disputes in China are rarely handled through the civil law courts. Incidents of British nationals being detained against their will to extort money or intimidate them for other gains have increased. It is rare for violence to be used, but the threat of violence is a recurring theme. You should report any threats of violence to the Chinese police.

Before entering into a contract in China you should take legal advice, both in the United Kingdom and in China. Contracts entered into in the United Kingdom are not always enforced by Chinese courts. If you are involved in or connected to a business and/or civil dispute, the Chinese authorities may prohibit you from leaving China until the matter is resolved. This is known as a travel ban. Contract fraud is treated as a crime in China and the defendant may also be placed in custody until the dispute is resolved.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Tibet and the Tibet Autonomous Region

You will need a permit to travel to the Tibet Autonomous Region. Applications for Tibet Entry Permits can only be made through specialised travel agents based in China and travel can only be undertaken through organised tours. The Chinese authorities sometimes suspend issuing Tibet Entry Permits to foreign nationals, and may also restrict travel to Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures in neighbouring Provinces by those who have already obtained a permit. These restrictions can happen at any time, but in particular during sensitive periods or major religious festivals – especially around February and March, coinciding with the Tibetan New Year festival and the anniversary of certain uprisings in Tibet. Travellers to all Tibet areas should check with tour operators or travel agents and monitor this travel advice and other media for information.

If you travel to Tibet you should be aware that ongoing political and ethnic tensions can lead to unrest and violent protest. While foreigners are not normally targeted, you should be alert to the possibility of being caught up in any unexpected demonstrations or outbreaks of violence. Security measures are tight around any large public gathering and unauthorised gatherings may be dispersed by force. There continue to be a number of self-immolations (most recently in December 2016) including in Tibetan areas outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region itself.

The Chinese authorities tend to react quickly to these incidents and will increase the security presence in the area. There are reports that housing around the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy in Larung Valley, Sichuan province, is being demolished by the local authorities so this area should be avoided. Avoid becoming involved in any protests or calls for Tibetan independence. Do not film or photograph any such activities.

Local authorities will react negatively if you are found carrying letters or packages from Tibetan nationals to be posted in other countries.

Photography in Buddhist monasteries requires permission. You will need to pay a fee, which is normally negotiated in advance.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

The security situation in Xinjiang remains fragile, and conditions locally can deteriorate rapidly at short notice. There have been several instances of violent unrest in Xinjiang. In September 2015, at least 16 people were reported killed in attack on police and civilians at a coal mine in Aksu Prefecture, and in November 2015, 28 people were reportedly killed in a security operation. There have been allegations of the use of lethal force to disperse protests.

Whilst outbreaks of ethnic violence remain sporadic, and foreigners are not normally targeted, you should be alert to the possibility of being caught up in any unexpected demonstrations or outbreaks of violence. The Chinese authorities tend to react quickly

to these incidents. They will increase the security presence in the area and their response may be heavy-handed. The Chinese authorities may restrict travel to some areas of Xinjiang, particularly during religious festivals and after violent attacks. You should remain vigilant, keep up to date with local security advice and media reports and take extra care when travelling in Xinjiang. Avoid becoming involved in any protests and avoid large crowds. Do not film or photograph any such activities or anything of a military nature.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Political situation

China is a one-party state. Although China is very open to foreign visitors, you should be aware of political and cultural sensitivities in conversation with Chinese people.

Territorial disputes between China and neighbouring countries have caused high regional tension. There have been a number of anti-Japanese and anti-Korean demonstrations in several cities across China. These protests have generally taken place outside diplomatic missions, but some have targeted other Japanese and Korean interests.

Avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings. The Chinese authorities enforce public order strictly and you may face arrest, detention and/or deportation. Foreign journalists have been intimidated, assaulted or detained for trying to report demonstrations. You may also risk becoming a target yourself when general anti-foreign sentiment runs high. Keep yourself informed of developments and follow the advice of the local authorities. During periods of tension, some news reporting, access to text-messaging, the internet and to international telephone lines may be blocked.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Terrorism

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in China. Although foreigners have not been specifically targeted, attacks may occur in places visited by foreigners. You should take particular care during national holidays or when transiting public transport hubs, and always follow the advice of the local authorities. Previous attacks have targeted public places including on one occasion at a railway station and an open air market in 2014. There have been no recent attacks in the main tourist areas. The risk is higher in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. You should take particular care and remain vigilant when travelling to or within Xinjiang.

Most attacks take place in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and, according to the Chinese Government, are carried out by Uyghur separatists with possible links to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). On 28th December 2016, a car was

driven into a government building in Xinjiang killing one person. The occupants of the car were shot dead by security forces.

In September 2015, at least 16 people were reported killed in an attack at a coal mine in Aksu Prefecture. In 2014, 31 people were stabbed to death at a railway station in the southern city of Kunming. In 2013, five people were killed in Beijing after a car drove into a crowd of tourists outside Tiananmen Gate.

You should take particular care and remain vigilant when travelling to or within Xinjiang where the threat is higher.

There is a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Find out more about the global threat from terrorism, how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack, at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reduce-your-risk-from-terrorism-while-abroad>.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Public transport

Public transport is popular, inexpensive and widely available, though it can become extremely crowded, especially at holiday/festival times like the Chinese New Year. At busy times, trains and flights are often fully booked weeks in advance.

Road travel

Visitors and tourists are not allowed to drive in China. Only foreign nationals with a valid residence permit may drive in China. You will have to pass a driving test and get a Chinese driving licence. An International Driving Permit is not sufficient. You must also have valid insurance.

There are harsh penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol, even at very low levels.

The poor quality of roads, high volume of traffic and generally low driving standards lead to many accidents. If you are involved in a serious traffic accident, call the police. Do not move your vehicle until the police arrive but make sure you and your passengers are in a safe place. If there are no injuries and damage is minimal, the parties involved often come to an agreement on the spot. In cases where there are injuries, you may be held liable for medical costs. You will also be held liable if you run over a pedestrian.

Sea travel

There are areas of disputed territory between China and other countries in the East China Sea. Mariners should be vigilant and avoid disputed areas. There have been incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the East China Sea. The Regional Co-operation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC) recorded 40 incidents in 2014 and 10 in 2015. See the ReCAAP ISC's website at: <http://www.recaap.org/> for updates on incidents and trends.

Rail travel

Only cash payments are accepted for tickets, including on high speed services. You will need to show your passport to buy a ticket and may need to show it again before boarding.

Trans-Mongolian express trains (Beijing-Moscow via Ulaanbaatar) are noted for smuggling. Search your compartment and secure the cabin door before departure. Petty theft from overnight trains is also common.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Natural disasters

Earthquakes

China is located in an active seismic zone and can experience major earthquakes.

An earthquake of magnitude 6.5 struck parts of Sichuan Province on 8th August 2017. The deadliest earthquake of recent times was the 7.9 magnitude earthquake on 12th May 2008, which also struck Sichuan province. It is estimated that more than 69,000 people lost their lives.

To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, see the US Federal Emergency Management Agency website at: <https://www.ready.gov/earthquakes>. Latest tsunami warnings can be found on the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre website: <http://ptwc.weather.gov/>.

Flooding

Flooding is common during the wet season (May to November). In June 2015, flooding and storms affected the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Chongqing leading to a number of fatalities and injuries. Shanghai was also flooded, with some roads said to have been under 30cm of water on 17th June 2015 after heavy rainfall.

Monitor local weather reports and follow any evacuation orders, at:
<http://www.cma.gov.cn/en/>.

Typhoons

The typhoon season in China normally runs from May to November, affecting in particular the southern and eastern coastal regions of China. You should monitor the progress of approaching storms on the Japan Meteorological Agency at:<http://www.jma.go.jp/en/typh/> and the China Meteorological Administration website at: <http://www.cma.gov.cn/en/>.

Avoid visiting isolated or rural areas if a typhoon system is forecast. There are sometimes large-scale evacuations, particularly in the coastal regions of southern China. You should follow the advice of the local authorities. Air travel and other forms of transport can be affected. Check with your airline or travel operator for further details and try to keep in touch with family and friends.

See the [FCO's Tropical Cyclones page](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tropical-cyclones) at:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tropical-cyclones> for advice about what to do if you are caught up in a typhoon.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

The Chop System

Under Chinese law, any entity legally registered in China must have an official company chop and a financial chop. Chops are red stamps which act as an official seal. There are several other chops with specific functions. They are used as a form of signature that is accepted as legally binding. Chops have to be made by a specialist company and registered with the local Public Security Bureau.

The holder of an official chop can bind a company in important transactions even where they have not been authorised by the legal representative or shareholders. If chops or other corporate documents such as business licences are lost or stolen a company may be unable to sign contracts, pay wages or withdraw funds.

Lost or stolen chops

If a chop is lost or stolen an announcement must be published in an official journal recognised by the local authorities. This makes it possible to request the cancellation of the lost or stolen chop, to have it remade and to register the new chop with the Public Security Bureau. A company must present its original business licence in order to register a new chop. If the licence has also been lost or stolen companies must request a replacement.

It is possible to file a complaint with the police with evidence a theft has occurred. However, the police are rarely willing to intervene in what they regard as commercial disputes and filing a complaint generally requires the company chop.

Chops – risks

The most common risk is that someone will use the chops and/or official documents to take control of a company without the knowledge of its owner or a joint venture partner. Owners based outside China are at a particular risk if no regular checks are carried out on the company. If the perpetrator is the company's legal representative or CEO/General Manager it can be very difficult for shareholders to remove them and declare their removal to the authorities without access to chops and corporate documents.

Preventative measures

The consequences of the loss or theft of chops can be extremely damaging and hard to correct. It is therefore essential to put in place preventative measures and effective internal controls. This should ensure chops can only be accessed by trusted individuals who need them as part of their job, that no one individual (other than the company owner) holds or has access to them all, that they are kept under lock and key and that documents that bear the company chop are checked and recorded.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Legal liability

Directors and senior managers may face civil, administrative or criminal liability if they act in breach of Chinese law, administrative regulations or a company's Articles of Association and cause losses to the company.

A stricter liability applies to the company's legal representative (³25n32;43D150:72fading daibiaor an individual with broad powers and potentially unlimited liability. An individual appointed as a legal representative may be held personally liable in Chinese law for a company's debts. The legal representatives of some foreign companies in China are individuals who have never set foot in China.

Intimidation and threatening behaviour

There have been incidents of foreign nationals being subject to threats and intimidation as part of a business dispute with a Chinese partner. In some cases facilities have been surrounded by employees or casually-hired support who have refused to allow the foreign partner to leave until a payment is made. Threats of violence are common although actual violence is rare. Stand-offs can last hours or days. The police may be reluctant to intervene and generally will not do so unless a situation does turn violent. If

you or your family are threatened in the course of a commercial dispute, you should report it to the local police and obtain a police report.

Travel bans

The Chinese Government may prohibit a foreign national involved in any kind of business or legal dispute from leaving China until the matter is resolved, which in some cases can take years! This is known as a travel ban and can last for an indefinite period. Individuals might not be aware they are subject to a travel ban prior to trying to leave the country when they may be stopped, interviewed and refused boarding. If you are the subject of a travel ban, you should immediately inform the British Embassy or local Consulate-General and seek legal advice.

See also the 'Legal sector briefing' for British nationals and UK companies in China, in the 'Sector-specific opportunities' section of the guide: http://484.shang-beij-shenz_484_china.doingbusinessguide.co.uk/the-guide/sector-specific-opportunities-in-china/.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Business and human rights

In September 2013 the UK launched its action plan on business and human rights, becoming the first country to set out guidance to companies on integrating the UN guidelines on business and human rights into their operations see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bhr-action-plan>.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Child labour

China is a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and has ratified the two core conventions on child labour. The Chinese Government condemns child labour. China's Labour Law prohibits the employment of minors under 16, but reports suggest child labour remains a problem, particularly in the manufacturing and service industries. Education law supports work-study programmes where this does not interfere with normal study, but some internship programmes appear to violate Chinese and ILO standards.

Ethnic minorities

The Chinese Government officially recognises 55 ethnic minority groups in China, in addition to the majority Han Chinese ethnic group. Despite anti-discrimination provisions in Chinese employment law, discriminatory employment practices reportedly persist including against ethnic Uyghur's and ethnic Tibetans.

LGBT persons

Chinese Labour Law specifically protects Chinese workers against discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender or religion. There are no applicable provisions against discrimination on the basis of sexuality or gender identity.

Gender

China is committed to preventing gender discrimination in the workplace under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Domestic laws are in place to promote gender equality and prevent gender discrimination and sexual harassment. China's report to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in January 2014 acknowledged that problems remain in gender-based employment and pay discrimination, and sexual harassment.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Migrant workers

China has an estimated 280 million migrant workers, who have moved from rural to urban areas for work. Most are ineligible for many urban public services, and are employed in low-skilled, low-paid jobs in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Minimum wage guarantees are undermined by illegal employment practices.

Migrant workers may be employed without a contract, or sign unfair contracts that stipulate a very low basic wage with long overtime needed to earn a living wage. Withholding wages is illegal, but reportedly rife and frequently causes labour disputes. Recent reforms to the hukou system of household registration have alleviated but not solved the problem in some cities.

Working conditions and occupational safety

The guidelines for occupational health and safety are laid down in the Safe Production Law, which was revised in 2014 to establish a blacklist for companies with poor safety records, and the Occupational Disease Prevention Law was revised and strengthened in 2013. In addition, enterprises wishing to set-up production in China must obtain a permit from provincial authorities under the Safety Production Permit Regulations, revised in 2013.

Allegations of unsafe working environments and workplace abuses in a range of industries remain widespread. These include excessive forced overtime; exposure to hazardous materials and inadequate safety management training. Official statistics show the number of industrial accidents is steadily declining, but approximately 180 people are still killed every day in workplace accidents. Despite new regulations for

filing workplace injury compensation claims, procedures remain complicated and time-consuming.

Rights of Association (Trade Unions)

The right to organise, strike and engage in collective bargaining remains strictly limited in both law and practice. Trade union activity in China must be carried out under the auspices of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), a quasi-governmental body under the direction of the Communist Party. In recent years Chinese workers have become more assertive at the grassroots level about using collective action to secure their rights: illegal protests and strikes are relatively common and increasing in frequency.

A number of labour NGOs operate informally to advise and support workers in labour disputes. In Guangdong Province, where most strikes occur, regulations on collective bargaining have been introduced. They place a greater obligation on (i) employers to honour minimum wage requirements, working-hours directives and social security payments, and (ii) the unions to play an engaged role in dispute resolution.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

UK Export Finance

The UK Government can provide finance or credit insurance specifically to support UK exports through UK Export Finance – the UK's export credit agency, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-export-finance>. For up-to-date information on the support available, see UK Export Finance's China cover policy and indicators at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/country-cover-policy-and-indicators#china>.

[Source – FCO Overseas Business Risk/UKEF/gov.uk]

Health

Visit your health professional at least four-to-six weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country-specific information and advice is published by the National Travel Health Network and Centre on the TravelHealthPro website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries> and by NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>.

Useful information and advice about healthcare abroad is also available on the NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/Pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx>.

If you are on prescription medication, make sure you either bring enough with you, or have access to a supply once in China. Certain medicines may not be available in

China (including major brands readily available in the UK), and you may be prohibited from bringing some medicines into the country. For more information and advice, check with your GP and the Embassy of China before travelling.

Depending on which hospital you are taken to, medical care is generally good in major cities, though some hospitals can be very crowded with long waiting times. Outside major cities, the standard of healthcare is variable; sometimes poor, and disorganised. Healthcare is not provided free of charge in China and medical bills can be very high. Medical evacuation from China is very expensive.

Make sure you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance covering healthcare and medical evacuation/repatriation for the duration of your stay. Further information can be found on the UK Government's medical treatment in China document: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-treatment-in-china>.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 120 and ask for an ambulance. Ambulances can be very slow to arrive and may not have trained responders. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment. The British Embassy Beijing and British Consulates elsewhere in China publish a list of hospitals and specialist medical service providers in China. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-hospitals-in-china>.

The high levels of air pollution in major urban and industrialised areas in China may aggravate bronchial, sinus or asthma conditions. Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions may be especially affected. You can check the pollution index levels for many cities on the 'Air Quality in China' website, at: <http://www.aqicn.info/city/beijing/>.

It is not unusual for guests to consume large quantities of strong alcohol served at business dinners in China. On rare occasions this has led to severe illness or even death. Fake alcohol is also sometimes sold in bars and this can be more damaging to health than genuine products.

Tap water in China is generally not safe to drink. You should drink only bottled water.

The extreme altitude (over 3,000m) in some mountainous areas of China, including Tibet, parts of Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province, may cause altitude sickness.

The Chinese authorities react quickly to any outbreaks of any infectious disease, including enforcing quarantine for those showing symptoms. There are occasional incidents of influenza transmitted to humans from animals, notably birds and pigs. Outbreaks are usually confined to rural areas and infection is believed to arise from close contact with infected birds or animals. For more information see the TravelHealthPro site at: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/49/china#CloutBreaks>.

Dengue fever is present in some parts of China, mainly during the rainy season. There has been a large increase in cases of dengue fever in Guangdong province. You should take appropriate precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. See: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/disease/42/dengue>.

[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Travel advice help and support

If you are abroad and you need emergency help from the UK Government, contact the nearest British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission, see: <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>. If you need urgent help because something has happened to a friend or relative abroad, contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London on 020 7008 1500 (24 hours).

FCO travel advice

If you are travelling to China for business, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website has travel advice to help you prepare for your visits overseas and to stay safe and secure while you are there.

For advice please visit the FCO travel section pages on the gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>

Travel insurance

Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel. See FCO foreign travel insurance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance>.

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