

# CHINA COUNTRY NOTES

VERSION 1, 10 JULY 2019

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS PROGRAMME**

China 2019/ 2020

Document compiled by British Council: Information correct @ 24 July 2019. We are aware that information can change throughout the year. Please inform us should you discover any errors.

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*“Have realistic expectations – you will at points feel lonely and isolated and want to come home. But get stuck in to the teaching, to the language, to the food, to the travelling and you’ll bring back an amazing number of fond memories, develop new skills and have done something to be immensely proud of. Go for it!*

*Former ELA, China*

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## NOTES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS APPOINTED TO CHINA IN 2019-2020

This document is version 1 China Country Notes for the 2019/20 English Language Assistants Programme. Any previous country notes relating to previous years should be ignored for the 2019/20 academic year.

### FOREWORD

Congratulations on your recent allocation to a post as an English Language Assistant in China. Every year, around 2,500 Language Assistants from the UK support the teaching of English in 14 countries around the world. Every Language Assistant is taking part in a programme that traces its heritage back to 1905. It began as an exchange programme to allow graduates from France to help English students learn French, with 'young Masters in English secondary schools' heading to France to perform a similar role. Shortly afterwards, a similar agreement was reached with the government of Prussia.

Since those early days, the programme has endured major global events such as two World Wars and the Great Depression. But while the global political, social and economic landscapes may have changed over the years, the Language Assistants initiative has remained committed to increasing language skills across the world.

This document contains important information and advice regarding a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting UK assistants in China. This document should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by the Chinese authorities. It is important that you take this information with you whilst undertaking your placement in order to be able to consult it at all times when problems/questions arise.

If your permanent (UK) home address, personal e-mail, phone number or passport number should change at any time from now, please inform us immediately by sending an e-mail to [languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org](mailto:languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org). We may need to contact you during the year with urgent messages, invitations to events or to add updates to these notes, so please ensure that you have given us the correct contact details.

We hope that you find the following information useful and that you enjoy the year ahead

Best wishes,

British Council Language Assistants Team

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## 1. CO-OPERATING PARTNERS

### 1.1. BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of [arts and culture](#), [English language](#), [education](#) and [civil society](#). Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

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#### BRITISH COUNCIL CHINA

Please note: The British Council in China is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistant programme - this is the role of CEAIE. For more information see [chapter 12](#).

### 1.2. CEAIE

The [China Education Association for International Exchange](#) (CEAIE) is the official partner organisation for the English Language Assistants Programme in China

Founded in 1981, the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) is China's nationwide not-for-profit organization conducting international educational exchanges and cooperation. Its headquarters is located in Beijing.

CEAIE has a full commitment to meeting the needs of China's modernisation construction, developing exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese educational community and other parts of the world; promoting the advancement of education, culture, science and technology and strengthening understanding and friendship among the peoples of all countries and regions of the world.

#### CEAIE TEAM

CEAIE will be your main point of in-country contact alongside your school mentor.

Ms. Zhu Xiaoying, (**Ava**) | Programme Officer  
Email: [zhuxiaoying@ceaie.edu.cn](mailto:zhuxiaoying@ceaie.edu.cn)  
TEL: 010-66416582-803

CEAIE, Yifu Conference Center, No. 160 Fuxingmen Nei Street, Beijing 100031  
<http://en.ceaie.edu.cn/>

***“The British Council works with CEAIE, which makes sure that the schools are good. If there are any problems with the school, then contacting CEAIE will solve any problems.” (Former ELA 2018-2019).***



## 2. ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE ASSISTANT

The role of a language assistant is a very important one and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you are considered a **member of staff** with the responsibilities and required **professionalism** that this entails. Please refer to [our website](#) for more information on your role as an English Language Assistant.

***“Each experience is going to be incredibly different depending on where you are placed - China is so big and the different places offer very unique experiences.” (ELA 2016-17)***

As a language assistant you are also an **ambassador for the UK and its culture**. The way you behave will influence how those around you view the UK and you should endeavor to be a positive example. If you set a bad example, you

could damage the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

As an English Language Assistant in China you will have significant responsibility. You will be expected to lead classes (in some cases without supervision) and+ will be treated as a foreign teacher rather than a language assistant. For many schools, hosting a foreign teacher is a rare privilege and it is likely they will want to make the most of your skills and knowledge.

Whilst some assistants embrace the extra responsibility they are given in China, others may initially feel less comfortable with this. If this is the case, please ensure you clearly communicate with your school mentor exactly what you feel comfortable in the first months.





As you grow in confidence, you may want to get more involved as the year goes on. The level of responsibility you take in the classroom should ultimately be agreed between you and your school.

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource and you should draw on this during your lessons. Advice to help you incorporate cultural content into your lessons – can be found in chapter 11.

***“Living in China has been an invaluable and unforgettable experience. I sometimes found the teaching tiring and difficult (I had 22 classes of 60 students to teach single-handedly) but I am now grateful for the challenge and realise how much I have learnt.” (ELA 2016-17)***

It is also important to familiarise yourself with the education system in China. It will help prepare to you start teaching at your school(s). You should ask your host school for specific information. Keep an open mind and remember to respect the rules and regulations of your host schools and China as a country. Co-operation gets you much further in China than confrontation.

***“Interact with your colleagues. Show them that you are here to make a difference academically but also culturally. Be proactive and suggest ideas for clubs/extra classes you would like to start; the chances are that they will be excited and be more than willing to help.” (ELA 2016-2017)***

It is important to be resourceful and use your initiative. If you do not think that you are being used sufficiently, make suggestions of topics that you could discuss with the students or activities that you could get involved with.



Guangzhou, China, Photo by 五玄土 ORIENTO on Unsplash

## 3. POSTING INFORMATION

### 3.1. SCHOOL ALLOCATION

Assistants in China are expected to work 16 - 20 hours a week. Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools allocated. You can request information regarding your timetable will from the head of your host school, which is usually the first one mentioned when you are sent details of your posting. If you have been appointed to two or three schools, you should write to all of them confirming your acceptance of the post

The maximum number of schools you can be appointed is three. Please contact us if you have been appointed to more. If the schools are several miles apart and you must travel between two on the same day, you are entitled to ask for help towards travel expenses. If no regular public transport serves your school(s) and there are no lifts available with other staff members, please inform us of the situation.



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You should ask information about the school(s) that you will be working in. For example, it may be useful to know the age range of pupils, the average class size, the general level of ability, the social background of pupils, the facilities available and if you should bring any specific materials from home. It is also important to enquire about the dress code for teachers and any other general school information.

### 3.2. DATES OF APPOINTMENT

The period of appointment for UK assistants in China next year will be **01 September – end of June** (exact end dates can vary so please check with your school).

### 3.3. MENTOR

The school will identify a mentor in the English department. This mentor will provide pastoral care and be your first point of contact. In most cases the school will provide internet access to on campus or will identify a nearby internet café.

***“Some mentors can be very useful and are very confident and friendly. This can help you to settle in and establish relationships early on. However, some mentors are maybe a little shy and reluctant to be so involved. If this is the case, just try to put in the effort and you should find your relationship with your mentor to come along a lot better. They can be extremely valuable to you, so try to work on this relationship.” (Former ELA, 2016-2017)***

### 3.4. HOLIDAYS

Assistants are entitled to the usual host school holidays. You should obtain the dates from the school secretary or your mentor teacher. You



should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. Attending the induction course does not give assistants the right to take holiday leave later.

The longest holiday in China is Chinese New Year which will be celebrated on 25 January 2020. Typically, ELAs will get around 4 weeks holiday around this time, though this can vary. It is best to check with your school(s) to get more precise dates. Please plan for this holiday carefully as it causes the biggest human migration on the planet and transport can be extremely busy.

While Christmas is not a public holiday in China, ELAs usually have the day off to celebrate. You should however check this with your school and follow their guidance.

You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. You may occasionally be asked to work at the weekend to cover the days missed because of a public holiday. This is a normal occurrence in China.

A full list of national holidays can be found in the Spotlight on China section of this document.



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## 4. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

### 4.1. FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Before travelling to China you should ensure that you check the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) travel advice pages: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and ensure that you have subscribed to updates so that you receive any important changes to the FCO's advice.

During a crisis, advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and updated regularly, so by subscribing you will ensure that you are aware of any updates. You can register for email updates using this link: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china/email-signup](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china/email-signup)

We also recommend that assistants read the 'Advice for Travelers' documentation provided by the FCO, which can be found here: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china) as well as their living in China webpages: [www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-china](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-china).

### 4.2. PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Assistants must be in possession of a standard 10-year passport before leaving the UK and are advised to check that it will be **valid for at least 6 months** after the completion of their contract in China. Those who are not in possession of a passport, or need a new one, should complete the application procedure as soon as possible either through a regional Passport Office or online: [www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports](http://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports).

Foreign visitors to China over 16 are required to keep their passports on their possession. Assistants should keep photocopies of their passport as a form of identification, but please ensure that this information is kept safe and out of sight.

### 4.3. TRAVEL TO CHINA

You are responsible for the cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year. **Your school will reimburse your return flight to China upon completion of contract (up to a value of 10,000 RMB).**

The British Council advises against booking your flight to China until you have received your visa and are certain that you will be able to travel on your chosen date. In some instances, you may be able to pay the airline a small fee for a flexible date if you wish to book further in advance. The British Council is not responsible for arranging your travel.

Past assistants advise that you check the baggage allowance for outward and return journeys when travelling by plane. Sometimes some cheaper airlines have more restrictive baggage allowances. The following websites may help you when booking your travel.

- [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)
- [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)
- [www.opodo.co.uk](http://www.opodo.co.uk)
- [www.expedia.co.uk](http://www.expedia.co.uk)
- [www.momondo.co.uk](http://www.momondo.co.uk)
- [www.airchina.com](http://www.airchina.com)
- [www.uk.trip.com](http://www.uk.trip.com)

The most widely used travel site in China is [www.ctrip.com](http://www.ctrip.com) which can be used for booking trains or flights.

### 4.4. TRAVEL INSURANCE

You are strongly recommended to take out Personal Accident Travel insurance for the period between leaving home and taking up your appointment, time during your appointment, and the period between ending your appointment and

your return to the UK. General insurance for your entire assistantship in China is also recommended.

When choosing cover, please think carefully about what you would like to happen in the event of sickness / accident / death. It is also advised to discuss insurance options with partners, family members or a close friend. This should include the following standard elements of cover:

- Medical costs for treatment in case of illness or accidental injury
- Benefits for permanent disabling injuries, e.g. rehabilitation and living costs
- Benefits for death and costs of repatriation
- Cover for loss or damage to your personal belongings
- Cover for cancelled flights, e.g. if the airline goes out of business or on strike
- Personal Liability cover. This provides legal support and covers financial costs if you cause injury or property damage to others and are found personally liable.
- 24hr emergency assistance helpline.

Many policies also have legal expenses cover, which is recommended in case you need legal assistance while overseas.

Your school will provide basic medical insurance, but past assistants advise arranging your own medical cover.

***“Be careful with school health insurance as most of it doesn’t cover much, but also try to get something with a low excess. In China most treatment is very cheap. A lot of my friends and I have been to the hospital for one off injuries and there isn’t too much money involved.” (Former ELA, 2017-2018)***

The British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages. You are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents’ or family insurance policy. Please be aware that some insurance policies, usually ‘backpackers’ insurance, do not allow for trips home during the year and it is important to check

the small print of your policy to make sure that you are covered.

Personal Accident Travel policies are readily available on price comparison websites, or by using a search engine to search for ‘travel insurance’. The UK Foreign & Commonwealth website offers additional advice on taking out Travel Insurance: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-insurance](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-insurance).

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in China, although we will offer support when necessary. You are therefore required to take out comprehensive insurance to cover you **during your whole time abroad**. We recommend you research the various options available and consult other/ former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation. Please note that it is unlikely that insurance companies will cover you in the event of a natural disaster or the outbreak of war.

Any package should cover medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases. **Please note that you should organise your insurance before you leave the UK, print the details and keep them safe.**

Insurance for travel outside of China

***“Remember that normally your health insurance only covers you within your host country during your allocated time there, therefore if you travel outside that country during or after that period, you may need additional insurance” (Former ELA, 2015- 16)***

Previous language assistants report that holidays provide the possibility for travel around or outside of China. If you do leave China at any point, it is highly advised to take out insurance for the country / countries that you visit. You must also check to see if any additional vaccinations are required. Up to date information on required vaccines can be found [here](#).



## 4.5. INSURING POSSESSIONS/ PERSONAL LIABILITY

In addition to health insurance, it would be wise to consider insuring your personal possessions. You should also check if your family have household insurance as this sometimes covers possessions away from home. Furthermore, **cover for personal liability** is often overlooked but it is extremely important. If you were the cause of an accident of any kind – e.g. cycling on the road – the resulting costs, practical and legal, could be prohibitively high.

## 4.6. GRADUATES WITH STUDENT LOANS

If you have a student loan, you will need to let student finance know. Complete an Overseas Income Assessment Form to enable the Student Loans Company to calculate how much you need to repay. On the Overseas Income Assessment Form you should provide them with details of your circumstances and prospective income.

You will be required to provide evidence of income or means of support. They will then send you a repayment schedule showing how much you need to pay each month. Your monthly payments will be based upon the earnings threshold for your destination country. More information can be found online here. Please note that the British Council cannot advise further on student loans matters.

For questions relating to how your income in China will affect your student loan, please contact the Student Loans Company directly - [www.slc.co.uk/students-and-customers/contact-information-for-customers/student-finance-enquiries.aspx](http://www.slc.co.uk/students-and-customers/contact-information-for-customers/student-finance-enquiries.aspx)

## 4.7. TAX

A Double Taxation Agreement exists between the UK and China. You are reminded that the UK tax year extends from 06 April to 05 April and that income earned in the UK between April and the start of your assistantship may be considered

when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed.

Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local tax inspector, not to the British Council. We cannot assist you in this area because we are not trained in tax and cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax.

For questions about tax agreements between the UK and China, please visit GOV.UK - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/china-tax-treaties](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/china-tax-treaties) For questions relating to tax in China, please contact CEAIE and your host school.

## 4.8. BENEFITS / UNIVERSAL CREDIT

If you are in receipt of government support in the UK, you must inform the authorities that you are moving to work abroad. Tell your local [Jobcentre Plus](#) or the office that pays your benefit if you're going abroad. If it's a temporary move, tell them when you're coming back. You must also [tell HMRC if you're leaving the UK](#).

## 4.9. PREDECESSORS

Unfortunately due to recent GDPR rules, we are unable to provide the contact details of assistants from the 2018-19 year. In the meantime, you may wish to look for previous / future assistants on WeChat, China's most popular social media site, or other social media.

## 4.10. TAKING PETS ABROAD

There are a variety of rules assistants must follow to ensure that they are compliant when taking pets abroad / returning them to the UK. Please check the FCO and China's International Centre for Veterinary Services website for more information. You may also wish to consider pet travel insurance to ensure that any pets are covered for emergency treatment whilst in China.

- [www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad/pet-passport](http://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad/pet-passport)
- [International Centre for Veterinary Services](#)

If you are considering bringing a pet to China you should confirm with your host school that you will be able to have pets in your accommodation.



## 5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each country-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the [FitForTravel](#) website.

General information on travel vaccinations and a travel health checklist is available on the NHS website. You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you're abroad.

Healthcare is not free in China and can be very expensive. Make sure you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance covering healthcare and medical evacuation/repatriation for the duration of your stay. For more information, see [Medical treatment in China](#).

The Chinese authorities react quickly to any outbreaks of any infectious disease, including enforcing quarantine for those showing symptoms.

Please see the Foreign Commonwealth Office website for more information regarding healthcare in China: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china/health](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china/health). The FCO medical care in China document has detailed information: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-treatment-in-china](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-treatment-in-china). If you require urgent medical attention in China dial 120.

### 5.1. MEDICATION

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in China. If you're travelling with

prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

If you're 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.

If your medicine is available from suppliers in China, doctors may first want to conduct their own diagnosis before repeating a prescription issued elsewhere. It is also important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and always advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

***“Bring medicines that are hard to get in the place you're going to (E.g. your specific contraceptive pill, branded things like day nurse / your preferred hay fever tablets) - the brands I wanted were unavailable.” (Former ELA 2014-2015)***

### 5.2. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS)

Whilst we have negotiated that you do not have to pay for a medical test in the United Kingdom, once in China you will be required to have a free in-country medical check. This will always take place within the first 30 days of arrival in China. As part of the check it is highly likely that you will be tested for STIs, therefore we encourage

programme participants who could be at risk to get tested for STIs well in advance of their departure to China.

Many people with STIs do not get symptoms, so it's worth getting tested even if you feel fine. Getting tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is straightforward and confidential. Most infections can be cured. More information about getting tested can be found on the NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health). Information about self-test kits is available online [here](#).

### 5.3. CHINA MEDICAL SERVICES

The FCO provides a list of hospitals & other medical service providers in China. Please note that inclusion in this list does not constitute official endorsement by the British Embassy or the UK government:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-hospitals-in-china](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-hospitals-in-china)

The FCO also provides a webpage designed to provide British Nationals with an overview of medical treatment in China and information on how the FCO can help if a British National is in hospital.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-treatment-in-china](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-treatment-in-china)

### 5.4. MENTAL HEALTH

Although working abroad can be enjoyable, it can also be challenging. Lack of familiar support systems disrupted daily routines, language barriers, culture shock and unexpected situations can intensify stress levels rather than alleviate them.

To avoid suffering from poor mental health while in China, you should:

- Exercise regularly
- Eat healthily
- Keep in touch with family and friends
- Ask for help when you need it

It is important to remember that culture shock affects everyone. There is no shame in admitting that you are having a difficult time. China is a very culturally distinct place. If you do feel homesick or

frustrated, please talk to your fellow ELAs as they will understand how you are feeling better than anyone else. Also, be sure to keep up to date with your family and friends back home.

In China, there is still significant stigma against mental health conditions, although this has lessened in recent years. Even so, be careful with whom you share any information about your mental health. The government recently updated the Mental Health Law of the People's Republic of China (2018).

Psychological counselling services are largely unavailable in rural areas. In large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai it should be possible to access such services in English but in many cases this will be difficult.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. **It is advised to read this information even if you are not currently suffering from mental health problems.**

The Foreign Commonwealth Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following links.

- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health)
- [www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues)

The leaflets hyperlinked below contain guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, and information about how the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) can assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad.

#### Mental Health: Travelling Abroad:

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/584029/FCO\\_MentalHealth\\_web\\_130117.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584029/FCO_MentalHealth_web_130117.pdf)

#### Mental Health: Travelling Abroad Checklist:

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/466425/Mental\\_Health\\_Checklist\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466425/Mental_Health_Checklist_-_Final.pdf)

The NHS website lists a couple of helplines that can offer expert advice to people with different mental health needs:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/)

Another useful resource is Better Help, but be aware that they charge \$35 / week for their services, with a possibility to apply for financial aid [www.betterhelp.com](http://www.betterhelp.com)

The Centre for Clinical interventions has a list of self-help exercises which may be of use: [www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/looking-after-yourself](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/looking-after-yourself). The Shanghai International Mental Health Association (SIMHA) has a list of licensed therapists who cover a range of areas including marital problems, infidelity, parenting, drug and alcohol problems, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, learning disabilities, and ADHD, among others. Therapists can be contacted directly via email and each has listed specialisms. [www.simha.com](http://www.simha.com)



Chongqing, China, Photo by Ming Chen on Unsplash



## 6. ARRIVAL

### 6.1. INDUCTION TRAINING

Upon arrival in China you will attend a two-week induction training in Changsha, Hunan. The course has been designed by the State Authority for Foreign Expert Affairs in China (SAFEA). This course will help you achieve your TEFL in China Certificate.

There will be several minibuses arriving throughout the day on **August 15 and August 16** to collect Language Assistants from the airport. Details regarding collection times will be sent prior to departure.

If you miss the departure of a minibus and don't want to wait for the next one, you will be able to take a taxi to the hotel which should cost **around 40-60 RMB**. Make sure you use the official authorised taxis – there will be signs in the airport guiding you to them. Do not use the unauthorised taxi drivers which will be touting for trade upon exit.

At the hotel you will be given a twin room which will be shared with one other language assistant. Breakfast will be served at the hotel from 07:00 to 08:30. A buffet lunch will be provided for you during the training, but you may need to organise and pay for dinner.

Your training will consist of a combination of classes, including TEFL lessons, an introduction to Chinese culture and Chinese classes. You will also be required to teach at local English camps. ELAs should expect to teach whole classes, under supervision from a local teacher.

A list of class topics will be given prior to departure to China so that you can prepare lesson plans in advance. This will free up more time to settle in and get to know fellow ELAs.

You will leave **Changsha** on **August 29** and travel to your host school.

### 6.2. TRAVEL ONWARDS FROM THE INDUCTION COURSES

Train tickets from Changsha to your host school could cost up to 1000 RMB (approximately £100) although in most cases they should cost considerably less. CEAIE will collect money from you once you arrive and book the tickets on your behalf. Your school will then reimburse the cost of your travel upon arrival. Please retain your ticket for reimbursement.

### 6.3. REGISTERING WITH THE PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

Foreign nationals in China must register their temporary residence with the Public Security Bureau (PSB) within 24 hours of arriving in the country. This is mandatory for any length of stay. If you are staying in a hotel, the hotel should be able to register you with the PSB. If you are residing somewhere other than a hotel (for example with family or friends), you must register yourself at the nearest police station within 24 hours of your arrival in China and obtain a 'Registration Form of Temporary Residence for Visitors'.

All foreigners living in China must register with the Public Security Bureau (PSB) on arrival via their local police station. Resident permit holders should also be aware that you are required to re-register each time you return from a trip abroad.

If you need to change or extend your visa, renew your residence permit or if you have had a baby, you will need to contact the local Public Security Bureau office for the area where you live. If you obtain a new British passport, you will also need to register the new passport with the PSB. Foreign resident issues are handled by the Entry-Exit Administration of the PSB. English speaking services are available.

## 7. SETTLING IN

***“Walk around and do things. Talk to people who talk to you and you will make friends in China quickly. Ask them for your WeChat then you can hang out with them and learn about China at the same time. You can also do language exchange with them and learn how to write Chinese, which is very useful. Also go around and explore, go to Chinese classes and take part in events.” (ELA China, 2018-2019)***

Settling in in China can be a daunting experience due to the significant cultural and linguistic barriers. It is completely normal to experience culture shock and there is no shame in struggling at times. Following the advice outlined in this chapter and building a social network as early as possible will help you to transition into life in China.

### 7.1. ACCOMMODATION

***“Make sure your school contacts send you photos of your accommodation before you go. This is so you can see you have what you need and that the place isn't run down or falling to pieces. Most of the time in China your school will have your accommodation prearranged, so it is fine to ask for more details before leaving the UK.” (ELA 2017-18)***

As part of your contract, your school must provide you with accommodation; this may be on the school grounds. Further details will be included in your contract.

The quality of accommodation for assistants is often of a higher standard than that of the other teachers - be sensitive to this. A basic standard of accommodation has been agreed with CEAIE and

you should be able to view your accommodation through their new online portal or ask for photos to be sent to you. If you feel, though, that the standard of your housing is not acceptable or not as advertised then you should discuss this with your school. If nothing is resolved then get in touch with CEAIE.

Your accommodation should be prepared in advance and will be ready when you arrive. Some schools may, but are not obliged to, meet the costs of the utility bills (gas, water, electricity) as well as rental costs, unless otherwise stated. However, ceiling limits on how much the school pays may be set regarding these costs. Please read your contract carefully and raise any questions with your school.

Some accommodation may be subject to an evening curfew. This is because your host school is responsible for all students and teachers living on campus, and the curfew may have been requested by the Public Security Bureau for safety reasons. This can be a common area of cultural conflict between language assistants and their host schools, as language assistants may feel that their freedom is restricted. You are advised to abide by school rules, and try to negotiate with your school if you can arrive back a little later on days where you do not have classes the next day. Please note that if your accommodation is on school premises, you must abide by the school's regulations.

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you first move in, to show that it is in the same condition when you leave.

Please take the necessary precautions with regards to your accommodation to avoid health and safety issues. When you leave for holidays, turn off any electrical devices to avoid fires and secure the premises, such as closing all windows and doors (locking where applicable), to avoid theft.

When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts e.g. internet or utilities. Ensure that you have checked health and safety issues in your accommodation (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc.

## 7.2. SHANGHAI ACCOMMODATION

In Shanghai, schools do not offer accommodation to assistants but they will support you in finding suitable accommodation. Salaries in Shanghai will be higher than in other provinces to ensure that assistants will afford paying for their living arrangements. The first thing to do when looking for permanent accommodation is to ask your mentor teacher if they can recommend anything. For example, they may know a local family with a room to rent, or already have somewhere in mind for you to stay. If your school cannot help, your best contacts are your predecessors at the school or in the area. Previous assistants are also often able to offer advice on how to find accommodation locally.

The first weeks of your assistantship will be busy as you will be finding your way around an unfamiliar town, dealing with bureaucracy and trying to make a good impression at school. Having accommodation lined up can make this easier.

***“I know of people who organised accommodation without seeing it before they arrived in their placement country and sometimes it did fall through - in one instance the flat didn't even exist! Before you leave the UK I'd recommend you to book a week in a hostel to give you time to view accommodation and get used to the area.” (Former ELA, 2015-16)***

For temporary lodgings while you look for something permanent, investigate the possibility of staying in a youth hostel. Remember that you will need your passport to check into hotels/hostels. **Do not** take out a contract on your accommodation **until** you know the location of your schools.

ELAs living in Shanghai may find it easier to live with other ELAs. Please ensure that all ELAs resident in any shared accommodation can travel to their schools easily. Once you get to China the following suggestions may be of interest:

- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask around the staff; do NOT advertise in local papers or public places
- buy the local newspapers early in the morning and telephone likely numbers immediately
- ring the local university halls of residence or check their flat share adverts and notices, or advertise on their notice board that you are looking for a room
- ask local friends'/acquaintances' landlords if they have any further accommodation to let
- write to or visit as soon as possible any student or youth organisation in the area that might have details of available lodgings
- accommodation agencies may be able to help but you should **be very wary** of paying large fees and deposits, and always read the small print in any leases or agreements to be signed; **look for small agencies as often their fees are lower**
- search for a room or flat on the internet

Some websites you may find useful are:

### Temporary

- [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)
- [www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com)
- [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)
- [hwww.elong.net](http://hwww.elong.net)

### Permanent

- [www.smartshanghai.com/housing](http://www.smartshanghai.com/housing)
- [www.nestpick.com/shanghai](http://www.nestpick.com/shanghai)
- [www.apartmentinshanghai.com](http://www.apartmentinshanghai.com)
- [www.intershanghai.com](http://www.intershanghai.com)

You are likely to have to sign a contract. In case you decide to change your accommodation during the year, **you are advised not to sign a contract for the duration of your contract unless there is a notice period included in the contract.** If your landlord does not ask you to sign a contract, we strongly recommend that you ask for one.



You should research the following before agreeing to anything:

- Location;
- Suitability; and
- Contractual arrangements.

When looking for accommodation please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#). When you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not live anywhere or sign any agreement you are not comfortable with and make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems should you decide to change your accommodation during the year.

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you move into your long-term accommodation and when you leave to help you get back any deposit you may have to pay, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when you first arrived.

### 7.3. SETTLING INTO SCHOOL LIFE

Starting any new job can be a daunting experience, no matter how confident a person you are. It's completely normal to be unsure of where to go, what to do or who to talk to at the beginning.

Teachers in China work very long days. It is not uncommon to see teachers sleeping at their desks between classes. This is not a behavior that you should mimic. If you have been asked to do some office hours, spend them planning lessons, correcting any homework you may have set or perhaps learning Chinese. You will not work the same long hours as other teachers and sleeping on a reduced timetable is likely to earn you a reputation for laziness.

Please remember that it is not good practice to correct the teacher in front of students.

***“Always speak to your colleagues and programme coordinator if there are any concerns - don't wait until the last minute to flag issues. (Former ELA, 2015 - 2016)”***

Meeting regularly with your mentor gives the opportunity for them to feed back about your performance and for you to raise any concerns or issues.

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the school, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to school 'open days' or parent evenings as these are also a good way of meeting people.

Language Assistants who are proactive and take the initiative often settle into school life much faster. Being a self-starter is a great way to make a strong first impression. Teachers are often very busy and will certainly appreciate your efforts to help and try to make an impact.

***“Say yes to everything, whether it's doing extra lessons, English club, swapping lessons with other teachers etc. Also make an effort to talk to other teachers, don't always rely on them to initiate conversation. Some of them aren't confident in their spoken English and so will be shy about starting a conversation.” (Former ELA, 2016-2017)***

### 7.4. RELATIONS WITH TEACHERS

Many language assistants in the past have complained about other teaching staff treating them coldly upon arrival. Aside from unintentional misinterpretation, the reasons for this can be a little complicated and are often tied up with modern China's complicated interaction with its cultural heritage.

One possible explanation is that other members of the English language department will simply be shy about talking with a native speaker. For many years the emphasis on language learning was very much on reading and writing and some teachers have not had that much exposure to native speakers. As China opens up this is becoming less and less common, but

nevertheless is still true in some instances. It is not worth trying to reform China's entire education system over personality clashes with other members of staff.

Please bear in mind that your colleagues will have a lot of work to deal with. Your mentor teacher may be responsible for both classes and administrative work related to foreign affairs at the beginning of the academic year. In most cases, they are just too busy to talk to you or help you solve problems.

These examples are exceptions rather than the norm; most teachers will be welcoming and friendly.

## 7.5. RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS

In a lot of cases, your students will be physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, usually because they have little free time. As a result, they may typically attempt to use their required attendance in your oral English class as a "time-out" or break period.

Most students perceive a real need to acquire functional English language skills, and they will be your best and most motivated students. Others will simply be fascinated by the presence of a foreign teacher in the classroom and will seek to learn as much about your culture as they possibly can. A few more may just happen to be naturally gifted at acquiring foreign languages and will genuinely enjoy learning English.

The main task of the foreign English teacher in China does not lie in the facilitation of speaking and listening skills but, rather, in establishing meaningful and enduring relationships with their students. As it turns out, this is not an easy task. To begin with, the entire educational system in China—not to mention the enormous fear of losing "face" (mianzi)—actively discourages students from speaking out, asking questions, or taking exceptions with the presented material. What you will quickly discover is that many of your students won't voluntarily answer a question if it is put to the entire class. You will need to walk around the classroom and specifically call on each student one at a time and, then, most will offer at least some response, usually in the form of one or two syllables.

To be effective as an oral English teacher in China, you will need a great deal of patience and you will have to be the kind of person who works well independently with very little need for feedback, approval, or support. You will have to find more satisfaction in being a mentor and role model, than an educator, in the traditional Western sense of that word.

Finally, remember that you are a teacher and you need to keep a clear line of professionalism between you and your students.

## 7.6. SUPPORT NETWORKS

Even if you have been to China before it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. On arrival, the thought of making friends and mixing with the locals can seem like a daunting task, but if you are prepared to put yourself out there; it is a part of the experience which previous assistants have found the most enriching.

Give yourself some time to adjust – you don't need to feel like a local within a week and in the beginning, you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with.

***“Make an effort to learn the language. Never turn down an opportunity to meet people. Go out as often as you can - even if you just go for a walk, your chances of meeting someone new are infinitely higher than if you're sitting alone in your flat. (Former ELA, 2017-2018)***

Here are some other ways to meet people within the area:

- Enrol for an evening class, join a sports club, music group, choir etc.;
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures;
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK; and
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.

Former assistants have recommended that you don't spend all your free time with other assistants, as you will not be able to integrate

into your community and life in China. On the other hand, don't feel that you must cut yourself off from them – assistants can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other's experiences.

***'If possible, don't just go into school to teach your lessons and then leave. Try to spend a little time in the office - for example, lesson planning is a good reason to stay. You could also have lunch in school which provides a chance to socialise. Participate in all school events such as trips, dinners, sports days. Take an interest and observe some of your Chinese colleagues' lessons. If you are learning Chinese, try to practice with the other teachers, they will appreciate it.'***  
***(Former ELA, 2017-2018)***

As a golden rule, try to say yes to every social opportunity presented to you that does not compromise your personal safety. Accept invitations to places and activities even if they do not sound interesting as you might meet other people there who do share your interests

however at all times, please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#).

### Start at school

The best way to start is with colleagues at school. Make sure that you always seem positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Showing that you are enthusiastic and keen to get to know staff will go a long way. Start with a simple hello or ask how their weekend went. Learning some simple conversation starters in Mandarin is always useful. Remember, though, that you will be working in a school environment therefore staff may not have a lot of free time. Don't be put off if a teacher doesn't have time to talk to you in the first instance, they may be in-between or preparing for a class. It doesn't necessarily mean that they don't want to talk to you.

Whilst it's important to get to know the colleagues you will be directly working with, it's always useful to get to know other staff too. Try introducing yourself to staff you may not directly work with, for example teachers in other departments, lunch time staff, receptionists, caretakers etc. If there are social occasions or team meetings try to make an effort to attend. It's a great way to get to know colleagues in a different environment. If you





hear about something happening which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

***“Befriend colleagues - ask them to show you around their city. Most are delighted to be asked, and often invite along friends who want to meet you too.” (Former ELA, 2016-2017)***

## Languages

Another excellent way to meet new people is to set up language exchanges with local people who want to practice their English. You could also enroll at a local language school or offer English lessons to colleagues/locals (always get permission from your school first). Former ELAs have developed social networks through private Chinese tutors, who are often English students.

***“The best thing to do would be to learn the basics of the language straight away. Always just say a friendly hello when you frequently see people in your neighbourhood and buy from local shops. You may not necessarily make many local friends in your immediate community, but you will feel more at home if you frequent the same fruit sellers or corner shop as people will get used to you. (Former ELA, 2017-18)***

## Previous Assistants

It is also a good idea to get in touch with other people in the area before you leave. One useful way to do this is to get in contact with a previous assistant in your region and ask them to give you any e-mail addresses or numbers of contacts they made.

## Social media

WeChat is the most popular social media platform in China. Former ELAs have made groups on WeChat in order to keep in touch. WeChat is linked to many other different sites and services and can be used to book holidays, buy cinema tickets or pay for purchases. WeChat is home to many groups which can be used for networking. It also has a “Find people nearby” function which you could use to meet people, although you

should always meet in a public place and prioritise your safety at all times.

## Local places

Assistants in major cities will be able to find bars or cafes where meeting people with a high level of English is significantly easier, although these places are normally more expensive than places catering to locals.

Universities frequently hold language exchanges or activity clubs where you may be able to meet people to speak with in English or practice your Chinese.

***“If you have a local University or College join its English club/corner - the students will be thrilled to have a native English speaker, and you'll meet people your own age.” (Former ELA, 2016-2017)***

## Chinese Language Assistants

We have put together a map detailing the locations of Chinese Language Assistants who have worked in the United Kingdom during the 2018/19 academic year and have recently returned to China. These assistants have kindly permitted us to share their details and are happy for you to contact them. These assistants have experienced the very processes you are going through but in reverse, so would be great local contacts or people to meet up with during your travels! The map can be accessed [online here](#).



## 8. MONEY MATTERS

The official currency of China is the Renminbi, which means “people’s currency”. The basic units are commonly referred to as Yuan, and colloquially you might use the term kuai.

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.

Counterfeit bank notes (especially RMB100) are increasingly common, including when taking money out of an ATM. Banks will not replace them. It is quite normal to check notes carefully before accepting them from others.

Cashless payments via smartphone applications such as WeChat Pay are increasingly commonplace.

### 8.1. MONTHLY ALLOWANCE

You can expect to earn 5,000 RMB - 9,000 RMB a month and work 16-25 hours a week (salary is dependent on your experience, region and working hours). Currently, the exchange rate is 1 GBP = 8.75 RMB.

Assistants in Shanghai will receive a higher salary (around 13,000 RMB) including a living allowance to cover the costs of accommodation, which will not be provided.

**The first payment of your allowance may not arrive until the end of September/ start of October**, so you should ensure that you take money or a credit card to cover initial costs. Food in China is substantially cheaper than in the UK, although European food is expensive. Even so, we recommend that you budget for at least 2 months without pay so that you do not run out of money before you get paid.

ELAs in Shanghai will have to bring extra funds to cover the cost of a deposit and first month’s rent.

It is also useful to have access to your UK bank account throughout the year in case there are delays to the allowance payment. **Make sure you inform your bank before leaving the UK that you may use it in China so that they do not block your card.** Be aware that you are often charged for using your British debit card to withdraw money abroad. You may wish to check what your bank charges are. Please check this information is correct with your local branch should you wish to pursue this option.

Please note that Mastercard and Visa are not as widely accepted in China as in Europe and America. The most common credit card type is Unionpay. WePay (We Chat’s pay format) and Apple Pay are also common methods of payment.

Your monthly payments should cover the cost of your rent and general living costs. If you wish to go travelling at weekends and holidays you may need to take extra money with you or have access to some savings. Your school may be able to give you an advance in an emergency.

### 8.2. ADDITIONAL INCOME

If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised **not** to advertise in local papers or public places. (Please read the relevant sections of our [Personal Safety leaflet](#)). In general pupils are easily found through private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth.

You should **not** deliver private classes to students at your school. You should also be cautious when discussing additional work with your host school and be sure not to be in competition with existing English or language teachers for tutoring work.

The going rate for private one-to-one tuition seems to be **¥150-250** per hour depending on how much preparation for the lesson you plan to do and how much your pupils can afford, as well

as location. Please ensure that any additional work does not conflict with your school timetable. Your school duties should always take priority over private classes.

### 8.3. BANK ACCOUNTS

It is advisable to open a bank account once you arrive in China, and your mentor teacher will help you do this. You should wait until you arrive in your town of appointment before looking into this. This will allow you to research all the local options, seek recommendations and receive help from your school.

We recommend opening an account with a national bank rather than local as they will be of greater use if you plan to travel. The biggest are:

- Bank of China
- Industrial and Commercial Bank of China
- Agricultural Bank of China
- China Construction Bank

### 8.4. LOST OR STOLEN CREDIT CARDS

If a credit card is lost or stolen, immediately call your bank to cancel it. If stolen, the theft should be reported to the police.

### 8.5. SPOUSES / PARTNERS/DEPENDANTS

Assistants should note that the allowance is intended to provide for one person only. However, if an assistant's spouse remains in the UK and is unemployed, he/she may be barred from income support or be required to refund whatever was received as such since the start of the assistantship. Enquiries should be made well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during a period of appointment.



Photo by Blake Wisz on Unsplash



## 9. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

### 9.1. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the school. If you cannot work because of illness you should inform your school(s) immediately by telephone. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the school as soon as it is issued.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to your school and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the school(s) who is within his/her right to refuse it. You should ensure any permission of absence is provided in writing as evidence.

If it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school, CEAIE and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full.

#### Pay deductions

Please read this section carefully. Every year the British Council receives calls from assistants who are unaware of their school policies regarding absence and face pay deductions.

If you are absent from school without prior written authorization (or without providing a doctors evidence for your illness) a financial penalty could be deducted from your monthly allowance. Deductions are usually calculated via a daily rate from the first day of your absence until your return to school.

This daily calculation includes weekends. For example, if you are absent on a Thursday and do not return to work until the Monday, your monthly allowance could be deducted for 4 days' (Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday). This rule spans holidays too. For example if you miss

school on your last working day before the Spring Festival holiday and do not provide evidence for your illness, your pay could be deducted by a daily rate until you return to school. This could result in up to a month of missed pay.

***“Lots of people put off registering at the doctor until they actually needed one or didn't at all. I would strongly suggest registering as soon as you can and it will make things a lot easier for you when you are ill! Also, any day off work needs a note from the doctor so even if you just have a cold you will need a trip there!” (Former ELA 2015-2016)***

If you are sick, you should book a doctor's appointment immediately - even if you consider your illness to be minor. At the appointment you should explain that you work in a school and require evidence for your absence.

A doctor's letter in some regions is not considered as justification unless the letter explicitly states that the individual **was 'unfit to work'** and accounts for all the days of the absence. If you are required to take sick leave, please ask the doctor to clearly declare 'not fit for work' on the letter if appropriate.

In most circumstances the British Council is unable to intervene in matters of pay deductions due to unauthorised absence. Assistants must make themselves aware of, and comply with, their own school policy. Please be aware that your school may have a different policy to that of other assistants working in the same region.

## 9.2. SOLVING PROBLEMS & LINES OF REFERRAL

***“Definitely speak up if there's a problem. Consult your mentor teacher, principal, or even a staff member you get on well with if any issues arise, and don't feel pressured to suffer in silence if there's something you aren't happy with.” (Former ELA, 2015-16)***

Conditions in schools in China differ from those in this country. Any difficulties should be discussed with your mentor teacher and/or the teacher of the class concerned in the first instance. If the problem cannot be solved, then talk to the head teacher or get in touch with your contact with the local education authority.

Satisfactory solutions can usually be found through such consultations but if the problem remains unresolved, you may contact CEAIE. The British Council in the UK will be happy to offer advice but should only be contacted when all other attempts to solve the issue have been made. Problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally and British Council will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above. **Please see the provided ‘Who to Contact’ document for your line of referral.**

Do tell people if you have problems or if you need information as otherwise they will assume everything is ok. **The authorities will not appreciate it if you suffer in silence and complain six months later.** A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in China was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low, especially during the first few weeks until they settle in.



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## 10. IN COUNTRY ADVICE

### 10.1. PERSONAL SAFETY

It is very important to stick to the same health and safety rules as you would at home and always heed advice given by local people. Please refer to the Personal Safety Leaflet which provides an emergency telephone number as well as essential guidelines on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

We strongly advise that you spend some time looking at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided. We also recommend that assistants read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation which can be found here: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

Ensure that you regularly check the China travel advice page: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>

Please also refer to the FCO website for information regarding sexual attacks: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad)

### 10.2. TRAVELLING AROUND CHINA

***“Throw yourself in, travel and visit as many places as you can, there's not likely to be many other times in your life when you have so much free time in a foreign country.” (Former ELA, 2012-2013)***

Working as a language assistant gives you a great opportunity to travel around China and you should make the most of your free time. Try to experience as much of the surrounding area as possible and take advantage of China's excellent transport network.

Two different types of train connect China's cities: slow, cheap **D** trains and High Speed **G** trains. The slower trains are incredibly cheap by British standards and even the fast trains are substantially cheaper. A second class ticket on a Beijing – Shanghai **G** train costs 550 yuan and takes around 5-6 hours. A second class ticket on a **D** train costs 247 yuan and takes 12 hours.

As transport in China can be crowded, booking in advance for all forms of transport is highly recommended, especially during Spring Festival.

Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, witnesses the largest human migration on the planet each year, with roughly 400 million people travelling from major cities to their home town. Public transport during this period is exceptionally busy and tickets for travel typically go on sale several months beforehand. If you wish to travel within China during this period you must plan an itinerary and book your travel as early as possible. Please note that many landmarks will be shut during the main days of Spring Festival. Many ELAs prefer to travel to other Asian destinations during this period to escape the crowds.

English levels in China are typically lower than in Europe. In theory, there will be at least one member of staff who can speak English at train stations, although this often leads to foreigners waiting in a much longer queue to be served. There is no guarantee that English will be spoken at hotels or restaurants. Learning a small amount of Mandarin Chinese will ease your travel around the country significantly.

In rural destinations it can be incredibly difficult to find an ATM. It is worth withdrawing enough funds prior to travelling to any more rural location.

The most widely used travel site in China is [www.ctrip.com](http://www.ctrip.com) which can be used for booking

trains or flights. There is also an app which can be downloaded.

Former ELAs recommend downloading Didi (like Uber) for travelling within cities: [www.didiglobal.com](http://www.didiglobal.com)

### 10.3. INTERNET

Your accommodation in China should have an internet connection. Connection speeds can vary substantially depending on your location.

Several popular websites are blocked in China. Google is blocked, although Bing can be used as a replacement. YouTube is unavailable, a Chinese equivalent called Youku offers similar content, although most of the content is in Chinese. Facebook and Twitter are also blocked. Instead, WeChat (微信, Wēixìn) is the most popular social media platform. If you have trouble accessing a site you can usually find an alternative that will fit your purposes.

**Please note that Gmail is inaccessible in China. If your usual email address is Gmail, we strongly encourage you to set up an alternative email address for any essential correspondence during your placement.**

### 10.4. PHONING HOME & MOBILES

The country code for China is **+86**. Most assistants find that investing in a mobile phone is a huge asset to their social life. Your school should assist you in setting up a mobile phone number for the duration of your contract. If you intend to use your current mobile phone in China, please ensure that it is unlocked.

Very cheap calls to the UK via a Skype account (see [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) can be made. Alternatively, encourage family and friends to download WeChat for video calls. Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive.

**Do not sign any contracts for phones or internet if you are not going to be in China for the entire length of the contract** (most phone contracts are for a minimum of 12-18 months). Please also remember to cancel any contract before leaving

the country. Do not sign any contract without fully understanding the terms and conditions.

### 10.5. LOST OR STOLEN MOBILE/CELLULAR PHONES

If a mobile phone is lost or stolen, call the service provider and give them the IMEI number (this is a cellular/mobile phone's unique identification number) so that the service can be suspended. Report the theft or loss at the local Public Security Bureau, providing the IMEI and telephone numbers.

### 10.6. DRUGS

There are extremely severe penalties for drugs offences in China, including the death penalty. The Chinese authorities undertake random drug testing on foreign nationals including on entry to the country. If you test positive, the Chinese authorities can prosecute you regardless of where or when you consumed drugs. Police raids on homes also occur; if drugs are found in your property, penalties can be extremely severe.

There have been increasing incidences of police raids on nightclubs and bars. When such raids take place, patrons will be subject to on the spot drug testing and immigration checks. This may involve being kept at the location, or a secondary location, for several hours whilst hair and urine samples are taken and passport and visa checks conducted. Testing positive to drugs, or being found in breach of your visa conditions, can lead to heavy fines, detention and deportation.

### 10.7. POLITICAL SITUATION

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

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.

## 10.8. ROAD TRAVEL

You need a Chinese driving license to drive in China. You must also have valid insurance. There are harsh penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol, even at very low levels.

Accidents are common in China due to the poor quality of roads, high volumes of traffic and generally low driving standards, so you should drive with caution. If you're involved in a serious traffic accident, call the police. Don't move your vehicle until they arrive but make sure you and your passengers are in a safe place. 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.

## 10.9. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

It is advised to take a fire alarm with you from the United Kingdom. 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 aren't blocked.

## 10.10. CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

It is advised to take a carbon monoxide alarm a fire alarm with you from the United Kingdom. Make sure your accommodation has a working carbon monoxide alarm. There have been incidences of carbon monoxide poisoning and death due to incorrectly installed gas equipment. The 'Be Alarmed' campaign gives practical advice on how to stay safe, and lists the symptoms to look out for.

## 10.11. SOCIAL MEDIA

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by

people you intend to see it. If you invite other teachers to be 'friends', remember to remain professional in what you say on your wall and be careful what you say about your employer.

You should not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be 'friends' or accept similar invitations from them. This is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behavior. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school. It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and to protect you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

## 10.12. SCAMS

Beware of scams in popular tourist areas. A common example is the 'tea tasting' scam or 'massage' scam. You may be invited to visit a bar, to participate in tea tasting or for a massage, but then face demands for an exorbitant fee. This can be followed by threats or actual violence, and credit card fraud.

Check QR code stickers on rental bicycles carefully before using them. There have been cases of the legitimate barcode being replaced with a false code, which redirects money to a different account.

## 10.13. POLLUTION

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 [aqicn.info](http://aqicn.info) website.

## 10.14. CRIME

Personal attacks, including sexual assaults, are rare but they do occur, including through drinks being spiked. You should take reasonable precautions - don't leave drinks unattended and avoid accepting drinks from strangers. Women, travelling alone or with female friends, could be



at greater risk - see the FCO [advice for women travelling abroad](#).

Serious crime against foreigners is relatively rare, but incidents do occur and less serious crime is not unusual. You should take care of your belongings at major tourist sites and other busy places, particularly where foreigners gather. If your passport is lost or stolen, you will need to go to the nearest police station or Public Security Bureau and get a report of the incident.

Avoid travelling in unmarked or unmetered taxis, as there have been incidents of sexual assault and robbery against foreigners. In marked taxis, make sure someone knows where you are and try to take a note of the taxi's number.

Disputes over taxi fares can occur. Insist on paying the metered fare and ask for a receipt; this has the taxi number on it.

Don't hike alone in isolated areas, including on 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.

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

### 10.15. CARRYING YOUR PASSPORT

Always carry your passport or scan of a passport and ID with you. 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're in China, you must register your new passport with the authorities promptly or face a fine.

### 10.16. COMMERCIAL DISPUTES

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're 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. For more detailed advice on business risks and commercial disputes, see the FCO [guide on commercial disputes in China](#).

Incidents of British nationals being detained against their will to extort money or intimidate them have occurred. 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.



Wuzhen Water Town, Zhejiang. Photo by Vicky Tao on Unsplash



## 11. TEACHING TIPS AND RESOURCES

***“Try to be positive as much as possible, never say no! It's a great experience so if you work hard, the school will appreciate it and you'll definitely be rewarded” (Former ELA, 2015-16)***

### 11.1. OBSERVATION PERIOD

When you first arrive at your school(s) you should ask to observe some classes. Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the school environment, to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of your pupils and gauge their level of English.

Try to note the following:

- How the teacher starts and ends the lesson;
- How the teacher speaks to pupils;
- How the teacher involves all pupils, including shy ones, in the class activity;
- What the teacher's attitude is to pupil errors and error correction; and
- How the teacher controls disruptive behavior, lateness and lack of effort.

### 11.2. TEACHING MATERIALS

One way of making language learning real for your pupils is bringing authentic materials from the UK into the classroom. Take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources while you are still at home.

Past assistants have found that the following materials worked well: Photos of family and friends and your home town, lots of postcards, examples of UK coins and notes, train tickets and timetables, stamps, posters and tea towels to decorate walls, Christmas cards and crackers, posters and games, UK TV programmes and listings, magazines and local newspapers, CDs, photos of school uniforms, a school timetable and

school report, flashcards, word searches, maps, tourist brochures, UK food (marmite, jelly, chocolate, custard, mince pies, gravy granules, etc), adverts, menus, cartoons, comic books, DVDs (e.g. Ready Steady Cook for catering students), simple recipes e.g. scones, recordings of the weather forecast, London tube map, tapes of friends' accents and conversations, bingo, Taboo etc.

The more materials you can find the better. Think about what worked well for you as a language student and about which items you find interesting when you are in a foreign country. You can also ask your host school(s) whether there is something specific they would like you to bring and to find out about topics you are likely to be asked to cover during your assistantship.

### 11.3. TEACHINGENGLISH WEBSITE

TeachingEnglish.org is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC: [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk). On the site you will have access to:

- Teaching tips
- Essential UK: Seasonal lesson plans based around UK topics
- Primary tips: Help getting started with primary-level students
- Classroom games

***“I think the TeachingEnglish webpage is an invaluable resource, I often use it when preparing lessons, either for a whole lesson plan or just inspiration. I find the content to be really well designed and thought out. The glossary of teaching terms also available on the site is very useful too.” (Former ELA, 2016-2017)***

## 11.4. SCHOOL LINKING

Please note that many schools are anxious to establish links with UK counterparts in order to share information and arrange pupil exchanges. Assistants are encouraged to help in whatever way possible in establishing such links and there is information and guidance on the British Council website: [www.schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/content/uk-home-page](http://www.schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/content/uk-home-page)

## 11.5. USEFUL TEACHING WEBSITES

[www.cartoonstock.com](http://www.cartoonstock.com)  
[www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk)  
[www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com)  
[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)  
[www.slideshare.net/](http://www.slideshare.net/)  
[www.macmillanenglish.com/](http://www.macmillanenglish.com/)  
[www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)  
[www.eslpartyland.com](http://www.eslpartyland.com)  
[www.eslgold.com](http://www.eslgold.com)  
[www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com)  
[www.eslflow.com](http://www.eslflow.com)  
[www.eslflashcards.com](http://www.eslflashcards.com) [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com)  
[www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)  
[www.bogglesworldesl.com](http://www.bogglesworldesl.com)  
[www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)  
[www.projectbritain.com](http://www.projectbritain.com)  
[www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc)  
[www.developingteachers.com](http://www.developingteachers.com)  
[www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com)  
[www.busyteacher.org](http://www.busyteacher.org)  
[www.letssingit.com](http://www.letssingit.com)  
[www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)  
[www.eslprintables.com/](http://www.eslprintables.com/)  
[www.cambridgeesol.org/teach](http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach)  
[www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)  
<https://en.islcollective.com/>  
[www.twinkl.co.uk/](http://www.twinkl.co.uk/) (requires subscription)

## 11.6. BRITISH COUNCIL TEACHING RESOURCES

The British Council produces and co-produces a range of resources specifically for Language Assistants. Making use of these will help you greatly to deliver interesting and useful classroom activities and will support you in solving problems in the classroom. The British Council is also closely involved with the teaching of English abroad. Local branches develop useful resources

and organise a range of cultural activities, which may be of interest to you and your school. For information on forthcoming events, go to [www.britishcouncil.cn/en](http://www.britishcouncil.cn/en)

## 11.7. BOOK LIST

You are not obliged to purchase any materials, however some assistants have commented that some of the books below are useful for English Language Assistants; particularly those who may wish to engage in private tutoring or pursue a career in language teaching in the future. Also look out for the series of handbooks and source books for language teachers published by CUP, Longman, Macmillan and OUP.

### Dictionaries

- BBC English Dictionary (BBC/Harper Collins)
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Longman)
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
- Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (Longman)

### Grammar Reference Books

- A Practical English Grammar (A.J. Thomson & A.V. Martinet, Oxford University Press)
- Current English Grammar (S. Chalker, Phoenix)
- Basic English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Practical English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Discover English (R. Bolitho & B. Tomlinson, Macmillan Heinemann)
- English Grammar in Use (R. Murphy, Cambridge University Press)
- How English Works (Michael Swan and Catherine Walter, Oxford University Press)
- Learner English (Michael Swan & Bernard Smith (eds.) Cambridge University Press)

### Basic Methodology Books

- The Practice of English Language Teaching J. Harmer Longman
- How to Teach English J. Harmer Longman
- How to Teach Grammar S. Thornbury Longman
- One to One Peter Wilberg Language Teaching Publication

## 12. SPOTLIGHT ON CHINA

The population of China is now more than 1.4 billion, making it the most populous country in the world. With an area of 3,700,000 square miles, it is the second-largest country in the world by land area.

China's urban population has risen to around 60% of the total number of inhabitants and this percentage is rising rapidly. Cities in China are ranked on a Tier System based upon their size and importance. In 2017, a report outlining the "New Tier 1 cities" was published. [China Checkup](#) explains the situation well and has an interactive map of the different tier cities.

China is a Communist state and the majority of the population are atheist. However, over its long history China has been influenced heavily by the 3 great faiths of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

Roughly 1 billion people, around 70% of the country, speak Mandarin Chinese as their first language. The second major language is Cantonese which is spoken in Guangdong and along the south coast of China, by approximately 100 million people.

### 4.1. REGIONS

At its highest level, China is divided into 22 provinces, 4 municipalities (the original Tier 1 cities), and 2 special autonomous regions (Hong Kong and Macau).

There are also 5 autonomous regions, which are markedly different as they are home to large ethnic minorities. These are Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi and Ningxia. These regions are found on the fringes of China's borders and represent a significant cultural shift from central China.

Regions along the east and south east coast of China have the largest populations and a higher

GDP. Most of China's largest, wealthiest cities can be found in these regions.

We expect to have posts available in Beijing, Chongqing, Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hebei, Shanghai, Guizhou and Guangdong.

#### Beijing

[Beijing](#) is the capital city of China and home to 22 million people. It is the cultural and political hub of China, one of the oldest cities in China, and boasts many of China's most iconic landmarks such as the Forbidden City (otherwise known as the Palace Museum), the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace. Beijing is also close to the best-preserved sections of The Great Wall of China.

#### Shanghai

[Shanghai](#) is China's largest city and the second most populous city in the world with 24 million inhabitants. In contrast to Beijing, Shanghai is an incredibly modern city: until the 19th century Shanghai was a reasonably small, undeveloped city. However, as a result of foreign trading and the influence of colonial powers Shanghai was transformed into a prosperous port and now it is the biggest container port in the world.

Shanghai's Pudong district is perhaps the face of modern China, where huge, spectacularly-lit skyscrapers glitter side by side across the water and China's Disneyland serves as a reminder of the powerful economic ties with the West. Visitors to Shanghai can expect vibrant nightlife, trendy people and an interesting mix of modern architecture.

#### Chongqing

While [Chongqing](#) city proper is modest compared to Shanghai and Beijing at just 9 million inhabitants, the municipality of Chongqing (an area the size of Austria) is home to 30 million people, making it the most populous municipality in China. Chongqing is famous for its spicy

Sichuanese cuisine, especially hot pot, and the Three Gorges dam, which is the largest in the world. The city is mountainous and experiences very high temperatures during the summer and mild winters.

Chongqing hosts the Chinese headquarters of many foreign businesses and has a significant foreigner population. It is, though, substantially cheaper than Beijing or Shanghai.

## Guangdong

**Guangdong**, in the south-east of China, is one of the most populous regions in the country. The local language is Cantonese. The region is almost tropical and experiences hot, humid summers and mild, dry winters.

The largest city in the region is **Guangzhou**, which combines with Foshan, Dongguan, Zhongshan and Shenzhen to form one of the largest, most populous urban agglomerations on the planet. Hong Kong and Macau lie off the coast of Guangdong, although for administrative purposes they are considered separate entities.

The region is well-known for its sweet cuisine, especially dim sum- small portions of food served in wicker baskets. Cantonese food is the most common type of Chinese food found in the UK due to immigration from Guangdong.

## Jiangsu

**Jiangsu** is located at the centre of China's east coast and is arguably the wealthiest, most developed region in all of China. The largest cities of are Nanjing, Suzhou and Wuxi are well-connected to Shanghai.

**Nanjing** has served as China's capital on numerous occasions and has an excellent variety of historical landmarks. **Suzhou** is famous for its Chinese gardens and canals and was declared "the most beautiful city in China" by Marco Polo. Wuxi is less historic but contains a wealth of large shopping malls and foreign investors.

There are many other sizable cities in Jiangsu, all of which are well connected by public transport.

## Zhejiang

Located to the south of Jiangsu, Zhejiang province is most famous for its capital, Hangzhou, which sits on West Lake. The region experiences 4 seasons, with spring and autumn generally being the most pleasant.

Hangzhou is one of China's most picturesque cities with West Lake at its heart. It has a population of around 9 million, and is well connected to nearby Shanghai and the south of China. It is one of the key technology hubs of China and in 2022 will be the third Chinese city to host the Asian Games.

Aside from Hangzhou, the region is known for fishing and tea production. It also has over 3000 islands off its coast.

## Hunan

**Hunan** is located in south central China. It is the birthplace of Mao Zedong, the first Communist ruler of China and is particularly famous for its scenery.

The most famous tourist draw in Hunan is **Zhangjiajie National Park** which inspired the world of Pandora in the hit film Avatar. Around 80% of Hunan is mountainous. **Changsha** is the most populous city and capital, and is filled with modern buildings as most of the old town was destroyed by a massive fire in 1938.

Compared with other regions, the expat community in Hunan is relatively small, so it is an excellent choice for those who want to be immersed in the Chinese language.

## Hebei

**Hebei** is in the north of China. Beijing and Tianjin are both within Hebei's borders, although operate as separate administrative divisions. As such, the region is extremely well-connected with the rest of the country.

The region's capital is **Shijiazhuang**, which is home to around 10 million inhabitants and 166km from Beijing. The city has massively expanded during Communist rule and industrialised heavily.



While there are large expat populations in Beijing and Tianjin this hasn't spread out to Hebei proper, so it is a good location for those looking to socialise in Chinese.

## Guizhou

**Guizhou** is located in the south west of China and has a temperate climate with very few extremes of temperature. The region is quite mountainous and undeveloped compared with China's coast.

The provincial capital is **Guiyang**, a city of 4 million people. It is well-connected by high-speed rail to Chongqing (2 hours), Chengdu (4 hours) and Guangzhou (4.5 hours).

Guizhou is better known for its natural beauty rather than its cities: it is home to Asia's longest cave and the largest waterfall in China.

There are very few expats in Guizhou as it is a remote region, although it is well-connected with Chongqing and Sichuan. It is home to several of the largest ethnic minority groups in China.

## 12.1. NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

China has many official public holidays every year, some observed nationwide, some local.

It is standard practice in Chinese schools to make up holidays lost as a result of weekends. For example, if a Thursday was a national holiday then the Friday may be given also. In exchange, the following weekend students may be expected to attend school on a Saturday. In all cases you should check public holidays with your school.

The following holidays are usually observed in most regions (dates shown are for the 2019-2020 school year):

- 13 September: Mid-Autumn Festival
- 1-7 October: National Week (sometimes referred to as Golden Week)
- 1 January: New Year's Day
- 24 January- 1<sup>st</sup> February: Chinese New Year/ Spring Festival (Note: while the official public holiday is a period of 1 week Language Assistants will receive significantly more time as holiday, usually between 3-5 weeks)

- 4-6 April QingMing Tombsweeping Festival
- 1 May: May day
- 25 June: Dragon Boat festival

Local festivals or holidays may also be held depending on your region. You should ask your mentor teacher for a list of holidays when you start at school but be advised that in China exact dates can be somewhat difficult to obtain.

## 12.2. WEATHER

China is subject to a variety of weather conditions, from heavy rainfall and high temperatures in central and southern regions to tropical cyclones (typhoons) affecting eastern and southern coastal region. Earthquakes occur, particularly in western and south-western regions. See the FCO **Natural disasters** webpage for more information.

## 12.3. NATURAL DISASTERS

China is subject to various natural disasters, including earthquakes, flooding and typhoons.

China is located in an active seismic zone and can experience major earthquakes. To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, see the US Federal Emergency Management Agency website [www.ready.gov/earthquakes](http://www.ready.gov/earthquakes)

The latest tsunami warnings can be found on the **Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre website**.

Flooding and storms are common during the wet season (May to November). You should monitor local weather reports and follow the advice and instructions of local authorities, including any evacuation orders.

The typhoon season in China normally runs from May to November, affecting southern and eastern coastal regions in particular. Air travel and other forms of transport can be affected. You should monitor the progress of approaching storms on the **Japan Meteorological Agency** and the **China Meteorological Administration** websites [www.cma.gov.cn/en2014/](http://www.cma.gov.cn/en2014/)

See the FCO's [Tropical Cyclones](#) page for further advice about what to do if you are caught up in a typhoon.

## 12.4. LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Certain behaviors may be deemed sensitive and attract greater scrutiny from the authorities, including photography near sensitive sites, engaging with political groups or charities, and making statements deemed to be politically sensitive

Chinese laws and procedures relating to the arrest and detention of suspects of crime are different from in the UK. If you're suspected of a crime, the Chinese authorities have the power to prevent you from leaving China (by withholding your passport or applying a travel ban) or to detain you for up to 37 days without charge. Travel bans may also be imposed on individuals involved in commercial or private disputes. If you're detained on grounds of national security, which is interpreted more broadly than in the UK, you may be detained for up to 6 months before formal arrest and may be denied legal representation before charges are brought.

### Dual Nationality

China doesn't recognise dual nationality. If you enter China on a Chinese passport or identity card, the British Embassy may not be able to offer you help. If you were born in China to a Chinese national parent you will be considered by the Chinese authorities to have Chinese nationality, and may be treated as a Chinese citizen, even if you used a British passport to enter China. If you have formally renounced Chinese citizenship, you should carry clear evidence that you have done so.

### Internet

The Chinese authorities maintain controls on internet access. Some services, including Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are permanently blocked. Other websites may be blocked from time to time.

China's cyber security laws are changing and online products and services (eg VPNs) are required to be licensed by the Chinese government. More information is available on

the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology website (in Mandarin only). Make sure you stay informed and follow Chinese law.

### Religion

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

### Gambling

Gambling is illegal in mainland China

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Homosexuality is not illegal in China and, in general, homosexuals are not subject to harassment. Homosexuality in China was decriminalised in 1997. In 2001 it was removed from the official list of mental disorders. However, there are no specific laws in place to protect the rights of LGBT people.

There remain conservative elements in Chinese society for whom homosexuality is "taboo", but it is becoming more and more accepted, particularly by young people in big cities. Although homosexuality is not prohibited by law, public attitudes are less tolerant than in the UK and public displays of affection may attract negative attention.

There's no provision under Chinese legislation guaranteeing freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. You can find information on LGBT life in China on the British Embassy website.

## 12.5. FACE

Much is written about "face" being an essential component of the Chinese national psyche. When the Chinese talk about face (mianzi), they mean little more than having status in the eyes of others and personal dignity. Gaining and maintaining such status and dignity affects many aspects of social and business life.

Causing someone to lose face can ruin business prospects and even invite recrimination. Insulting an individual or criticising them in front of others, especially where unjustified, is very

damaging. Foreigners can unintentionally offend Chinese by making fun of them in a good-natured way, or by treating someone of status with too much familiarity, or by siding with a subordinate against his or her superior.

## 12.6. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING - GUANXI

Relationship building, or guanxi (rapport), can oil otherwise slow-moving bureaucratic wheels. It is difficult to overestimate its importance in China. Guanxi implies favours given and returned, and often, though not always is dependent on personal friendships (they can be exchanged between people who dislike each other but who each have something to offer). As with other relationships, “guanxi” is built up over time, exchanged favours gradually increasing in scale. Foreigners can unintentionally sever “guanxi” by turning down a request without careful explanation or by not realising the extent of effort and inconvenience caused by a favour done for them.

## 12.7. HIERARCHY

Chinese organisations maintain a strong sense of hierarchy. Rank is prized because it exacts obligations from others and, in a society which is more group-orientated than in Europe, rank in itself is respected. But high-ranking people are not always the most powerful in the organisation. While protocol requires that the senior person is seen to be calling the shots, the key decision maker, the person you need to convince, may be several grades junior and difficult at first to identify.

The hierarchical nature of organisations can cause decision-making to be a slow, collective process. Foreigners often complain that there seems to be a lack of willingness to take responsibility. Here, patience- and awareness of the internal niceties which have to be observed- is a virtue. The difficulty for outsiders is to judge when they are being deliberately stalled and when the machinery is moving forward, albeit at a snail's pace.

## 12.8. MEETINGS AND SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

Etiquette is largely a manner of being respectful and fitting in with your Chinese hosts. You will not be expected to know Chinese customs in detail and breaches of the finer points by foreigners are easily overlooked. However it is worth making note of the following points:

Courses are usually served at the same time rather than in set courses, and usually everyone helps themselves from the numerous dishes on the table. There are very few rules about dining, compared to the West, and most people treat it as a more social and relaxed situation. Always let others fill your drinks and try to keep others topped up. Helping yourself is a sign that your host or companions are not looking after you properly.

Frequent toasts to good health, Sino-British friendships etc. are standard. Locally-produced wines or bai-jiu (spirit, sometimes over 50% alcohol and with a very strong flavour) are not to every foreigner's taste and you won't be required to drink. Any participation in local practices and the tasting of local specialities makes a good impression. Alcohol consumption at dinner can get extravagant, but if you don't want to drink any more leave your glass full and politely indicate that you can't drink any more. If you do empty your glass out of politeness it is probable that someone will fill it out of politeness. If you host a meal, plenty of soft drinks should be available.

Stick to safe conversation topics. These include family, your hometown, etc. It will also be greatly appreciated if you can show you have a little knowledge about China, as the Chinese are usually well versed in their country's history, poetry and geography. Be aware of certain sensitive subjects, avoid talking politics and do not criticise China. Avoid ridiculing your own organisation or British standards, even in a light-hearted manner. This is regarded as disloyal in China and will reflect badly on you. Avoid jokes of a sexual connotation.

## 12.9. EMERGENCY SERVICES IN CHINA

- Police/ General Emergency call: 110
- Ambulance: 120
- Fire services: 119

To report a crime, including stolen property and lost or stolen passports, visit the nearest Public Security Bureau (公安局, gōng'ānjú). It is unlikely that there will be an English speaker on staff so you should bring a Chinese national to help translate.

If you're in China and you need urgent help (for example, you've been attacked, arrested or someone has died), call the British Embassy in Beijing: +86 (0) 10 8529 6600

## 12.10. BRITISH EMBASSY AND CONSULATE

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in China please refer to: [www.gov.uk/world/organisations?parent=&keywords=china](http://www.gov.uk/world/organisations?parent=&keywords=china)

Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Beijing below in case of emergency or loss of your passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates or Embassies in China.

### British Embassy

- 11 Guang Hua Lu, Jian Guo Men Wai, 100600 Beijing, China
- Telephone (General): +86 (0) 10 5192 4000
- Telephone (Consular assistance for British nationals): +86 (0) 10 8529 6600

Opening hours (local time): Monday to Friday: 8:30am to 12pm, 1:30pm to 5pm. If you call outside of these hours you will be given instructions on how to proceed with your call depending on your circumstances. Please visit [www.gov.uk/world/china](http://www.gov.uk/world/china) for more information.

Other Consular services are provided in [Hong Kong](#), [Shanghai](#) and [Guangzhou](#).

## 12.11. THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN CHINA

Please note: The British Council in China is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistant programme - this is the role of CEAIE. [British Council China](#) operates four offices in China:

### BEIJING OFFICE:

Address: Cultural and Education Section, British Embassy 4/F Landmark Building Tower 1, 8 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Beijing 100004 China  
Telephone: +86 (0)10 6590 6903  
Fax: +86 (0)10 6590 0977

### SHANGHAI OFFICE:

Address: Cultural and Education Section, British Consulate-General, 17F Garden Square, 968 West Beijing Road, Shanghai 200041 China.  
Telephone: +86 (21)8017 3200  
Fax: +86 (0)21 6192 2121

### GUANGZHOU OFFICE:

Address: Cultural and Education Section, British Consulate-General, 7th Floor, Teem Tower, 208 Tianhe Road, Guangzhou 510620 China  
Telephone: +86 (0)20 8510 3000  
Fax: +86 (0)20 8510 3111

### CHONGQING OFFICE:

Address: Cultural and Education Section, British Consulate-General, Room 2805-07 28/F Metropolitan Tower, 68 Zourong Lu, Yuzhong District, Chongqing 400010 China  
Telephone: +86 (0)23 6399 7199  
Fax: +86 (0)23 6399 7200

We also have the Nanjing English Centre, where we deliver a bicultural and multilingual educational programme to thousands of students.

In addition to this, the British Council develops and participates in many different projects themed around society, science, education and the arts.

British Council China can be added on WeChat: [www.britishcouncil.cn/en/british-council-wechat](http://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/british-council-wechat)



## 13. OTHER INFORMATION

### For travel

UK Government Travel Advice for China  
[www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china)

For up-to-date information on a variety of travel-related issues including, but not limited to: vaccinations, visas, natural disasters and security.

- Travel China Guide  
[www.travelchinaguide.com](http://www.travelchinaguide.com)

Information on different Chinese regions and cities, with useful resources like maps.

- Lonely Planet China  
[www.lonelyplanet.com/china](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/china)

Information on travelling in China, with suggestions of landmarks to visit, hotels to stay in and other tips.

- Travel Tips for China  
[www.thatadventurer.co.uk/tips-travelling-china/](http://www.thatadventurer.co.uk/tips-travelling-china/)

A helpful blog post outlining some of the challenges you may experience while travelling in China.

### For language learning

- BBC- Learn Chinese  
[www.bbc.co.uk/languages/chinese](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/chinese)

Offers a wealth of resources for learning Chinese, including short guides, videos and the BBC World News service in Chinese.

- Memrise  
[www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com)

A sophisticated platform for language learning, with a large online community. App also available.

- Duolingo  
[www.duolingo.com/course/zh/en/Learn-Chinese](http://www.duolingo.com/course/zh/en/Learn-Chinese)

A simplistic platform for language learning which is very easy to access. Bite-size lessons allow the user to practice for anywhere from 5 minutes a day. App also available.

- Anki  
[www.apps.ankiweb.net](http://www.apps.ankiweb.net)

An online platform for learning, focusing on memory-recall. Packs for specific levels of Chinese available.

- CUCAS  
[www.cucas.edu.cn](http://www.cucas.edu.cn)

The Chinese equivalent of UCAS, useful for ELAs considering staying in China longer-term to learn the language.

- The Linguist  
[blog.thelinguist.com/how-to-learn-chinese](http://blog.thelinguist.com/how-to-learn-chinese)  
A blog with useful tips for language learners.

### 13.1. REFERENCES

Please note the British Council is not the employer of UK assistants abroad and should not be given as a referee in future job applications. In general the head of the school would be the most appropriate referee.

**Disclaimer:** Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in these notes. However the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors which may exist or for any subsequent changes.

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