



China



Welcome

Unlike the Japanese or Koreans, Chinese people no longer bow in greeting and will shake your hand instead. When greeting Chinese people, it is polite to address the oldest person in the group first. Don't be concerned if a Chinese person does not look you in the eye when greeting them – it is a sign of respect.

'Welcome!'
Hwān yíng gwāng lín
欢迎光临!

Chinese names traditionally begin with the surname, followed by the first name. You should use their title and surname, so if you were to meet Zhang Ziyi, you would greet her as Miss or Ms Zhang. Many Chinese take a Western name if they were born or spend a lot of time abroad. For example, you may know Liú Yùlíng better as Lucy Liu.

2008 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

After the 2008 Games take place in Beijing, there will be great interest in London as the hosts of the 2012 Games: expect large numbers of Chinese visitors.

The Language

Hello

Néen hǒw
您好

Goodbye

Dzàee jyàrn
再见!

Please

Chǐng
请

Thank you

Shyèr shyèr
谢谢

Many younger people have learned English, but do be patient in conversation. It may be difficult for them to pronounce certain words as there are some sounds in English that don't exist in Chinese.

Mandarin Chinese is spoken by 70% of the population and is the official language of China, although there are many different dialects of Chinese. Chinese languages are written using picture-style characters (logograms) instead of letters. Mandarin Chinese is the most spoken language in the world.



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The Culture

The Chinese will appreciate it if you know a little about their history, traditions and values. Three features of Chinese culture are *Confucianism*, *mianzi* and *guanxi*.

- **Confucianism** is an ancient ethical and philosophical system and the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture. It offers a way of behaving to promote harmony and the social good. Appropriate behaviour will change depending on the relationship people have with one another. For example, parents have a higher standing than their children but there are also gender, age and even birth order differences.
- **Mianzi**, or saving face, is about preserving the honour and respect of an entire group. This may include not answering a question or even laughing nervously if they are in an awkward situation. If you find yourself in such a situation, it is polite to change the subject and take the attention away from them or the problem.
- **Guanxi**, or respect for connections and relationships. You may find that a group will rely on one spokesperson, even if you are serving another member of that group.

Customer Service Advice

The Chinese value politeness and courteous greetings as a demonstration of respect. If this is their first time abroad, they may not be familiar with British products, labels or sizes and will appreciate it if you give them information about your product. Brand names and famous labels are important as well as getting a good bargain.

The Chinese are great hosts and will often entertain large groups of people, especially in restaurants. Remember that they may not be used to eating with Western cutlery and may appreciate you offering them chopsticks.

Almost one third of the world's smokers are Chinese. Two out of every three Chinese men smoke cigarettes. There are very few non-smoking rules in China, so be prepared to explain the UK's smoking ban.

Did you know?

Paper, printing, umbrellas, playing cards, the compass and the wheelbarrow were all invented in China.



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- **DO** try to say a few words in Chinese as it will be appreciated.
- **DO** help to explain a menu if it looks like someone is struggling to understand. British food may be unfamiliar to many Chinese people.
- **DO** bear in mind that Chinese people tend not to show emotion through their facial expressions. You might need to look for other clues to judge what they are feeling.
- **DO** avoid drawing attention to Chinese visitors. They tend to be modest and prefer not to stand out from the group.

The Dragon of Asia

The People's Republic of China is the fourth largest country in the world and has the world's largest population.

China has had a history that spans over 5,000 years and has experienced many different political regimes. Recently China has made huge political and economical changes and has the fastest growing economy in the world.

Key Facts

- **Population** - approx 1,325,000,000
- **Capital City** – Beijing
- **Languages** – Mandarin Chinese (70%), Cantonese, Shanghainese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur
- **Religions** – Buddhists 50%, Taoists 30%, Christians 3%, Muslims 1.5%, agnostics 14%
- **Currency** – Yuan (abbreviated RMB)
- **Exchange Rate** – RMB 14.1 = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +86
- **Time Difference** – GMT+8



Where to go next

For more information about welcoming international visitors to London, visit www.rln-london.com/welcoming

RLN London's *Service Finder* can help you find language and cultural services – including translation, detailed cultural briefing and language training. www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. RLN London has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of RLN London.

Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. They can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.