



A GUIDE TO YOUR HOMESTAY PLACEMENT



WRITTEN BY FORMER TEACHERS FOR FUTURE TEACHERS

CONTENTS



VISA, FLIGHTS AND INSURANCE	2
VISA	2
FLIGHTS	2
INSURANCE	3
PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION	4
FINANCE	4
CURRENCY	4
MOBILE PHONE	5
VPN	5
MEDICAL	5
CLOTHING	5
PACKING	6
ARRIVING IN CHINA	7
POST ARRIVAL ORIENTATION	7
GIVING A GIFT	7
SETTLING IN	8
CULTURE SHOCK	8
GENERAL HOUSE RULES	8
HOMESICKNESS	9
SAFETY	9
FOOD & DRINK	10
LEARNING MANDARIN	10
TUTORING	12
PLANNING	12
DISCIPLINE	12
REWARD SYSTEMS	13
TEACH ENGLISH IN CHINA RESOURCES	13
AFTER YOUR PLACEMENT	14
TRAVELLING	14
HELPING TEACH ENGLISH IN CHINA	14
MANDARIN LESSON	16

VISA, FLIGHTS AND INSURANCE



VISA

To be able to enter China and take part in the Homestay Programme legally, you will need to apply for a tourist visa (L). Once you have confirmed that you will stay with a host family, you will be sent an invitation letter needed to apply for the visa. The cost of an L Visa is £151 and will expire 90 days from the date of entry. Please be aware of this when planning your travels.

When you arrive in your host city, you will be taken to the police station to register either by the family or by our partners. This is nothing to worry about, it's just to let the authorities know where you are staying. You will need to take your passport to register.

FLIGHTS

Although you may be eager to get your flights booked as soon as possible, it's important you wait until you have got your visa to do so. There can sometimes be delays with the visa process, so it is better to wait until you have it, rather than risking missing the flight and wasting money. When booking your flight, think about whether you wish to fly to and from the same airport, or if your travel plans will make it easier to fly home from another city.

Once you have got your visa and booked your flight, you will need to send us your flight details so that we can arrange an airport pick-up with our partners in China. If you arrive at the airport between 8am and 8pm, you will be picked up that day. If you arrive outside of these times, we will assist you in booking a hotel and our partners will meet you the next day.

We work with a company called StudentUniverse that can help you find and book competitively priced flights. They also offer discounts with certain airlines for those under 26 and can help with changing dates and flexible returns.

Other good sites to look for flights on are SkyScanner and Expedia

INSURANCE

It is extremely important that you get insurance for your time away and it is your responsibility to do so. StudentUniverse can also help with short-term travel insurance. They offer packages which include repatriation and hospitalization (recommended). Below is a breakdown of their costs:

- 1 month: £60
- 2 months: £85
- 3 months: £110

For more information on flights and insurance with StudentUniverse, follow this link;

<https://www.studentuniverse.co.uk/travel-services/teach-english-china/affiliate/Teach-English-in-China>

NOTES

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PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION



FINANCE

How far your money will go in China depends entirely on your style of living. There are lots of articles online comparing the price of living in China compared to big Western cities such as London, showing how 20p is standard for a bottle of water, and meals can cost between £1 and £3.

It is possible to limit your spending during the placement, as accommodation and food is provided, so you'll only need to pay for any meals or snacks outside of the family home, trips at the weekends, or social activities with other participants. You will receive an allowance during your placement of 900 RMB (approx. £100), but to be on the safe side we recommend that you budget for £250-£300 per month during your placement.

If you plan to travel after your placement, we recommend allowing for approximately £20-25 per day, though this does of course depend on the type of accommodation you wish to stay in and activities you wish to do.

CURRENCY

The national currency in China is Renminbi (RMB), or Yuan and is denoted by this symbol ¥. Exchange rates vary of course, but £1 is roughly worth ¥9. Chinese currency can be bought in the UK, both on the high street and online. However, make sure you go and buy your currency in advance of leaving, as some places need to order it in, which can take up to a week.

A second easy option is to take currency out of a UK bank account using a cash point once in China. We advise you to inform your bank of your intention to do so to avoid any problems. ATMs are widespread in Chinese cities, especially in metro/bus stations and airports, and will usually offer the option to translate their language into English at the beginning of the transaction. However, you should be aware that when using your UK card, Chinese ATMs will charge around £2.50, depending on which bank you are with.

MOBILE PHONE

UK mobile phone networks are not suitable for use in China as you will be charged an extortionate amount for texts and data. Our in-country partners will help you to set up a new SIM card, normally with either China Unicom or China Telecom. As with most things in China, you will need to take your passport along to set this up.

If you wish to use the Chinese SIM in your UK phone, please ensure your phone is unlocked phone. Otherwise, phones can be bought cheaply in most cities.

We recommend downloading 'WeChat,' an app similar to 'WhatsApp', as most of the teachers in your school and people you meet will use it.

VPN

It may come as a shock to some, but internet sites such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Google (including Gmail) are blocked all over China. If you want to have access to such sites you will need to purchase a VPN connection, a programme which directs your internet server through that of another country, enabling you to access blocked websites.

It is much easier to get a VPN while in a Western country, so it's preferable to arrange this before you leave home. There are many options ranging in cost from free upwards. The most reliable one from our experience is Astrill, priced around £27 for 6 months.

It is a matter of personal choice whether or not you choose to buy a VPN, but many of our teachers do so in order to maintain familiar internet services and contact friends and family at home.

MEDICAL

We advise that you check with your GP well in advance which vaccinations you will need for your time in China and anywhere else you may visit. We can't advise you which ones you should get, however we can say that some are provided free on the NHS, so do you research!

Keep in mind that if you plan to travel after your placement, you may need additional vaccinations. We advise you to get any vaccinations or medication in advance of your trip, as they are very difficult to find in China.

CLOTHING

Depending on which city you go to, summer in China can be extremely hot and humid. Northern cities such as Beijing can reach up to 30°C and 77% humidity and Southern ones like Shenzhen 32°C and 81% humidity.

We advise checking the average temperatures for the month you are going and packing suitable clothes for the climate. Although there are no real rules surrounding what can and can't be worn in

public in China, it's best to dress respectfully and avoid wearing very short shorts/skirts, particularly around your host family's home and during tutoring times.

Most Chinese cities host excellent markets, where you can find cheap clothes that are suitable for the climate. If you're unsure which clothes to pack, you will certainly be able to find appropriate and comfortable clothing out there.

You will be given access to laundry facilities in the home.

PACKING

Below are some items we recommend taking:

- Scan and photocopy of passport, visa and National Insurance card
- Insurance details
- Passport photos
- Paracetamol, cold and flu tablets etc. (difficult to find in China)
- Spray deodorant and for girl's tampons (expensive in China)
- English gifts
- Photos from home
- Travel adapters

Every year our teachers come back and tell us they wish they'd packed lighter. Remember, most things can be bought cheaply and easily in China. You may well pick things up as you go along, and you'll need space in your case!

If you plan to travel before or after your placement, many of our teachers advise a 70 or 80 litre back pack rather than a suit case. Of course, this is down to personal preference, but most find backpacks easier to carry over long distances and getting on and off transport.

Whether you pack your laptop or not may depend on whether or not your family has a computer that you can use. Remember that if your family does have a computer you can use, it's very unlikely they will have a VPN, meaning the sites you can access will be limited. A laptop or iPad with a VPN can be useful for showing film clips or PowerPoints or helping you to plan your tutoring sessions.

ARRIVAL IN CHINA



POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION

Once you have been picked up from the airport, you will be taken directly to the offices of our in-country partners for orientation. During this time, you will set up a SIM card, get given a transport card and possibly a bank card if needed. You will also receive training on how to get along well with the family and be told what to expect.

Following the orientation, your host family will either come to the office to meet you, or you will be taken to their home.

GIVING A GIFT

It's important that you present your family with a gift when you arrive at their home. This is a common in Chinese culture and is seen as a polite gesture. As the Homestay is all about cultural exchange, we advise taking something from home that the family can enjoy. Such examples could be:

- English tea
- Shortbread/biscuits
- Western style snacks/specialty foods
- A toy for the child

Certain things should be avoided as gifts in China due to cultural connotations:

- Clocks/anything to do with time
- Anything with the number 4
- Cut flowers
- Red pens
- Any solid white objects
- Sharp items

When you speak to your host family in the run up to your placement, try to find out the kind of things they like, as this might make deciding what to give them easier.

SETTLING IN

Most problems occur due to a breakdown in communication, so it is important that you do your best to maintain a mutual understanding between you and your host. The host will aim to provide you with a caring, comfortable and healthy environment and at the same time learn from you and your culture. It may be difficult to understand and speak to your host but in a short time both your language skills will improve and you will be able to communicate with them. The more often you speak to your host the more quickly you learn.

After a few days, you will be given a key to your host family's home. Please ensure you know how to use this to avoid being locked out or not being able to lock the door when you leave!

You will also be given directions to the public transport, a transportation card and a map. Check that you can understand how to read the information and you know where you are going.

Please make sure that you carry some form of identification at all times, as well as the Chinese characters of the area you are staying in and your host's telephone number, so that if you get lost, you can show a passer-by this information and your host can be contacted.

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is something everyone is likely to experience in one way or another when moving abroad and this will likely be heightened by living with a local family. Adjusting to a foreign culture is a very personal process and our experienced host families are aware of this.

There are no hard and fast rules about how long it will take you to settle in and to feel comfortable in your surroundings. There will of course be highs and lows of your experience, so it's important that you have people to speak to on those days where the cultural differences are getting on top of you.

There are several aspects of Chinese culture that in Western cultures are commonly seen as wrong. For example, children are frequently seen urinating in the street, public spitting is widespread and queuing is not a social norm. You should also expect to be photographed by fascinated locals, with or without your permission.

These things are likely to seem bad mannered, baffling and downright frustrating at times but, it's important to remember that in China such behaviour is normal and is not done to cause offence.

It's important to remember that culture has its good and bad features and you are on the programme to experience a new culture. You should always be respectful towards your family, but equally they should be respectful towards you. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with anything in the family home, you should address this in a polite manner.

GENERAL HOUSE RULES

When living with a host family, it's important to be respectful and abide by some general house rules. Good manners will be appreciated by your hosts, so remember to:

- Knock before entering the bathroom or bedroom
- Only enter the family's bedrooms when given permission to do so
- Don't spend too long in the shower
- Keep your room tidy
- Clean up after yourself in the bathroom/kitchen
- Inform your host if you will be home late or late for dinner
- Get permission before bringing someone into the house

Ultimately, it's best to behave as you would expect someone staying in your home to.

HOMESICKNESS

As the initial stages of the culture shock wear off and you are familiar with your new city, China will most likely become a home away from home. However, this won't prevent the feeling of homesickness, which can creep up on you when you least expect it.

Again, this is a very personal thing which everyone deals with differently, however here are some tips from former teachers on how to deal with it:

- **Be proactive;** make plans, accept invitations and take all the opportunities you can. This will keep you looking forward to things and take your mind off what's happening at home.
- **Take your hobbies with you;** some of our teachers have taken things such as acoustic guitars, ukuleles and sketch books to provide something familiar to do.
- **Regular contact with home;** Skype can make it seem as though your friends and family are just around the corner
- **Establish a routine;** this will help you feel in control of your new life, keep you busy and enable you to enjoy what your city has to offer
- **Socialise with other foreigners;** they are likely to have a good understanding of how you are feeling and are the best people to vent to! Some of our teachers have attended concerts by big Western names such as Ed Sheeran. Such activities can be a great taste of home.

The goodbyes on the way out will be hard, but so too will they on the way home. You'll be surprised by how emotionally attached you'll become to your family and local area!

SAFETY

Generally, China is a very safe place in which to live and travel. However, as in most busy tourist cities around the world, foreigners can be targeted by pick-pockets and scams so it is important to take care of belongings and beware of suspicious people.

One common scam in big cities is the 'tea scam.' This will normally involve a young Chinese person approaching you, claiming they want to practice their English with you and offering to take you to a nearby tea house or 'tea ceremony'. Once the tea is finished the bill will be presented and it will be astronomically high! If you refuse to pay things can get nasty. There is a similar scam involving art galleries and the "Chinese Picasso". If such a person approaches you kindly decline their offer to go to the tea house/visit their art gallery.

When getting a taxi, always go for a marked, city licensed cab. These can be found in taxi ranks outside any train or subway station, or can be flagged down in the main street if they have a green light on the top. Avoid any individual approaching you offering you a taxi, no matter how good the price may sound. You should never have to barter for a taxi – they should run on a meter.

In recent years there have been problems with fake alcohol. This is best avoided by not drinking spirits and “free drinks” offered in big cities. It’s important to listen to your contact about where is safe to drink and where isn’t. Violence in bars isn’t all that common, but can happen. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, make your excuses and leave.

FOOD AND DRINK

You should not drink water straight from the tap in China, however if you boil it first it is perfectly safe to drink. If your family are offering you boiled water and you would prefer not to drink it, explain to them you would prefer bottled water for health reasons and offer to buy it yourself. Bottled water can be found all over and is very cheap.

When in restaurants it’s best to use the phrase “búyàobīng” (no ice), as this is often made using tap water and is unsafe to drink.

Food plays an important role in Chinese culture and your family will likely want to share with you their diverse cuisine. It’s best to go in with an open mind and be prepared to try anything, but if you really do not like or want to eat something, explain it to your family politely. The Chinese usually prepare a range of dishes and place them in the middle of the table for everyone to take from, so if there is a dish you are not particularly keen on, there should always be something else to fall back on!

There is a huge street food culture in China; pavements across the country are lined with sellers preparing all kinds of different delicacies. We advise being careful about what you eat from such stalls, especially when you first arrive, as the meat can be left to stand uncovered for hours. Just use your common sense when it comes to things like this; if it doesn’t look safe, don’t eat it.

It’s not unusual for the stomach to struggle to get used to new foods and new bacteria at first, but being wary will go some way towards preventing illness. If you feel ill at any time, let your family know as soon as possible.

The Homestay is all about cultural exchange and your family will likely want to learn about the foods you eat at home. It may be a good idea to offer to cook a western meal for your hosts. In big cities, western shops are relatively easy to find, but expensive, so you may wish to take out a sauce/powder with you from home.

LEARNING MANDARIN

Although you will not be expected to speak or understand any Mandarin when arriving in China, we do encourage you to try and learn the basics. If nothing else, this will be a great sign of respect to your host family and will make your experience more rewarding. Though host families can speak some English, the level of this can vary, so it is best to learn some of their language.

We work with an experienced Mandarin teacher who will give a short introductory lesson at the orientation day. With patience and a willingness to learn it's not as difficult as it seems!

People in shops, on public transport and at your school will be eager to help you learn their language, so use these opportunities and don't be afraid to ask for help.

The free app 'Pleco' can be a life saver when out and about, allowing you to take a photo and get the definition of a character. It can even say the word for you!

Several people suggest focusing on spoken Mandarin rather than reading and writing to speed up your learning, but you are likely to be familiar with a handful of characters you see frequently.

See our Mandarin Lesson document for a brief introduction to some basic words and phrases you are likely to need.

NOTES

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TUTORING



PLANNING

Though what is expected of you in your tutoring sessions will differ vastly from family to family, one thing you should always do is ensure you have a good plan in place. It can take some time to get used to your student and discover their true level, their preferred method of learning and their interests, but it's important to go in with a range of ideas.

Your host family should let you know when you arrive what they want their child to achieve from the sessions and provide you with materials. The way in which you teach will largely be up to you. Within the first few sessions, you should come up with a rough study plan so that you know what your aims are and how you will achieve them.

As you will usually be tutoring on a 1-to-1 basis, you can use your student's interests to create activities they will enjoy. With younger students, it's a good idea to use realia in your sessions and change activity frequently, so as to keep them interested and engaged.

You should incorporate a variety of exercises into your sessions to make it more fun for the student. Good ideas could be:

- Role plays
- Online language games
- Competitions with teacher
- Short video clips to test listening comprehension
- Written exercises/worksheets
- Drawing exercises & presentations
- Dialogues

DISCIPLINE

If your student is misbehaving in a 1-to-1 session, your lesson will most likely not go to plan. Therefore, it's good to establish a few ground rules and discipline methods to help you control their behaviour.

The methods you choose, will of course depend on the family and there may be particular methods that work well for them, or they would rather you not use. Therefore, it is a good idea to speak with the family about this before your tutoring sessions begin.

That said, there are some basic methods that will go a long way in encouraging good behaviour;

- **Positive reinforcement;** when your student does something well or gives a good answer, make sure to give them positive feedback and let them know they have done well. If they are praised for good work, they are likely to want to continue behaving well.
- **Ban an activity;** warn your student if they are misbehaving that if they continue to do so, they will not be allowed to watch a video/play a game they enjoy at the end of the session. You could also incorporate this with a family activity if the parents agree.
- **Tutor at a suitable time;** though this may not always be in your power, it's best to tutor when the student is not too tired or in a bad mood. If you do so at a time when the student is not prepared to learn, it is almost certain that the class will not go well.
- **Be firm but fair;** it may be difficult to establish a line between being part of the family and being a tutor when living with the student, therefore it's important that you establish early on that during the tutoring time you are to be listened to and respected.
- **Build trust;** your student is likely to behave for you if you build their trust in you. This is best done by showing that you respect them, rewarding them for good behaviour and being consistent in your rewards and discipline methods. You should never raise your voice at the student, as this will destroy any trust they had in you.

REWARD SYSTEMS

It's important to reward your student for any good behaviour or good work. It may be a good idea to discuss this with the family when you arrive, but some effective ideas are;

- Giving your student English stickers
- Playing a game (educational or not)
- Reading them a story
- Showing them a video/film

Such rewards go a long way in encouraging your student to continue behaving well and building their trust in you.

TEACH ENGLISH IN CHINA RESOURCES

- Instagram: teachenglishinchina
- Youtube: 'Teach English in China' channel
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Teach-English-in-China/8861318597>
- Website: teach-english-in-china.co.uk. Our website is packed with information, articles and photographs from former teachers
- Lesson plan library and Member's Area: www.teach-english-in-china.co.uk/member-login/

AFTER YOUR PLACEMENT



TRAVELLING

On the Homestay Programme, you will not only have the opportunity to live as a local, but also to visit other parts of this vast country. More and more of our teachers decide to travel either before or after their placement, due to the affordability and accessibility of travel in and around China. Previous teachers have visited places such as the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an and the Avatar mountains in Zhangjiajie National Forest Park. Others have gone further afield, to places such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Bali.

China has a great train system that allows you to get almost anywhere in the country at an affordable price. It is cheaper to buy tickets at the station, but www.travelchinaguide.com is a reliable site to check timetables, information and book through. Please note that you will need to use your passport whenever you book a train.

HELPING TEACH ENGLISH IN CHINA

We encourage our participants to stay involved with Teach English In China after their placements have finished. You can do this in many ways – from helping at careers fairs and lectures, sending on your photos or writing articles about your experiences in China. If you have an idea for an article or would like to work for Teach English In China in any other way, email Arnold Vis at arnold@teach-english-in-china.co.uk

As this is a new programme, we are particularly interested in any contributions from our Homestay participants this year. We would appreciate any pictures, lesson plans, or feedback you are able to give us about the experience and we are also offering a few paid opportunities, such as writing an article or creating a video. More information on this and pay rates can be found on the 'Job Opportunities' tab of our Member's Area; <http://teach-english-in-china.co.uk/member-login/>

MANDARIN LESSON



THE TONES

mā

má

mǎ

mà

GREETINGS AND BASIC CONVERSATION/QUESTIONS

ENGLISH

Hello

How are you?

What's your name?

Where are you from?

I am ... (name)(British)

How old are you?

I'm ... years old

May I ask? (Before query)

Have you eaten?

Where is ...?

Please give me ...

A/one of

I don't want ...

How much (money)?

Thank you

To have/not have

PINYIN

Nǐ hǎo

Nǐ hǎo ma?

Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?

Nǐ shì nǎlǐ rén?

Wǒ shì ... (Yīngguó rén)

Nǐ duō dà?

Wǒ ... suì

Qǐng wèn yī xià ?

Nǐ chī le ma?

... Zài nǎ(lǐ)?

Qǐng gěi wǒ ...

Yī gè

Wǒ bù yào ...

Duō shǎo (qián)?

Xièxiè

yǒu/méi yǒu

CHARACTERS

你好

你好吗？

你叫什么名字？

你是哪里人？

我是...（英国人）

你多大？

我...岁

请问一下？

你吃了吗？

...在哪里？

请给我...

一个

我不要...

多少钱？

谢谢

有/没有

NUMBERS

1	yī	一	8	bā	八
2	èr	二	9	jiǔ	九
3	sān	三	10	shí	十
4	sì	四	20	èr shí	二十
5	wǔ	五	100	bǎi	一百
6	liù	六	1000	qiān	一千
7	qī	七	2 of	liǎng gè	两个

FOOD

Fried rice – chǎo fàn – 炒饭 Steamed rice

– mǐ fàn – 米饭 Fried noodles - chǎo miàn

– 炒面 Meat – ròu – 肉

Fish – yú – 鱼

Beef – niú ròu – 牛肉

Mutton – yáng ròu – 羊肉

Pork – zhū ròu – 猪肉

Chicken – jī ròu – 鸡肉

Duck - yā zi – 鸭子

Vegetables – shū cài – 蔬菜

Fruit – shuǐ guǒ – 水果

Dumplings – jiǎo zi – 饺子

Egg – jī dàn – 鸡蛋

MSG – wèi jīng – 味精

Sweet and sour - táng cù – 糖醋

Soup – tāng – 汤

OTHER USEFUL WORDS

This – zhè ge – 这个

That - nà ge – 那个

Toilet – cè suǒ/wèishēngjiān – 厕所/卫生间

Water – shuǐ – 水

Beer – pí jiǔ – 啤酒

Drink – yǐn liào – 饮料

Menu – cài dān – 菜单

Medicine – yào pǐn – 药品

To see a doctor – kàn bìng – 看病

Cold – lěng – 冷

Hot – rè – 热

Spicy – là – 辣

Salty – xián – 咸

Sweet – tián – 甜

Taxi – chū zū chē – 出租车

Train – huǒ chē – 火车