



HotellerieSuisse | Switzerland.



Swiss Hospitality for Chinese Guests



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Foreword

When a friend comes from afar, isn't it delightful?



1 Claude Meier
2 Martin Nydegger

1 Tourist marketing usually refers to the market as "Greater China" or "Mainland China including Hong Kong and Taiwan".

For you as a hotelier, hospitality for guests from both near and far goes without saying. When guests come from places which have a different culture, knowledge of the respective culture helps you avoid misunderstandings and make the guests' stay as smooth as possible. This brochure, "Swiss Hospitality for Chinese Guests" addresses these matters. Between 2012 and 2018, the number of

overnight stays by Chinese guests¹ in Switzerland increased by some 83 percent (excluding Hong Kong). The next two decades are also expected to see a continuous increase in the number of overnight stays by the Chinese. The Chinese middle class enjoys travelling and is growing, and state restrictions continue being relaxed, which makes it easier for Chinese citizens to obtain a passport and export currency. In addition, since 2013 flexible holiday times have been gradually introduced in order to avoid the problem of the whole country going on holiday at the same time. This should be fully implemented throughout the whole of China by 2020. This will give further impetus to foreign tourism. True, the Chinese still mainly travel in big groups and often travel quickly from one place to the next. However, individual travel is quickly establishing itself. The classic quick trip around the countries visited is now being complemented or even replaced by an extended and deeper look into a tourist destination on the part of certain target groups or individuals from specific regions. Likewise, a younger, more open generation has also discovered travel. These travellers show more interest in local peculiarities and in the culture of the country being toured. The brochure "Swiss Hospitality for Chinese Guests" (first edition 2004), now completely revised by Hotelleriesuisse and Switzerland Tourism, gives you important background information about China and prepares you optimally for Chinese guests and their needs. In addition to interesting information as to the culture and mentality of your clients from the Far East, it contains expert opinions and practical suggestions as to how to give your Chinese guests the best welcome possible. We wish you good reading and exciting encounters with guests from both near and far.

Claude Meier
Director HotellerieSuisse

Martin Nydegger
Director Switzerland Tourism

Knowledge of Chinese history
and their four great inventions
impresses the Chinese.





General information about the People's Republic of China

Historical summary

China has the longest continuously existing culture in the world, which can be shown to go back to around 2000 BC. The Chinese are especially proud of their long-standing history and the four great inventions of ancient China: the compass, paper, gunpowder and the first printing process. After many economic and cultural highlights in ancient history, China suffered a large decline after the Opium War in the middle of the 19th century. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded on the 1st of October 1949 by the leadership of the Communist Party. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping initiated profound economic reforms which led to China becoming one of the most important economies in the world and which unleashed unprecedented dynamics in the country.

Key data

Population and area

The People's Republic of China is the world's most highly populated country with 1.4 billion inhabitants. It stretches across 9 500 000 km² and is the third largest in area behind Russia and Canada (Switzerland 41 290 km²).

Languages

China's official language is Mandarin; in addition, there are many Chinese dialects and about 50 languages spoken by national minorities.

Cities

The largest cities are the capital city of Beijing (Peking) with 21.5 million inhabitants, Chongqing with 30.5 million, Shanghai with 26 million and Tianjin (Tientsin) with around 14 million. There are some 140 other cities which each have a population in excess of 1 million inhabitants.

Knowledge of the fast-growing Chinese economy and its importance in the world impresses the Chinese guest.

Economy

With the gradual introduction of necessary structural reforms, China has changed economically in recent decades. The country has consistently achieved a high economic growth for over 30 years now, and even though it has been somewhat reduced in recent years it continues to outstrip that of Western countries. China overtook Japan in 2010, thus becoming the second largest economy in the world. Today, the People's Republic has positioned itself at the centre of international economic interests.





Key economic data

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
GDP (in billion USD)	8570	9635	10535	11226	11222	12062	13407
GDP/per inhabitant (in USD)	6329	7081	7702	8167	8116	8677	9608
Growth rate (in % of GDP)	7.8	7.9	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.6
Inflation rate (in %)	2.6	2.6	2	1.4	2	1.6	2.1

Source: International Monetary Fund, Economic Outlook Database (April 2019)

Characteristics of Chinese culture

Seeking Good Fortune, Warding Off Bad Fortune

What would China be without its abundance of practices and popular beliefs, which support the Chinese in their search for a harmonious universe and a happy life? The variety of good signs and omens is endless:

Animals The dragon as a brilliant imperial symbol; the phoenix, the unicorn, the tortoise, the crane and fish are also considered to be lucky charms.

Lucky Objects Happy New Year messages on paper, as well as signs of good fortune and longevity on different objects.

Colours Red means good fortune; yellow is for imperial; white and black are for mourning (although a white wedding today is no longer taboo).

Numbers The number 8, which sounds like the word for "fortune", is favoured, in contrast to number 4 which sounds similar to the word for "death".

Philosophy

Among other things, the two most important teachings which have greatly influenced Chinese culture are Confucianism and Taoism.

Confucianism

The teaching of Confucius stems from around the year 500 BC and was later established as the state ideology. It is more of a moral philosophy than a religion. It says that in each society there are five basic relationships; the emperor vis-à-vis the subject, the husband vis-à-vis the wife, parents vis-à-vis the children, older siblings vis-à-vis younger siblings and older friends vis-à-vis younger friends. Seniors have obligations of goodwill and care towards the young, and in turn, the young show them their gratitude with their respect. All manner of equality is rejected because mutual obligations take precedence. Through the influence of Confucianism, Chinese society today is very hierarchical.



Taoism

Laozi is regarded as being the founder of this doctrine. It teaches that a full life is achieved through complete detachment, where calm and indifference preside. According to Chinese tradition, two opposing forces govern the order of the universe and are a central

element of Taoism: “Yin” and “Yang”. However, the truth, as a fruit of antagonistic but progressive elements, is not absolute, but is rather always relative and dependent upon the circumstances of the individual case. The influence

千里之行始于足下 A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step.

(Famous Quote)

Knowledge of the two philosophers and their quotes impress the Chinese guest.

of these holistic thoughts is to be found in many areas of Chinese culture; for example, in nutrition, in martial arts or in traditional Chinese medicine.

Relationships

Of utmost importance, whether it be in the family circle or in one’s wider circle, is the avoidance of conflicts and the forging and cultivation of relationships. Should one person do a good turn to another, then they have the right to expect similar treatment in return, as reciprocity is a vital obligation. These interpersonal relationships can only be established by showing strict regard for social hierarchy and the respect that goes hand in hand with it. Parents are held in high esteem, through the practice of rituals linked to filial devotion, as are those in authority and one’s superiors and elders.

Absolutely avoid direct confrontations!

Harmony

In order to avoid confrontation, the Chinese speak in a reserved and modest fashion. Scandalous behaviour and outbursts of anger are perceived in an extremely unfavourable light. Chinese culture favours the indirect style. This is in contrast to the direct and ‘straight to the point’ Western way of doing things, which is often misunderstood. The Chinese way is more of a careful approach which facilitates getting to know one another and the laying of a foundation for the ensuing conversation. A rejection is never expressed directly, and neither will any admission of ignorance be, as the Chinese are always careful to avoid insulting or hurting others and seek to provide the possibility of an honourable exit at all times. The same applies likewise to accusations and criticism. What may appear to be a “lie” to us, is often considered to be a form of courtesy in China. No one is allowed to feel hurt or lose face and certainly no one expects to be brutally confronted with the truth.



A language with no shortage of characters

Chinese love to teach their language to others.

In cases of doubt, inquire as to which is the first name and which is the surname.

The Chinese language is one of the oldest languages which is still spoken today. The official spoken form of Chinese is Mandarin ("high" Chinese). In addition, there are numerous dialects such as Cantonese for example. Chinese writing is a unique example of a graphic language, consisting of many thousands of characters.

Personal names

In China, the surname is placed before the first name. Should the surname and the first name be reversed for "technical" reasons, it is strongly recommended that the family name be written in capital letters in order to be sure of recognising it later and to not confuse it with the forename. A person is called by his name and title, rather than by his forename, which is reserved for close personal friends. Chinese persons who have a lot of contact with foreign countries or who have had education there, sometimes have German, English or French forenames, which might be shown on their visiting cards.











Adapting to the language

When making contact with the Chinese, it is recommended that documents be made available in the Chinese language. Top-class translators must be involved in the preparation of such documents, and the final version of the translated texts must be approved by a native Chinese speaker. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that a Chinese name be given to any person or company wishing to interrelate with China. The Chinese do actually rename all proper names into Mandarin. Specialist advice is called for in choosing this name. After all, it is absolutely vital to be able to correctly pronounce the name of a company or of a place, in order to know who or what is being spoken about: Tielishishan (Titlis), Caiermate (Zermatt), Yintelaken (Interlaken), Lusaïen (Lucerne), Shaonüfeng (Jungfraujoch), Boerni (Berne), Dawosi (Davos).

Please use simple words of greeting in Chinese. Chinese guests will really appreciate it.

Good day	Nǐ hǎo	你好
Welcome	Huān yíng	欢迎
Thanks	Xiè xie	谢谢
Have a pleasant trip	Lǚ tú yú kuài	旅途愉快
Goodbye	Zài jiàn	再见

Finger Counting System

1 yī 一	2 èr 二	3 sān 三	4 sì 四	5 wǔ 五
				
6 liù 六	7 qī 七	8 bā 八	9 jiǔ 九	10 shí 十
				

Business practices

First comes the trust, then comes the business!

Long-term vision

For Westerners, the signing of a contract is the conclusion of a process. For the Chinese it is simply the starting point. Therefore, the following is to be taken into consideration:

- Understand that the negotiation process calls for deep personal involvement. Progress is made cautiously, step by step.
- Emphasise a long-term partnership as opposed to short-term objectives.
- Favour an amicable and peaceful atmosphere, as this is required for mutual understanding.
- There will be no business deals without trust, a good relationship and compromise.

Be reserved, attentive and modest. These are of central importance in business relationships.

Personal bearing is a crucial factor

For the Chinese, it is the impression that a person gives which is much more important than the reputation of a company or the prestige of an institution. This is because it is the person himself who serves as a guarantee for successful business dealings. Initial exchanges rarely focus on business. The purpose of such discussions is to allow the negotiators to become acquainted, and to get in tune with each other. Questions about one's personal life (family, relationship with parents) and living conditions (price levels, salaries) are customary. For the Chinese, the listener is always the centre of attention. A reserved, attentive and modest attitude is therefore expected. Sartorial extravagance is to be avoided: a sober appearance with dark-coloured clothing and shoes is perfect business attire.

China in transition

Since the gradual economic opening-up at the end of the eighties, China has found itself in a state of progressive change. To that end, economic expansion abroad plays an important role. Therefore the country has likewise expanded its influence in Europe in recent years and invested in numerous businesses, including some in Switzerland. International practices are increasingly making visible inroads into everyday life in China and the Chinese themselves strive hard to learn Western codes of practice. Therefore, approach your Chinese counterpart with openness and do not be surprised if you find that the Chinese are far more Westernised than you may have perhaps expected.

Tips – negotiations

In China, negotiations are conducted in a more formal manner than in Western countries. It is therefore recommended that you take into consideration the following suggestions:

Pay close attention to the seating arrangements, as the highest-ranking persons sit opposite each other at the centre of a long table, furthest from the door.

At dinner, the best seating place is to the right of the host, the next best place to his left. The place of honour is opposite the door, but is far from it, and faces south where possible.

The lowest-ranking person occupies the most vulnerable place, with their back to the door.

Respect the speaking order. Express yourself slowly and in an intelligible manner, without interrupting the other party.

Set aside ample time, as haste is ill-advised.

Realise that the Chinese do not expect to have any important information revealed early on in negotiations, but rather towards the end.

Do not continue negotiations during the meal that follows; however, this more convivial time is truly essential to the success of the overall process.

Hierarchy is very important.

Use interpreters who possess an excellent level of language skill and who are trained in the relevant area; provide them with all details concerning the procedures, and during the discussions ensure that both sides have a good grasp of the information being exchanged.

Summary

Generally speaking, it is advisable to prepare yourself for this intercultural task, if necessary by seeking specialist advice. It must be stressed just how much the Chinese appreciate it and feel flattered when Westerners make the effort to try and understand and respect Chinese culture, and attempt to speak their language. Lastly, do not be afraid of making mistakes. The Chinese are perfectly aware that you are not totally familiar with every nuance in the Chinese world.



Tips – gifts

Gifts are a very important mark of respect and friendship. The giving of gifts is an indispensable practice:

Typical Swiss presents are greatly appreciated: watches (no wall-clocks as these signify that someone will soon die) music boxes, writing implements, calendars, “ethnic” items, etc. Remember that Swiss Army knives must be packed in hold luggage for airline security reasons. With the exception of chocolates and sweets, do not give food!

Please also be careful about giving the following gifts: knives are felt to cut into the relationship and can serve as a poor omen regarding negotiations. In contrast, an original red Swiss Army knife is allowed. Also other knives from internationally-acclaimed brands may likewise be given as gifts. In principle however, knives are not first gift of choice. Umbrellas in China carry with them the significance of not wishing to see someone again. Therefore, the good old-fashioned umbrella with company logo should be avoided by representatives from the West.

Gifts are given wrapped (avoid white and black paper) and are not usually opened in front of you.

Gifts should be offered with both hands, as should business cards, passports, credit cards, hotel bills and any other important personal documents.

The value of the gift ought to be appropriate and consistent with the hierarchy. The highest-ranking person receives a more prestigious gift. The item given to him can be presented without gift-wrapping in order to show its value, or to explain how it works or what it signifies.

Gifts strengthen ties with Chinese guests.

“Due to the increase in individual travel, the needs of Chinese visitors are changing.”



Simon Bosshart,
Switzerland Tourism,
Director China/
Asia Pacific/Global
Accounts

What do you think makes Switzerland especially interesting for Chinese visitors?

Simon Bosshart: “The natural beauty of Switzerland fascinates our guests from China, especially the way it is embedded in the extensive tourist infrastructure, making it so convenient to connect with the spectacular natural environment in Switzerland.”

Is Switzerland still an attractive destination for Chinese travellers?

SB: “Although the market is no longer growing at the same pace we saw a few years ago, the number of Chinese visitors is still rising. What we find much more significant is the growing number of individual tourists we now welcome to our country – we estimate this group accounts for as much as 30–40% of all visitors from China. These are guests with different needs, they stay longer, show an interest in local traditions such as modern art, and more and more of them are connecting with our natural environment by going hiking or skiing.”

What marketing areas should Swiss hosts focus on to attract Chinese visitors?

SB: “High-quality service is still the key marketing tool today, especially for smaller companies, because it is effective word of mouth advertising. A knowledge of the Chinese language also helps. Even little things like encouraging service staff to learn a few friendly words of Chinese. If you have Chinese staff in the company, they would certainly be happy to help promote the business on the Chinese social media. It is also worthwhile to participate in the marketing efforts of local or regional tourism organisations, or if need be, to develop marketing tie-ups with other companies. Individual companies considering an investment in digital marketing should proceed with caution, since their internet presence would only represent a tiny speck in the vast internet ocean in China.”

Are there any specific things Swiss hosts should pay attention to when it comes to looking after their Chinese guests?

SB: “Chinese guests are becoming used to rapidly improving service quality at home, so they are more demanding when they encounter our touristic environment. What they have now come to expect in China is to get an immediate and more flexible response to their requests, which may not always be compatible with our very thorough approach to doing things here. If a Chinese guest becomes particularly demanding, offering a disarming smile and a polite request for a little patience – as they do in China – will help defuse the situation.”



Is there any particular faux-pas to avoid at all costs?

SB: "Avoid discussions about Chinese politics; it is very likely that our western mentality will differ greatly from the Chinese way of thinking. Always try to avoid an abrupt 'no' to any requests and show a willingness to discuss matters. After all, we have a lot of experience in finding compromises in Switzerland."

Is there any special service or small courtesy Swiss hoteliers can offer their Chinese guests so they have happy memories of their stay in Switzerland?

SB: "Although Chinese guests are becoming increasingly more open to trying out the local delicacies nowadays, they will certainly appreciate a special culinary treat now and again that reminds them of home. Consider offering rice noodle soup with vegetables for breakfast, or Chinese chili sauce to accompany the main meal, or provide a kettle and a packet of instant noodles in the room for a midnight snack before retiring for the night."

"High-quality service is still the key marketing tool."

On tour with the Chinese



Strong growth in foreign travel

As statistics show, the number of overnight stays by Chinese tourists rose by about 6% in 2018 compared with a year earlier and that trend is set to continue through the next two decades as the country's middle class steadily grows. The government is also easing restrictions on its citizens obtaining passports, as well as on the amount of money they can take abroad. Furthermore, since 2013 flexible holiday time has been introduced in order to avoid the situation where the entire country goes on vacation at the same time. This too ought to give foreign travel an additional boost.

Group travel vs. individual travel

Travelling in large groups (40 persons) continues to be the preferred option in the "new" Chinese tourist markets. In the traditional tourist markets (e.g. the major cities), the trend is clearly pointing to smaller group sizes (15 to 25 persons), as well as to tourism on an individual basis. Current estimates put the share of individual tourists at 35% to 40% of all Chinese tourists visiting Switzerland. This figure is expected to rise by 10% by the end of 2020.

One indication of this development is the sales of Swiss Travel Passes (public transport passes for overseas visitors). Sales of Swiss Travel Passes to China increased from 2017 to 2018 by 14.9%, to CHF 20.3 million (total 2018 sales were over CHF 130 million). In the business tourism segment, the growth of incentive trips (so-called “reward travel” for groups of 20 to 500 persons) continues. Today, women make up around 50% of the total number of recreational tourists. The proportion of individual female tourists is expected to rise, since people no longer necessarily travel as a family, but increasingly together with a group of friends.

Switzerland as a destination for Chinese tourists

In November 2003 during an official meeting of Swiss and Chinese government representatives, the Approved Destination Status (ADS) for Switzerland was announced. An agreement now regulates the way in which Chinese citizens may travel to Switzerland. It only applies to groups (minimum five persons) who are managed by Chinese tour operators (starting from departure in China through to the return there); it limits the outflow of hard currency and provides for measures in case of illegal stays by Chinese tourists. Under the ADS Agreement, Swiss incoming agents, as well as tour operators, must guarantee that all members of a group leave from China together and return to China together. Furthermore, hotlines with Chinese-speaking staff must be provided for emergency cases and certified guides and drivers must be used during the tour. The obligation to have a visa for entry into the Schengen area and therefore into Switzerland too, remains unchanged. Not covered by the ADS Agreement is the disproportionately growing group of individual tourists which are increasingly seen to have at their disposal both the necessary financial means as well as the requirements necessary for a Schengen visa, permitting a trip to Europe and/or Switzerland respectively. The individual travel business itself especially benefits from the growing number of both international and Chinese online travel agents which have an ever-larger product portfolio at their disposal.

Source: Swiss Federal
Statistical Office
(HESTA 2018)

Overnight stays in Switzerland by Chinese tourists (excluding Hong Kong)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Arrivals	575 326	704 945	823 713	1 122 852	879 605	974 756	1 026 160
Overnight stays	743 656	894 316	1 034 275	1 378 434	1 130 925	1 279 216	1 359 519

Tips – travel and languages

Discussions about politically sensitive matters like human rights or regional independence movements should be conducted with great care and diplomacy; your Chinese counterpart often does not feel at ease discussing controversial matters.

Although an increasing number of young Chinese speak much better English than the older generation, most Chinese understand only a little English, German or French: information boards in Chinese at the most popular destinations and tourist hot spots as well as important places is a must (i.e. menu cards in restaurants, at airports, train stations, in cable cars, museums, at entrances and exits, bathrooms, etc.).

The Chinese are proud to be citizens of the People's Republic of China, and proud of the economic and political success of their home country.

Well-trained, Chinese-speaking guides must accompany travel groups from China throughout their visit to Switzerland.

Provide complete and concise information in Chinese about the main sights and attractions in Switzerland and/or the destination, for example, in a booklet or a brochure which includes a local map in the Chinese language.

The Chinese are last minute tourists: they do not really plan their trip and they do not like to wait. Show flexibility with regard to the suggestions of your Chinese guests and provide a speedy response and service.

Clearly indicate to the relevant tour operator exact details concerning your capacity for receiving groups into your hotel or restaurant.

Display the correct flag of the People's Republic of China!

Profile of Chinese tourists to Switzerland

In general, Chinese tourists will book a package of 10–14 days and visit several countries. The aim of the journey will be to see the main attractions and only very limited time is spent in one particular place.

- Switzerland is among the three favourite European destinations for the Chinese. 40 percent of visitors from China book their travel in winter and 60 percent in summer.
- Only a few Chinese have visited Europe or Switzerland before. Therefore, their expectations about the “faraway” West are high.
- Most of the Chinese travelling to Europe are young professionals in their 30s or 40s who come from the big cities on the east coast and who belong to the fast growing middle class. Other important groups are wealthy people of all ages who have already travelled extensively through Asia, as well as government officials and entrepreneurs who are involved in international negotiations.
- Where the trend a few years ago was for multi-destination trips to between six and ten countries within Europe, today the trend has changed to “deeper tours”: The current leading product is a trip to the three countries of Italy, France and Switzerland. At the same time, it is not uncommon to see one-off trips to single countries too. In the core markets of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Taipei and Hong Kong, it is hard to find a tour operator these days who does not offer at least one single-destination trip to Switzerland.
- China is also on the move with regard to the kind of travel engaged in: next to classic “passive sightseeing”, the trend toward active holidays must not be underestimated. Golf trips, Arctic expeditions, as well as outdoor sports ranging from hiking to mountain climbing and skiing are all experiencing increased participation in China. It is foreseeable that these activities will also find their place in the overseas travel product.
- Thoughts about safety in connection with terrorist acts is also something which the Chinese find important. However, for those Chinese guests who would like to travel to Europe, Switzerland continues to be a safe place when compared to other European countries.

Swiss hospitality for Chinese guests

Hospitality has a far greater significance in China than it does in Switzerland.

A central element of Chinese culture

In Chinese culture, receiving a guest embodies Chinese hospitality par excellence. The Chinese art of receiving guests focuses on two main objectives: taking care of the visitor during the whole period of his or her stay and placing his or her presumed preferences at the centre of the host's attention. By paying attention to each and every detail, every effort is made to ensure that the visitor will feel at home. On the one hand, Chinese hosts strive to portray their homeland and environment in the very best light. On the other hand, they endeavour to establish harmony and consensus. They will always show that every possible effort has been made to live up to the expectations of the visitor. The guest is assigned every honour and the host "gives face" to him, thus preserving his own. Further, he lets the guest feel that he has done his best for him, to spoil him as it were, whilst at the same time apologising for only being able to offer an imperfect performance. He will always stress the esteem of the guest whilst playing down his own.

Chinese guests expect that everything will be undertaken in order to fulfil their desires.

What do the Chinese expect?

Given the aforementioned, it will not come as a surprise that the expectations of Chinese guests toward their Swiss hosts are very high. They will, in principle, take it for granted that their Swiss counterparts know all about their preferences and habits and that they are well prepared for these.

Leisure activities

A generally unfamiliar spheres

The notion of leisure is still rather new to Chinese society. In fact, no clear distinction is made between the time spent at work and the time dedicated to the family, friends or a hobby. Working life and private life are not considered to be two completely separate spheres of human existence. Furthermore, Chinese employees and entrepreneurs have quite a bit less time off work than their European colleagues.

Tips – arrivals and social etiquette

Chinese visitors have high expectations: show as much flexibility as possible and take into account their requests.

When dealing with Chinese guests and partners, always remain calm, friendly and patient. Never show negative feelings (displeasure, impatience, vexation). This leads to unnecessary, embarrassing situations and can even end up breaking-out in a hopeless disagreement in which both parties are the losers.

If possible, do not assign Chinese guests to rooms on the 4th floor or to rooms which contain the number 4 (4,14, 24, 34, etc.), because this number is associated with being unlucky – or even with death. However, room numbers containing 6, 8 or 9, as well as rooms located on the 6th, 8th and 9th floors are considered to be lucky rooms.

A Chinese leaflet or an electronic concierge (with Chinese language selection) containing information about the hotel and the services provided should be made available in all the rooms.

Provide clear operational instruction in Chinese as to how the pay TV works and clearly indicate that the fee is not included in the room rate or the package.

Assign your Chinese guests to rooms with two beds: generally speaking, the members of the group travelling together will not have known each other before starting the trip.

Ensure a fast check-in and check-out service: Chinese people get rather impatient if they have to wait.

The hotel room should be equipped with an adapter for electrical appliances made in China.

The Chinese love to drink hot tea or hot water at almost any time of the day or night. Provide an electric kettle or a thermos containing hot water, as well as free tea and coffee in the rooms. Hot water or hot tea is usually served free at lunch and dinner as well.

Chinese people travel with little luggage: provide a basic selection of accessories for daily use, such as shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste, in their room.

Tips – stay and leisure time

Chinese people prefer to spend their free time in a group: take this fact into account when proposing leisure activities during their trip.

The Chinese dine early (at about 6:30 p.m.) and go to sleep rather late: let them know what kind of evening entertainment is on offer locally (shows, movies, bars etc.)

Having Chinese-speaking personnel in your shop is a must if you want to do business with Chinese tourists.

Display the prices of your products in a clear manner.

Shopping is also a social event: be prepared to deal with a whole group of customers at once.

Inform your Chinese clients about the possibility of receiving a VAT refund for goods purchased in Switzerland and exported to the PRC.

Chinese people are evening and weekend shoppers.

The Chinese love chatting together loudly – even in public.

Socialising and shopping are top of the hit parade

The Chinese love places which are “renao” – literally hot (“re”) and noisy (“nao”) – in the sense of bustling activity. “Renao” is a part of Chinese life style in much the same way as cosiness is for the Swiss, Germans and Austrians.

Chatting with family or friends at home is among the favourite activities of the Chinese. Walking around downtown in a crowd after dinner or at weekends is likewise considered to be fun too. Another popular activity is shopping. Sports as a leisure activity are not as widespread in China as they are in Europe or North America.

Give the Chinese the opportunity to purchase something – even in the hotel.

Average day expenditure by over-night tourists in Switzerland (not including arrival and departure)

Country	CHF
Gulf States	420
China	380
India	310
Japan	300
USA	280
Russia	250
Korea	210
Switzerland	140
Germany	130

Source: Switzerland Tourism Monitor, 2017

Shopping around the world

Chinese tourists also like to undertake leisure activities as a group. Entertainment such as shows and concerts are greatly appreciated. In China, the concept of “saving money at home and spending it abroad” is quite widespread. Chinese people love to shop when they are travelling. Generally they will bring home presents and gifts for the whole family and their friends. Branded products with local characteristics such as Swiss watches, Swiss knives, jewellery and clothing are especially popular. With an average per capita expenditure of approximately CHF 380 per day, Chinese tourists are among the biggest spenders in Switzerland.

Mobile payments – more and more Chinese people travel without cash and credit cards

Mobile payment is the most common payment method now used in China on a day-to-day basis and is gradually replacing cash and in some cases even credit cards. Therefore, when the Chinese travel, they do so in the expectation that when they are overseas they can naturally use mobile payments exactly as they do at home. This is especially the case when it comes to younger travellers. This means that mobile payments are growing rapidly all over the world and it is essential to offer this payment option (Alipay and WeChat Pay) to Chinese guests in Switzerland. You also need to inform your team about the importance of this payment method for Chinese guests and offer training for your staff in this area. If you accept mobile payments, you should also actively inform your Chinese guests about this option.



“Switzerland is a pioneer of modern tourism.”



Susu,
Chinese travel
influencer

What are the values that shape Chinese culture?

Susu: “The uniqueness of Chinese culture can be summarised by the terms ‘DAO’ and ‘XIA’. ‘DAO’ means principle, idea or path. If you follow the right path, others will respond with flexibility and tolerance. ‘XIA’ means fraternity: when it comes to human relationships, shared interests are sometimes more important than shared advantages. These deep-rooted traditions, together with the mix of people from different regions and cultures have shaped the compassionate attitude, the strong character and the flexible way of thinking of the Chinese people. A further characteristic of the Chinese is their close bond with culture and with nature, combined with a deep sense of tradition and hospitality.”

What kind of experiences do Chinese visitors look for when they come to Switzerland?

Susu: “They want to enjoy the wonderful natural beauty of the country and discover the Swiss lifestyle, to forge a bond with nature and the local culture.”

Have you ever been to Switzerland for a holiday?

Susu: “Yes, I have been there several times on holiday.”

When you look back on your visits, do you have any special memories?

Susu: “I have so many beautiful memories, but what impressed me most of all about Switzerland was the level of expertise on display, the strategic way of thinking and the efforts to maintain cultural traditions. The spirit of innovation is also very strong in Switzerland. Whether it is a hotel, a company, a brand or a trade, they are handed down through several generations, yet are always at the forefront of innovation. Another thing that impressed me deeply was the passion the Swiss people feel towards their country. They are adept at showing the best side of Switzerland and at offering numerous opportunities to discover their beautiful country.”

How did you experience Swiss hospitality?

Susu: “I was once in a hotel in Sils-Maria that has been under family ownership for five generations. When we arrived at the railway station in St. Moritz, it was already too late to get a taxi. We then called the hotel and they arranged to have us picked up. When we got to the hotel, the manager welcomed us in person and said, ‘It’s nice to have you with us. I can go home now without worrying.’ He also introduced us to his brother, who was in charge of the restaurant. We then saw him every day, going round the tables personally

and talking to the guests. Both the hotel manager and his brother treated each guest as if they were a member of the family or a friend. Switzerland is a country with a tradition of hospitality and is a pioneer of modern tourism. For more than 100 years now, Switzerland has welcomed tourists from many different cultural backgrounds, developed an understanding of their needs and has always provided guests with a wide range of services. This is why the rest of the world looks up to the Swiss tourist industry as a role model. Look at any hotel category and any segment of the market and you will find Swiss hotels that rank among the best in the world. This is one of the defining characteristics of hospitality.”

Could you give us any tips on what Swiss hotel owners could do to make the guest experience even more enjoyable for Chinese visitors?

Susu: “It is important to be aware that Chinese tourists who travel individually have very different expectations from those travelling in groups or on business. The latter do not usually choose their hotels themselves, unlike individual travellers. There is little doubt that the share of individual tourists coming to Switzerland from China is going to increase further. As a result, the criteria of location and price will become increasingly less relevant, with more emphasis on the specific holiday and experience offerings hotels can provide. Individual travellers from China want to use public transport while in Switzerland. Anyone who is interested in attracting a greater number of individual tourists from China has to offer the best possible solution for the ‘last mile’, i. e. transporting guests from the railway or bus station to the hotel. There are many excellent hotels in the Swiss mountain regions. The key is to make access to them as simple as possible; otherwise, they will lose their appeal among individual tourists from China. Hotels that offer their guests a comfortable ‘last mile’ experience will capture a larger share of this tourist segment – which often translates to repeat business.”



“I was hugely impressed by the passion the Swiss men and women feel towards their country.”

Chinese eating and drinking habits

A long tradition

Much of Chinese daily life revolves around food and just about every Chinese person considers himself to be an expert in that field. Sophisticated cosmopolitans and simple employees alike are happy to discuss food in detail and with great enthusiasm. The importance

(Chinese) food is one of the most important things to the Chinese.

of culinary delights goes back many centuries in Chinese history. Through the ages, poets, emperors and other important persons were expected to be connoisseurs of fine dining and to be able to discourse knowledgeably about food, as well as about its history and preparation.

Eating is also an important social event for the Chinese: they love to come together for meals around a large table with family and friends. Finding oneself alone at a table is considered to be one of the worst fates possible.



For the Chinese, eating is not just a sensual pleasure. Other aspects such as health and balance, based upon the principles of traditional Chinese medicine are always taken into account when preparing the menu.

Culinary experiences are holiday highlights

It is not really surprising that food is one of the most important parts of a Chinese trip. In fact, most Chinese people will not recommend to their friends or family to see specific sightseeing attractions such as monuments or museums, but rather, will tell them not to miss the best spring rolls in town or the exquisite roast duck at this or that restaurant. In fact, it would be unthinkable for most Chinese people to enjoy something other than Chinese food when on a trip abroad.

Green tea is the preferred kind of tea for the Chinese.

Drinking habits

The usual European selection which we have such as mineral water, soft drinks, beer, tea or hot water, will be perfectly suitable for Chinese guests. In recent years, the interest in wine and coffee has also grown strongly.

Tips – food and beverage

The Chinese love variety: therefore, offer your Chinese guests several small dishes rather than just one big dish. Put emphasis upon using different kinds of food stuffs (meat, vegetables, eggs, etc.)

Chinese people eat quickly: try and serve the food all at the same time and please do not take it as a mark of disrespect when the Chinese leave the table immediately – as soon as they have put down their cutlery or chopsticks.

Avoid using too many milk products (cream, cheese, butter) and be moderate in the use of salt.

Try and base your menu planning on the basic principles of Chinese cuisine.

Tips – food and beverage

The Chinese like foods which are liquid and soft. However, baked goods are not very common in China.

Swiss cuisine also contains dishes which time and again find new fans amongst the Chinese: sausages, pasta, rösti or sauerkraut all enjoy their own Chinese fan-club. Even fondue and raclette when served as mini-portions may arouse the exotic interest of Chinese tourists.

A menu in Chinese should be available for your guests.

For breakfast, porridge and fried vegetables provide a welcome extension to the classic European breakfast. Soft-boiled eggs are not so much appreciated – so please boil them a bit longer.

Hot drinks (and often simply hot water) are preferred to cold drinks. Chinese people are also used to having free hot water provided to them to top up any tea they have ordered.

If possible, reserve a big round table for your Chinese guests: groups travelling together prefer to eat together.

Chinese guests like to combine different dishes and tastes. Therefore, it will be appreciated if all courses are served together, with the exception of soup – which generally is served at the end of the meal.

Place chopsticks on the right-hand side of the bowl or plate for each person, along with classical European cutlery. Never stick chopsticks into the food – this would be associated with bad luck or even death.

Otherwise, the usual European tableware and decoration will be appreciated by your Chinese guests.

Chinese people like to eat early: Breakfast between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m., lunch at 12.00 noon and dinner between 6.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.

Chinese guests eat fast and leave the table immediately once the final course is consumed: speedy and efficient service will therefore be appreciated.

Contact details

Should you require any further information, advice or training as to how best to entertain Chinese visitors or to work the Chinese market, please do not hesitate to contact the following addresses:

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Useful websites

www.myswitzerland.com/zh (Switzerland Tourism, in Chinese)

www.sinoptic.ch (Information about China, in French and Chinese)

www.chinadaily.com.cn (Chinese daily newspaper, in English)

www.sccc.ch (Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, in English)

ch.china-embassy.org (Chinese Embassy)

www.swissinfo.ch/chi (Swiss information platform, in Chinese)

www.globalblue.com (English)

www.globalblue.cn (Chinese, Information about VAT refunds)

