

Insights into planning a family vacation to China

The year is 221 B.C.

In Rome, construction of the Circus Flaminius has begun.

In Mexico, the city of Teotihuacan is flourishing.

And in China, a team of doomed craftsmen begins an incredible feat that would remain a secret for over 2,000 years.



China: Past and Future

ULTRALUXURY TRAVEL

In this issue of *FourThought*, we focus on a family trip to China and highlight the aspects of ultraluxury travel, private aviation, medical care, and personal security that have been tailored specifically to the family's needs as they travel together to Beijing and Shanghai:

• The Ford Family

The Ford family (not the family's actual name) resides in the northeast part of the United States. They will travel to, from, and within China on a chartered private jet. The family owns a successful manufacturing business with which Mr. Ford and his daughter will need to stay in touch while traveling. The Fords have two children who will accompany them on the trip — a daughter in her 20's who now works in the family business, and a younger son who recently completed college and is about to enroll in business school. Their son is a diabetic. The trip is a family vacation, but the family also has an interest in getting a better understanding of China and its economic future. They want to understand how the coming government transition, the urbanization of China's population, the increase in Chinese manufacturing costs, and the growth of China's domestic market will impact the family's manufacturing business.

• The secret is the guides

A trip to Beijing and Shanghai presents an opportunity to explore China's fascinating history (Beijing) and to peer into its future (Shanghai). Perhaps more than any other destination, your choice of guides in China will determine how well you get to know the country and its people. Hiring a generic guide through a hotel concierge will not result in a meaningful experience. For those wanting a deep understanding of China, the secret is to employ a number of specialist guides and academics in combination to educate you. For the Ford family, and their desire to understand how China's role in the world will impact their business, the right choice will be a prominent U.S.-based economics professor to accompany them in Shanghai. In Beijing, the right combination of guides for the Fords will be a Chinese business school professor and a Chinese historian — both of whom came of age during the Cultural Revolution — as did the generation which will assume power in the Chinese government transition scheduled for late 2012.

For a family with other interests — art, culture, fashion, or food — a different set of guides with entirely different academic and professional backgrounds will be the right fit. The tourism infrastructure in China has developed to the stage where the combination of Chinese and western guides and academics, thoughtfully selected, can create the personalized experience in China that any family is seeking.

• Design a trip around your personal interests and preferences

Letting your personal interests — rather than a concierge or guidebook — determine your activities can lead to



very rewarding experiences in Beijing and Shanghai. For those interested in food, there are markets, gourmet restaurants, dinners in private homes, and cooking lessons with talented chefs. For those interested in fine art, there are museums, galleries, and opportunities to visit artists in their studios. Day trips can be arranged to panda sanctuaries, The Great Wall, and, of course, the 2,000-year-old Terracotta Army — all with special access to places not open to the public.

When you travel, you may prefer to stay and eat your meals in a villa or private residence. But Beijing and Shanghai are cities in which the best suites in the best hotels offer far more comfort and amenities than staying in a private residence. And both cities afford the visitor the opportunity to eat very well at both Asian and European restaurants — although the best European restaurants are the more luxurious.

• The best time to go

The best times to visit both cities are April-May and September-October. Heat, humidity, and smog (Beijing) make both cities less than ideal summer destinations. Beijing is quite cold in the winter, while Shanghai is milder but still cold.

— True Latitudes



PRIVATE AVIATION

Private aviation is relatively new to China where the government has focused on developing commercial aviation in some respects at the expense of private. But the government's current Five-Year Plan (its twelfth) contains a change of direction and a commitment to promote private aviation.

Both Beijing and Shanghai now have modern, fixed-base-operator facilities. The Fords will use the best of these — Jet Aviation in Beijing and Hawker Pacific in Shanghai. Both feature comfortable facilities as well as dedicated security channels which allow passengers and crew to complete immigration and customs formalities quickly. However, dedicated private jet catering companies have yet to emerge in either city.

At this time, private jets cannot take off at short notice, or fly freely within China. Air space is controlled by the air force and the Civil Aviation Administration of China. Permission from the latter is required to do just about anything. The process begins with obtaining a landing permit. Then each subsequent leg requires permission to take off, fly a particular airway route, and land again. Your flight crew will need the appropriate visas for the duration of their time in the country. This process of obtaining permits and visas requires some advance planning. Starting the process at least three weeks before your trip should provide enough time.

— RYL Jets

MEDICAL CARE

Travel to China — particularly to large cities like Beijing and Shanghai — does not present medical risks greater than traveling to other countries in Asia. But it is a mistake to assume that should one of your family become sick or suffer an injury in China that your hotel doctor, or a hospital recommended by the hotel, will provide the level of medical care that you will want.

The Ford family faces another challenge — their son is diabetic. But following certain pre-trip steps can have him prepared for most problems that might arise. He needs to carry with him a letter describing his illness and all of the steps that he takes in order to monitor and manage it. He also needs to bring the specific medication (insulin) and medical supplies (syringes) that he requires. Then, he needs to consider what he would do and where he would go during each stage of the trip if he were to lose his medication or medical supplies, or if his return home was delayed. Finally, with his doctor, the Ford's son needs to recall each of the complications that he's suffered from diabetes in the last two or three years, and decide what he would do if those complications were to occur while he's in China. The final questions for him to ask are what affect the rigors of travel and change of climate, altitude, and time zone may have on his condition, and how he will manage those.

None of us should expect to make good decisions or get good local advice in an emergency. Know before you leave home what you're going to do at each destination if you need a doctor or a hospital.

— Black Bag

PERSONAL SECURITY

Because of the prevalence of hacking in China, travelers from other countries should not take their mobile phones or laptops with them when traveling to China. It's not just your portable device which is at risk. It's common practice for hackers in China to break into a traveler's portable devices, and leapfrog from there to the networks with which the traveler connects — including those of the traveler's company.

This presents a big challenge for Mr. Ford and his daughter as they need to stay in touch with the family's business, and from time to time get access to data from the business' network. It would be a huge risk for their company if an outsider were to gain access to their network. Their initial reaction to this problem was to take with them encrypted devices.

However, China prohibits travelers from entering the country with encrypted devices — unless they have permission from the government. The solution is to travel with loaner or rental devices, which should be wiped clean before leaving home and again after leaving China. On these devices, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and the camera should be disabled. Removing the battery from your phone eliminates the possibility that its microphone can be turned on remotely. Copy and paste your password from a USB thumb drive. Never type a password directly into a device. Hackers in China are skilled at installing key-logging software on your laptop.

— Hillard Heintze



Points to remember when planning a family trip to China

Travel —

Your choice of guide will be the most important determinant of what you learn and what you get out of your trip to China. Select a combination of specialist guides ranging from western economists to local artists to insure that your family's personal interests are the organizing structure of your itinerary.

Jets -

Limited infrastructure and a burdensome permit process make flying privately to China somewhat challenging. However, utilizing FBOs such as Jet Aviation in Beijing and Hawker Pacific in Shanghai will help ensure that your airport experience is optimal.

Medicine -

Prepare for your trip by planning for the medical problems that you can anticipate. You should not expect that you will make good decisions during an emergency, or receive good local advice or medical care in the event of an injury or illness. Bring the medicine and medical supplies that you will need, and know how you will replace them if they are lost or depleted.

Security -

Do not take your mobile phone or laptop with you to China. The solution is to travel with loaner devices which should be wiped clean before and after the trip. Never type a password directly into a device while you're in China.

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This issue: China

Future issues: Family meeting, African safari, Australia, French Riviera, Brazil, Mountain West

Recommended reading:

"Socialism is Great!": A Worker's Memoir of the New China by Lijia Zhang

A memoir by a former Chinese factory worker who grew up in Nanjing, participated in the Tiananmen Square protest, and became an international journalist.

Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China by Jung Chang

Chang recounts the story of how three generations of women in her family fared in the political maelstrom of China during the 20th century.

For the first time, the key elements of ultraluxury travel have been brought together in a seamless service designed for the most discerning travelers and their families. TJMS Partners is a carefully-selected team of companies with unparalleled expertise in ultraluxury travel, private aviation, global emergency medicine, and personal security with the shared goal of delivering an incomparable travel experience.