SA 10303 Intercultural Teamwork

2015 Packing Suggestions: May 14 through May 27, 2015 in China (PRC)

Top level final check: passport, wallet/$100 cash & credit/ATM card/s, program contacts “wallet” card, flight info/itinerary, phone & charger, camera & charger, carry-on luggage & any critical medical supplies, luggage for checking, jacket—PLUS confirm repacking of anything removed from luggage for use just prior to departure—e.g., phone*

* Suggestion: count items for quick check “in transit”—e.g., (1) jacket, (2) backpack, (3) carry-on tote, (4) one bag to check, total of 4 items to track in transit.

Gifts

You may wish to take something personal as potential thank-you gifts for your Chinese partners. These could be Purdue related or not. These small gifts might reflect hobbies or interests or something relating to your home town or family. It is difficult to predict, but you may be surprised with small gifts that will be offered to you by our program partners. You may be glad to have something meaningful with you to give in return. Especially appreciated: something with a story—e.g., something native or handmade.

Luggage Considerations

Take what can be handily lifted—as when ascending subway steps. Take what can be easily monitored—it’s a good idea to be able to connect with everything all at once. Example: one bag on shoulder, second bag (if needed) with the other hand (either for lifting or for pulling), thus leaving one hand free to handle tickets, food, or other necessities.

Additional factor: wheels—consider taking only what will fit in a wheeled luggage piece, unless you have figured out how to fit everything into a reasonably-sized backpack. Small bags (e.g., for camera) travel best inside a larger one; bubble wrap is cheap and effective protection.

Leave 10—20% unfilled—laundry takes up more space than clean clothes; also, good idea to leave some room for bringing back a few items. Do pack any liquids inside leak-proof zip-lock bags for checked luggage because changes in pressure encourage everything to leak that can.

Net, mesh, or fabric “laundry” bags can also help to preserve interior order in larger luggage—helps to keep laundry separate from clean clothes, etc. Net bags work especially well because they compress easily.

Consider the “maximum allowable” listed by any airline as far more than is needed for this trip, or perhaps for any trip. Just before departure, visit the website of the airline and check their “international travel” page to confirm weight and dimensions for “free allowance” baggage.

Less luggage, more fun! Take half of what you think you need. Be sure to check the weight limits and charges for checked bags on any connecting flights that impact you individually.

Multipurpose Strategies

Take layers—two light ones are better than one heavy one, wear at least one, rather than pack—jackets are great to sleep under in transit. Sleep/casual gear can serve as warm under layer around the clock if needed. Fleece is light, warm, and inexpensive. Harbin is usually significantly colder than West Lafayette (winter goes until April). One jacket offering significant warmth is recommended; an attached hood can be welcome for the occasional chilly rain.

Clothing suggestions: jacket, shirts, casual pants and jeans (please avoid torn/tattered jeans) work well. Possible additions include sweater, hat, a skirt or dress. Although international cities in the East are not so different that in the West, please avoid extremes—neither very dressy nor very casual clothing (e.g., “shorts”) are needed. Please remember to pack your Purdue China Maymester polo! Plan for two weeks.
To really reduce weight, consider taking laundry detergent—a laundry bar or several travel-sized detergent pouches. Note that powder re-packaged in Ziploc bags will always find a way out. If you do plan for some sink washing, use the first night at a new location to schedule that washing. With this plan, there will be time for the “dry” phase. To be safe, it is smart to take items that hang dry in a day. **Nylon and other synthetics dry quickly, as does very sheer cotton.** Heavy knit cotton (sweat shirt, sweat pants) may *never* dry. If you do not plan to launder, just take a few more items. Commercial laundry stops may or may not be practical. Please do not plan to have commercial laundry access.

Try to find one **great pair of shoes.** Pay attention to shoe traction and to sole thickness, important for long days in them. If second pair is important—sandals?—pack the lighter ones, wear the heavier ones. Also plane cabins can be cold.

**Medications**

**Prescription and over-the-counter:** Individual needs vary greatly. Certainly bring anything used on a regular basis at home—it’s not that it couldn’t be secured via prescription or purchased; rather, the problem is the inconvenience and time required to do so. **Personal first-aid basics** include band-aids and antibiotic ointment; when traveling, be sure to take care of any skin damage right away.

If you wear **contact lenses,** be sure to pack back-ups of essential maintenance items, including antibiotics if you have had trouble with eye conditions in the past. To be sure, carry 3 oz small sizes of such critical products in your “3-1-1” Ziplock and do not depend only on supplies in checked luggage. If you wear **glasses,** consider packing your previous pair as a back-up, depending upon how much breakage or loss would impact your travel.

Additionally, take note of what you use at home for a cold, earache, indigestion, etc. and bring a small quantity with you. If you have any **on-going medical condition,** e.g., asthma, confirm that you have with you whatever would be needed even for an uncommon or infrequent development (e.g., prednisone and/or a particular antibiotic) and do not place such important items in checked luggage. Only liquids are limited in quantity (3 oz) for carryon; non-liquid medications do not to be screened separately.

**Common optional items related to “travel” follow:** Imodium (digestion upset), aspirin, Tylenol, or Ibuprofen (jet lag headache), Dramamine (motion sickness), Benadryl (allergic reactions), sunscreen (excursions), caffeine (Diet Coke and double latte substitution), vitamin C (may help immunity). Alcohol gel (may wish to have small bottle for pocket, larger bottle for refills) and/or disposable “wet wipes” are refreshing. Note: The alcohol-based antibacterial gel has sometimes been disallowed by TSA at security checkpoints due to flammable potential, but wipes have not been an issue; if desired, pack gel in checked luggage and take “wipes” as carry-on supply.

**If in doubt about medication, bring it—it’s probably small.** Note that this “medications” list reflects many individual preferences—**choose what fits your own comfort needs.** Actually being seriously ill is quite rare and has never impacted any of our Purdue trips to China.

**Essentials**

1. **Pack and label two sets of anything absolutely essential** to your health and keep one set on your person (e.g., asthma medications).

2. **Cleanliness:** bring **paper products**—wet wipes, tissues, sanitary products, etc. While toilet paper is usually provided in hotel rooms, it is often missing in random locations, a potential “surprise” at the most inopportune moment.

3. Arrange for essentials **not readily replaced**—cash, credit/ATM debit cards, passport, driver’s license/Purdue ID—**always carry these essentials on your person** in a secure “carry pocket” for waist or neck. Please **do not take any brand of traveler’s checks** as they offer no advantage in China and do require significant time and paperwork to cash.

**ATM's are everywhere and provide great access to cash—provided that you have notified your bank that you will be using your card in China!** Provide dates (May 9 to May 23) and countries (China, Korea). Good
practice is using ATM cards at actual banks—either inside or immediately outside. That way, **assistance can be obtained on site if needed**; when traveling, it often is impossible “follow up” with a bank some distance away about a card retained by one of their ATM machines!

Do not depend on open pockets in clothes or (especially) jackets for anything important; also, do not put anything really important into checked luggage or leave behind in hotel rooms.

Note that the **passport must be provided to airlines and to hotels/accommodations**, so it is important to both keep this item secure and also have it reasonably accessible. Particularly at “check-ins” for overnights, there will be a delay in returning passports as they will be photocopied before they are returned. Passports are also required for currency transactions (not ATMs).

Do leave photocopy of passport **info page with picture** and **Chinese visa** page with someone you could reach by phone.

Do have the **phone number/s you would need to cancel any credit or ATM that you are carrying**. Also, carrying a second card is good insurance should you have to cancel a card while away—but that second card needs to be safeguarded just the same as the first—but in a different location.

Note that the necessary phone numbers—and those for such resources as the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in China/various itinerary cities—need to be stored where they are not likely to suffer the same fate as credit cards and/or currency.

**Water**

**Water bottle**—one of the most important travel containers. Keep filled. After departure from the U.S., **drink only water that is bottled or boiled**. You may prefer your own container, but it’s also ok to just go with the bottles that come with the water you purchase on site—in China perhaps 50 cents U.S. per bottle.

**Rain plan** (required!)—a hooded jacket can work, especially if part of a “rain shedding” garment; any umbrellas should be compact.

**Appliances**

If you can pack “world voltage appliances” (meaning that both 110 and 240 v. work), no voltage converters (transformers) are needed, helpful. Converters are expensive, heavy, and sometimes damage appliances. Note that a world voltage hair dryer probably costs less than a converter. Furthermore, most cameras, phones and computers are “world voltage.” Of course, it is good practice to inspect each plug prior to packing, as a small puff of smoke later means “no.”

“World voltage” appliances (e.g., camera chargers, computers) may still require a plug **adapter**. Look for a “multipurpose” kit or find “specifically for Asia/China” plugs that have small (compared to UK/Europe ones) round prongs, or alternatively, flat but slanted ones. These plug adapters may be needed to get U.S. plugs secured in sockets safely and without damage to the appliance plug. Wal-mart has an “all-in-one” multi-type plug adapter that is works fairly well.

**Keeping Time**

Please have a phone or watch/clock with an **alarm that works for you**—important “in transit” and at destinations. China is **12 hours ahead** of West Lafayette Eastern DAYLIGHT savings time: Sunday night at Purdue is Monday morning in China. All China shares the same time zone. Take special note of time in Korea, which, surprisingly, is one hour **ahead** of China.

**Course Supplies**

Bring basic office supplies—note paper (China logs—12, 2-sided printed out), pens, pencils. Computers not required, but also not prohibited. Internet connections in accommodations are not known in advance—perhaps available one third of the time.
Phones

Taking your U.S. cell phone is important as these phones can be critical resources at departure and arrival times while in the U.S. Some U.S. phones also work in China but phones for local use in China are not essential. If desired, China cell phone “sims” can be purchased on line or on site after arrival for local use. These “sims” will work in unlocked, “quad band” U.S. phones (removing the U.S. “sim” and U.S. call capability). iPhones are “international”—check rates prior to departure.

Please do not use hotel room phones for the purpose of calling home or any purpose. Rates can be exorbitant. Using some U.S. cell phones internationally may run $2 per minute without advance arrangements (varies with carriers), but that may still be a welcome option for an urgent call. Skype for internet international calls may work if you have Skype installed on your own phone or computer and also have wifi or Internet access at the time.

Recommendation: For a course as short as two weeks, please arrange with family/friends to share pictures and news after you return! Too much contact may even dilute the experience of being in Asia. The emergency number for the course can be used when contact is absolutely essential.

Especially important: assure friends and family that you will not try to call from the airport upon arrival because we are a large group moving through security checks, customs and meeting ground transportation arrangements; to do otherwise, threatens us with complete paralysis. Certainly assure friends/family that they will be contacted if there is any noteworthy development at any time. Similarly, please do not leave the group to change cash at the airport as there will be adequate opportunity later.

Security Checks

In the U.S., the TSA requires that all liquids and gels packed in carry-on luggage must be placed in one one-quart Ziploc bag (“3-1-1 system”) with a limit of three ounces per individual container in the bag. A good precaution is to write your name on the outside of that bag as it can easily become separated from your other luggage at security check points. Additional security requirements may include: removing shoes, extracting computers from luggage for separate scanning, belt removal, etc. Look ahead in the line to be ready for what is required. Some variations are to be expected internationally.

Unwelcome Choices

Please avoid unlabeled prescriptions or supplements. Please avoid any sharp points (metal nail files). Pack a light “daypack” that can hold items needed in flight—e.g., print materials/computer, snack supplies, etc. A “day pack” is also useful at destinations and ideally can fit inside larger luggage to limit number of items tracked.

Packing Strategies

Packing in units (e.g., bath, laundry, etc.) helps in shared spaces. Using zippered cases, net bags, etc, also simplifies packing and unpacking. Quantities—individual needs differ. We have four destinations, two North, two South; 12 nights, 2 “banquets,” several picture occasions where Purdue polos will be used. In all, we have four destinations, 3 days each. Estimate how many “changes” you will need for “everyday” casual and comfortable wear.

Completing packing at least one day ahead allows time for at least one iteration. Catch oversights and ditch anything not important enough to carry around for two weeks.

D.L. Atkinson—Last modified on 3 April 2015