Holidays

National Holidays:

* 1st January - New Year’s Day – National Holiday
* January 28th - Chinese New Year (dates can vary – takes place in 12th lunar month of the Chinese calendar) National Holiday
* January 29th – Spring festival golden week holiday – National holiday
* April 5th (or 15th day of the spring equinox) - Qing Ming Jie holiday – National Holiday
* May 1st – Labour Day – National holiday
* May 28th – Dragon boat festival – National holiday
* October 1st – National Golden Week holiday – National holiday

Local Holidays:

* There are numerous other holidays which are observed locally but not designated as national holidays.

New Year's Day: Jan. 1st @@@@

Laba: 8th day in 12th lunar month, usually in Jan.

Chinese New Year: @@@@

1st day in 1st lunar month, usually in Jan. or Feb.

The grandest traditional festival in China, the longest public holiday;

Annual family reunion, eat dumplings, set off fireworks

Lantern Festival:

15th day in 1st lunar month, usually in Feb.

Watch lanterns, eat glutinous rice dumplings, guess lantern riddles

Qingming Festival: @@@@

Apr. 4th or 5th

Also known as Pure Brightness Festival or Tomb-sweeping Day;

Visit ancestors' tombs, spring outing

May Day:May 1st @@@@

Dragon Boat Festival: @@@@

5th day in 5th lunar month, usually in Jun.

To commemorate Qu Yuan (340-278 BC), an ancient Chinese patriotic poet;

Eat Zongzi, dragon boat race.

Double Seventh: 7th day in 7th lunar month, usually in Aug.

China’s Valentine’s Day

Mid-Autumn Day:

15th day in 8th lunar month, usually in Sep.

Family reunion, appreciate the full moon, eat moon cakes

National Day: @@@@

Oct.1st

Military parade and celebration on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing;

Nationwide traveling peak from Oct. 1st to 7th regarded as the 'Golden Week'

Double Ninth Festival: 9th day in 9th lunar month, usually in Oct.

Winter Solstice: Dec. 21st, 22nd, or 23rd

[National Holidays](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/festival/): New Year's Day, Women's Day, May Day, Children's Day...  
[Traditional Festivals](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/essential/holidays/): Chinese New Year, Qingming, Dragon Boat, Mid-Autumn Day, Chongyang...  
[Ethnic Minority Festivals](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/essential/holidays/minority.htm): Water-Splashing, March Fair, Nadam Fair, End of Ramadan, Corban...  
[Tourism Festivals](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/festival/tourism.htm): Harbin Ice & Snow Gala, Luoyang Peony Fair...  
Western Festivals Celebrated in China: [Christmas](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/essential/holidays/christmas.htm), Halloween, Valentine’s Day…

Greetings

*Handshakes as greetings in China are as common as they are in the West.*

Do

* **Do greet others by using a handshake or a nod.** Bows are best saved for your visit to Japan or Korea.
* **Do address seniority** by an honorific title (family relationship or e.g. 'teacher': *laoshi*) or by the family name plus Mr. (*xiansheng*), Ms. (*nvshi*).
* **Do address the eldest or most senior person first.** This is done as a sign of respect to those in a more senior position.

Don’t

* **Don’t offer too firm of a handshake.** A firm handshake could be construed as a sign of aggression.
* **Don’t go straight for a hug**. Especially when meeting someone for the first time. Any body contact, apart from a simple handshake, may make your new Chinese friends feel uncomfortable.
* **Don’t address elders using ‘ni hao’ (/nee haow/).** Instead, use ‘Nin hao’ (/neen-haow/ ‘you good’). This is more polite, formal and respectful.
* **{** It means "Hi!", "How do you do?", "Hello!" It is an everyday greeting and is used at any time, on any occasion and by a person of any social status.}

If you’re interested in avoiding other do’s and don’ts when communicating in China, take a look at our in-depth guide on [Communicating in China](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/guidebook/communicate-with-chinese.htm).

Table Manners

*Our guides will show you the proper, Chinese way of using chopsticks*

Do

* **Do join in on toasts.**It’s considered polite to join in on each toast and even to stand up during formal gatherings.
* **Do sample all dishes at banquets or formal occasions.** It’s considered polite, and at the end of the meal be sure to leave a little on the plate to honor your host’s generosity.
* **Do tap the table when someone refills your tea.** The gesture of using two fingers to tap the dining table is used to show thanks toward whoever refilled your tea.

Don’t

* **Don’t put bones, seeds or other inedibles into in your rice bowl.** Use a tissue or your hand to place them in the small plate provided — or observe how others deal with them.
* **Don’t tap your chopsticks.** Tapping your bowl or the table with your chopsticks is considered rude and impolite.
* **Don’t use your own chopsticks to pick food from the central dishes.**This is typically considered unhygienic. Use the serving spoons or serving chopsticks provided.

See our article on [Chinese Dining Etiquette](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-food/dining-etiquette.htm) to learn more about Chinese table manners.

Giving and Receiving Gifts

*When visiting friends in China, it's common to present your host with a small gift.*

Do

* **Do Present and receive things with both hands.** This is considered polite in Chinese culture.
* **Do refuse a gift a number of times before accepting it.** Politely refusing a gift before accepting it is the norm in Chinese culture, so don’t be discouraged when someone initially refuses your gift.
* **Do gift small items** like books, music CDs, perfumes, cigarettes and candies from your home country (or a well-known Chinese brand). These are always appreciated and are always well received.

Don’t

* **Don’t be too eager to unwrap your gift.** Unless the person offering the gift insists. It’s considered polite in Chinese culture to open gifts after you or your guests leave.
* **Don’t wrap gifts using black or white wrapping paper. Choose** festive colors, such as red, instead.
* **Don’t gift clocks or other symbolic items.** Clocks and things related to the number four are associated with death in China, and sharp objects symbolize the severing of relationships.

Not sure what to gift your new Chinese friends? Our guides on [Gifts for Men](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/article-what-to-buy-for-men.htm) and [Gifts for Women](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/article-what-to-buy-for-women.htm) have you covered.

Etiquette in Historic and Religious Areas

*Don't photograph elders in Tibet without permission.*

For example, around [Tibet](https://www.chinahighlights.com/tibet/) and [Jiuzhaiguo](https://www.chinahighlights.com/jiuzhaigou/):

Do

* **Do walk in a clockwise direction when touring a temple or monastery.**
* **Do take off your hat when entering temples.** This is done as a sign of respect.
* **Do donate a few yuan to religious beggars.** This is considered an act of merit in Tibetan culture.

Don't

* **Don't photograph old folk without permission.** It's often assumed that a request to photograph them is an offer to pay – the same in some places on the [Silk Road](https://www.chinahighlights.com/silkroad/).
* **Don't touch a Tibetan on the head.** Tibetans believe that God resides in your head and may be offended by this gesture.
* **Don't dip your fingers in the yak butter lamps in temples.**You may be tempted to taste the butter but this is highly offensive, not to mention unhygienic and a health risk.

If you’re interested in learning more about Chinese temple culture, be sure to check out our guide, [How to Visit a Chinese Temple](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/article-how-to-visit-a-chinese-temple.htm) or join us on our popular [7-Day Tibet Discovery Tour by Train](https://www.chinahighlights.com/redirect.asp?url=https://www.chinahighlights.com/tour/cht-tb-01/&t=78002) where you’ll be surrounded by spectacular scenery while travelling via [the world’s highest railway](https://www.chinahighlights.com/video/the-railway-between-qinghai-and-tibet.htm).

In Mosques and Islamic Areas Around the Silk Road:

*Xi'an Great Mosque*

Do

* **Do maintain gender separation in mosques.** This is very important in Islamic culture, and you shouldn’t even shake hands with the opposite gender.
* **Do cover up when visiting mosques.** As a minimum, you should cover your arms to the elbow and your legs above the knees.
* **Do cover your head with a scarf.** Women are required to wear headscarves when visiting mosques.

Don’t

* **Don’t ask sensitive questions.** Sensitive topics such as relations between the various ethnic groups and the governments should be avoided.
* **Don’t assume that alcohol and cigarettes are permitted**. This is usually not the case. It’s best to ask first if you’re unsure.
* **Don't bring non-halal items** into a Muslim restaurant/home (our guide can help if you're unsure).

Thinking of travelling to the Silk Road? Be sure to check out our [Silk Road Travel Guide](https://www.chinahighlights.com/silkroad/travel-tips.htm), or if it’s your first time visiting China, our [13-Day Beijing- Xian- Dunhuang- Urumqi- Shanghai Tour](https://www.chinahighlights.com/redirect.asp?url=https://www.chinahighlights.com/tour/cht-sl-02/&t=78002) incorporates a visit to the Silk Road with other popular Chinese highlights.

General Etiquette in China

*Always remember to keep calm and to never overreact*

Chinese people are just as proud, if not prouder, of their country as visitors are of theirs. They can understandably become a little irritated when visitors favor with **criticisms of China**. Would you be happy to hear criticisms of your home country? Chinese people ***already know*** that not everything’s perfect, and they also know that they, like other countries, are working hard to deal with issues such as the environment and the population. Discussions regarding politics, state leaders, recent history, and issues pertaining to Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet are still seen as sensitive topics, and should be avoided.

**Do not overreact** when a local asks personal questions. What might be regarded as a personal question in your country could be a perfectly normal, and valid question in China. Don’t act shocked if your new friends start asking you questions regarding your marital status, family, age, job or income – they’re asking such questions in an attempt to seek common ground and start or keep the conversation going. If you don’t feel comfortable answering a question, let the person you’re talking to know. Just as there’s no need to overreact when asked such questions, there’s no need to answer a question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

**Keep calm** when dealing with government officials and void making situations unnecessarily tense. An angry or upset foreigner sticks out like a sore thumb and draws unnecessary attention. Not only that, but raising your voice or getting angry is considered a loss of face in Asian culture, and China’s no exception. Getting frustrated will help with nothing but creating a losing-face situation for everyone involved, and there’s few things worse than causing someone to lose face among their peers.

**Never write in red ink.** Red ink is a symbol of protest or criticism, and best saved for teachers correcting students’ homework. Another reason as to why you should never write in red ink, particularly when writing someone’s name, is that red ink is used to mark the names of criminals condemned to death in official records, and to write their names on their tombstones. Need another reason? Red ink is sometimes used to convey bad news – such as somebody passing away or a breakup letter. The best thing you can do is to avoid using red ink all together, the last thing you’d want is to upset your new friends by writing them a thank you letter in red ink!

**Punctuality** is considered a virtue in China (despite the fact that Chinese people are, on average, 10 minutes late for their engagements!). Being on time is a sign of respect toward others. Chinese people may show up earlier to show their earnestness, but be wary of the situation. Showing up early to a meal you were invited to can be considered impolite, as it may give the impression that you’re hungry and eager to eat. Being on time for your tour or at any other time shows respect for the guide, and for fellow travelers.

**Avoid public displays of affection.** Even though public displays of affection in China are not as taboo as they used to be, it’s still wise to avoid them. Just like the body contact we mentioned in the “Greetings” section, the person you’re with might not be comfortable with PDAs, or the community you’re in might frown upon such acts. Play it safe and save all affectionate displays.

Known as both the Double Seventh Festival and the Seventh Night Festival, Qixi (qī xī jiē) is all about love and romance. In fact, it is the Chinese equivalent to Valentine's Day.  
  
It takes place on the seventh night of the seventh lunar month (usually August) in China and it is a common practice on this day to recall the tale of the “Weaving Maid and the Cowherd”.

## The most beautiful girl

As the story goes, there was once a kind and good-hearted cowherd named Niulang. His parents died when he was little, so he lived with his brother and sister-in-law. However, his sister-in-law disliked him so much that living with her became unbearable, so he left home with only an old ox to keep him company.  
  
Niulang built a small cottage and tried to make a life for himself. Even though he was often tired and hungry, he always found time to take care of his old ox.  
  
One day, the ox suddenly began to speak. It said that it used to be the star Taurus, but was punished when it stole some seeds of grain to give to men. Because it had disobeyed the rule of the Heavenly Palace, it was sent to earth in the form of an ox.

## Love at first sight

Near Niulang's cottage was a sacred pond where young goddesses bathed. The ox took Niulang there and told him that the most beautiful girl in the universe, Zhinu, would go there. If Niulang hid her clothes, she would stay and be his wife.  
  
Zhinu was renowned not only for her beauty but for her skills as a weaver and seamstress as well. She was also the granddaughter of the Jade Emperor.  
  
Niulang hid in the grasses and waited for the goddesses. When they had taken off their robes and gone into the pond, Niulang went and stole Zhinu's clothes. This scared the other goddesses who ran away and left Zhinu alone.  
  
Niulang returned to give her clothes back. The two fell in love at first sight and were soon married.

## In pursuit of the Empress

When the old ox was about to die, it told Niulang that its hide could help a man fly up to heaven. It told him to preserve its hide properly. Niulang and Zhinu lived happily for many years, and were blessed with twins, a son whom they called Brother Gold and a daughter called Sister Jade.  
  
Their happiness was cut short, though, when the Jade Emperor found out that his granddaughter had married a mortal. He ordered the Empress to fetch Zhinu.  
  
Niulang came home one day and saw his children crying. All they could tell him was that an old woman had come to take their mother away. He realised what had happened and immediately went to take the hide of the old ox.  
  
Niulang put his two children in a basket which he slung over his shoulder. They then flew off in pursuit of the Empress.  
  
The Empress became angry when she saw Niulang and his children. She slashed across the sky with her hairpin and a raging river flowed in the heavens. This created Tian He, or the Heavenly River, which separated the lovers.  
  
Niulang and his children could only weep bitterly. Moved by their sorrow, the Jade Emperor turned them into stars and allowed them to meet once each year via a bridge made from magpies.