



Of all the trips we have made from the Kingdom during the past thirty years, the one we still talk about with a real yearn to return, is the trip we made to China. Both my wife and I had spent extended periods of travel and work in the far East but nothing prepared us for the wonders of China. I hope by reading this it will stimulate your curiosity to take a trip I know you will never forget.

China has a marked continental monsoonal climate characterized by great variety. Most parts are in the northern temperate zone while the southern areas are in the tropical or subtropical zone and northern areas in the frigid zone. Most parts of China have clear division between seasons. In winter, northerly winds from high latitude areas keep the northern part cold and dry, while in summer, monsoons from southern coastal areas bring warm and moisture. In addition, the climate also varies with the extensive territory and various topography from region to region.

In north China, such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, summer is dry and sweltering while winter is formidably cold. Sandstorms sometimes occur in April in this area, especially in the Inner Mongolia and Beijing area.

On the Tibet-Qinghai plateau (about 4,000m above sea level), winter is long and extremely cold while summer is short and moderately warm. There is little precipitation in this area and the temperature fluctuation is great between day and night.

In central China (the valley where the Yangtze River travels), summer is long, hot and humid while winter is short and cold. In the areas south of the Yangtze River, temperature rarely falls below freezing. In the far south, areas around Guangzhou, the summer is long, humid and hot while the winter is short and comfortable, a paradise considered by many northerners. The rainy season runs from may through august and typhoons frequently occur in the southeast coast between July and September.

The Great Wall of China is definitely a travel destination that won't disappoint you. Covering such a huge amount of history and offering so many stories, it's certainly worth reading up before embarking on your journey.

To gain the maximum potential from the Great Wall of China, and to appreciate it's 'greatness' it's best to get up close and personal and take a walk along it. This can be treacherous and difficult if you are not properly prepared.

By following these simple guidelines, you will get the most from your adventure.

Clothing: Since it was a military facility, the Great Wall was mainly built along the ridges of steep mountains. Your clothes should therefore be light, loose outdoor sportswear suitable for mountaineering. Your sportswear should be waterproof and wind-resistant suitable for mountaineering. It is also recommended that the fabric is air-permeable to keep your body dry and comfortable.

Foot protection: Different routes require different shoes. Your feet will swell with the altitude and heat, so be careful with new shoes. New shoes may be uncomfortable; 'wear them in' by going on a couple of hikes prior to your journey. Hiking boots or Tough waterproof trainers with good traction and ankle support are recommended. Shoelaces shouldn't be too loose or too tight; otherwise your feet will easily get tired and even hurt.

Socks should be of moderate thickness, cotton socks although soft and are sweat absorbent, may cause blisters. Vaseline and grease can be daubed on feet to ease the rubbing and prevent blisters. If you do get a blister, place antiseptic and an expandable band-aid over the area - do not prick it!

Sunburn protection: It is very easy to get sunburnt when mountaineering due to the altitude and strong ultraviolet radiation. The following measures must be applied to avoid that, or you will suffer for a few days. First, DO NOT expose yourself to the sun, wear a hat and long loose clothing. Secondly, about half an hour before you start your journey, use a strong sun protection cream on all exposed areas - don't forget the back of your neck. Re-apply the protection cream every couple of hours.

Water supply: Water is essential for your trip. You should drink plenty of fluids to replace the fluids your body uses during exercise. You should drink at least 100 ml every 30-40 minutes, so pack half a liter for every hour you intend to walk. Alkaline drinks are preferred to quickly restore physical strength.

Safety: Traveling on the Great Wall can be exhausting if you are not fit. Seniors and weaklings are recommended to take it slowly and get enough rest to appreciate the charming scenery of the Great Wall. When touring to undeveloped sites, do not climb onto insecure or damaged sections as you may injure yourself and damage the wall.

Whilst taking pictures, pay attention to barriers underfoot - many people have come 'unstuck' during a lapse of concentration.

Just a reminder, always pack a medical aid kit and extra camera films!



By Paul Dugan

