

# Preparing for China

## I've been offered a job – what next?

Many congratulations on your successful interview and being offered a position to teach English in China! There are now a few administrative tasks that need to be completed before you embark on your exciting adventure.

### The Contract

Once you've decided to accept a job, the educational establishment will email you a contract. The contract should be a thorough document noting the conditions of your salary, working hours, teaching hours per week, students per class, accommodation provision (if relevant), visa provision, medical insurance (if relevant), flight reimbursement, conditions regarding overtime, and terms of the employer release letter.

Please review the contract very carefully when you receive it; if you feel that anything is missing or incorrect then you should raise this before signing it. Many contracts impose various fines should you break its clauses, so if something is not clear or you do not agree then under no circumstances should the contract be signed.

Please note that your contract is signed between yourself and your employer, not with Opportunity China. The contract should be signed prior to the visa application process starting.

Before signing a contract, it is very important to review your own personal situation and understand you are making a promise to your future students and employer that you are committed to work for them for the entire year. If unavoidable circumstances occur you will need to address the situation. As in any situation, the more professional and understanding you are in the handling of the matter, the better the outcome is likely to be. When contracts are broken it is very normal to forfeit elements of a contract, such as reimbursed flights, and end of contract bonuses.

If you are unsure about the position, do not sign a contract. It is expensive for a school to apply for a Z visa and foreign expert permit. Once a contract has been signed and all required documents submitted, the school will begin the visa application process.

### Accommodation

If an apartment is provided by a school, please factor in that most schools expect a teacher to cover their own bills – although these are not expensive, and no more than RMB500 maximum per month.

If an accommodation allowance is provided, note that the first allowance payment is typically made with your first salary payment. You'll be expected by a landlord to pay a deposit, as well as 2 – 3 months' rent upfront upon move in. Please ensure you have budgeted for these up-front costs. If in doubt, please ask your school for further clarification on suggested total up-front costs. We are also happy to assist with any questions.

## Visas to Teach in China

The three most common types of visas for China include the tourist (L) visa, the business (F) visa, and the working (Z) visa.

To work legally as an English teacher in China you need to have a 'Z' work visa. Our partner schools are licensed to provide 'Z' work visas for teachers who meet the requirements of the province, and will handle the paperwork for you.

Opportunity China strongly recommend that you do not leave your home country without having the correct visa in place, except in exceptional circumstances.

### Documents required for the Work Visa

You'll then need to promptly prepare high quality copies of the following documents, which are required by most schools in order to apply for your Z visa and foreign expert certificate:

- BA degree certificate
- TEFL Certificate
- Passport scan
- Passport photos
- Reference letter
- No Criminal Record Check Certificate
- Medical Check
- CV (occasionally it will be requested for this to be translated to Chinese)

#### No Criminal Record Certificate

If you're in the UK, please see the link below for information on the 'no criminal record certificate' required for the work (Z) visa;

<https://www.gov.uk/living-in-china#criminal-record-checks>

If you opt for the DBS check, a 'Basic Disclosure' can be applied for by an individual and costs £25:

<http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/basicdisclosureonline/index.htm>

For American candidates an FBI criminal record check is required:

<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks>

Irish candidates can refer to the following information:

<http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=2742&Lang=1>

#### Medical Check Up

In order to obtain a z visa many schools may require you to complete the following 'physical examination record form' whilst still in your home country:

<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/visas/fd/W020110807201675371788.pdf>

Your school will notify you of whether they require this to be done as part of the visa application process.

Please note that often you will be required to gain a further medical check-up once you arrive in China, even if you have also had to complete this in your home country.

We recommend going to see your doctor to ask him/ her to complete the form as fully as possible. A doctor should be able to complete the majority of the form, but some parts may not be feasible. In our experience, the form can be completed as follows and will be accepted by the Chinese government:

- The first page should be relatively easy for your doctor to complete
- On the second page, in the top box, a comment such as 'normal' is sufficient
- In the chest x-ray and ECG boxes please just comment 'Not applicable'
- The final box should include a comment stating that you are fit
- Please ask your doctor to then sign the form with a stamp from your doctors surgery

**Refer to our 'example physical examination record form' to see an example of a completed form that would usually be accepted by the local Chinese government. Please email to request this example.**

To date the above has been successful with our candidates. However, please note that should this not be accepted and the full medical examination required, it is likely that you will need a full medical check from a private surgery, which can cost anywhere from £200/ \$300. Some schools will cover the costs of this examination, other schools will not.

Note that this information regarding the medical check is purely a guide, and only for reference; policies of the Chinese Embassy regularly change.

## Chinese Visas - Application Process Overview

The work visa requirements vary slightly from province to province, and can change, however generally speaking the China visa application process works as follows:

Stage 1 –you gather all of the required documents for the school to make an initial application to the local government, which as outlined above would usually include a degree certificate, TEFL certificate, passport copy, no criminal record check, and sometimes medical check. These are sent via high quality scan, via email. A school cannot submit the visa application until it receives all documents in the required format, so any delay in sending documents will result in a delay in the application.

Stage 2 – the school will then submit the necessary paperwork to the local government and if the application is successful a work permit and letter of invitation will be issued in hard copy format within 4 approximately weeks. This work permit and invitation letter paperwork will then be posted to you in your home country, typically by courier, taking 4 working days.

Stage 3 – once you have received a work permit and letter of invitation you can submit a visa application at your local Chinese Embassy in your home country. You should take this paperwork, along with your passport (valid for at least 6 months) and completed visa application form to your nearest Chinese Embassy/ Visa for China Centre. In some countries, the application can be sent via a postal application.

For UK applicants, visa applications are made through the Visa Service Centre:  
[www.visaforchina.org](http://www.visaforchina.org).

Please read through the information provided on the website pertinent to you, and ensure you have all of the documents that you need when going to a visa appointment.

In the UK, you can apply by post or by making an appointment at the visa centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh. The visa centre suggest that when applying by post it should take 10 days to process and return your passport and visa. If you submit the application via an in-person appointment then the express service takes 3 working days to process, the standard service 4 working days to process. Do take in to consideration any Chinese public holidays, when the visa centre may be closed. Please note that the visa centres will contact you directly, usually via telephone, if they have any queries about your application.

The Z-visa is valid for entry to China for 90 days after it is issued.

**\*Important\* Please review the information on your country's Chinese Embassy website:**

[http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/gjhdq\\_665435/](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/)

Stage 4 - once you arrive in China you must apply for a Residence Permit from the immigration department at the local public security authority in the place intended to stay within 30 days of entry to China. Your school will help you to organise this.

## Booking your Flight

We strongly advise that you do not purchase a plane ticket until your visa arrives at your home as any delays may mean you need to rebook your ticket, which could result in very high administration fees.

For a flexible ticket we recommend that you book your flight via a travel agent, who can clearly communicate the conditions of a particular ticket to you.

If you are just booking a one-way flight, and no flexibility is needed, we suggest you look at websites such as [skyscanner.org](http://skyscanner.org), [kayak.org](http://kayak.org) or [lastminute.com](http://lastminute.com) to get the best priced flight available.

## Travel Insurance

It is very important that you have travel insurance that will cover you for the duration of your stay in China and that includes medical evacuation, repatriation and all travel. Many schools will offer medical insurance as part of your remuneration package, but often this will only cover you while at work.

For UK applicants, please see advice on gaining travel insurance from [the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website](#).

There are many insurance policies/companies to choose from and Opportunity China has partnered with one broker that we have had good experiences with to date. To find out more please [visit the travel insurance](#) section of our website.

You should print out at least two copies of your policy, and keep one copy in your hand luggage. Ensure that you have noted the emergency contact number stated on the policy.

## On Arrival

Once you're in China your school will assist you in converting your temporary visa into a Foreign Expert Certification and/or Work Permit and a Residence Permit. This process may take between 2 to 4 weeks during which you may be required to hand over your passport, therefore we suggest you make a few high quality copies of it before it's out of your possession.

The government also requires you to undertake a full health check. If you have already done one back in your home country, in many cases you will be made to do another one once in China.

### Registering With the Police

Before and after your school applies for the Foreign Expert Certification and/or Work Permit and Residence Permit you will need to register with your local police station in China.

Again, you'll need your passport for this, and a copy of your apartment lease if applicable. They will provide you with a Registration Form of Temporary Residence. Failure to get this document may result in fines, so it is important that the police registration is done.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I open a Bank Account in China?

Yes, your school will assist you in opening a bank account. A valid passport and a deposit of 100RMB is generally required to open an account, and the process is quite easy. The most popular banks for foreigners are the Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China, China Construction Bank, and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

### What is the Tax Rate in China?

Taxes vary from province to province in China and usually reflect your salary. A higher salary equates to a higher tax rate, however generally the tax rate varies between 5% and 10%. RMB4600 of your salary each month should be tax free.

### What is healthcare like in China?

Healthcare is not provided free of charge in China and medical bills can be substantial. Medical evacuation from China is very expensive. We strongly recommend that you ensure you have comprehensive travel insurance covering healthcare for the duration of your stay. The UK Government does not pay travellers' healthcare costs overseas.

A generally good standard of medical care can be accessed in China's major cities, though some hospitals can be very crowded. Outside major cities, the standard of healthcare is more variable.

Your Doctor or Travel Clinic can provide up-to-date advice on immunisations and other preventative measures relevant to the part of China to which you are travelling. You should ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up-to-date. We strongly recommend that you visit the websites of the National Travel Health Network Centre or review the website of your National Health Service for guidance on vaccination requirements and current information on health issues in China. The following websites can also provide useful information:

- [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk) - The UK Health Protection Agency supplies accurate and detailed information on infectious disease, particularly malaria.
- [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) – an NHS Scotland website.
- <http://www.who.int/countries/chn/en> - World Health Organization information on health issues in China.

This information has been taken from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/china#health>)

### How can I stay healthy in China?

Many people inevitably can feel a little ‘under the weather’ because of the changes in your new environment. For this reason, we recommend that you bring a variety of medications from your home country to combat things like colds, the flu, diarrhoea, and other general illnesses. In addition to this, we also recommend that you keep the following advice in mind:

- Do not drink tap water in China; drink boiled or bottled water only
- Eat completely cooked food only
- It’s best to avoid eating at local street carts and food vendors in China during your first few weeks in the country
- Don’t swim in rivers or lakes

### Do I need any vaccinations?

Teachers should contact a travel nurse in their home country for up to date advice. Hepatitis A and B, DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio), and Typhoid are normally advised, and Japanese Encephalitis is usually recommended as well.

### What are the emergency services telephone numbers in China?

Police **110**  
 Fire **119**  
 Medical **120**

### I am allergic to peanuts, is that an issue when living in China?

Peanut oil is used OFTEN in many foods in China in restaurants and on the street. If you have a severe allergy to peanuts we highly recommend you taking extreme caution when eating out.

### I am Vegetarian, is that an issue living in China?

There is a lot of delicious vegetarian food in China, so learn to say ‘wo bu chi rou’ ‘I don’t eat meat’ or show people in the restaurant these characters; 我不吃肉

## Can I bring a laptop?

This is up to you! It will not be needed and clearly you will need to take very good care of it, however you may find it useful for using skype to contact your friends and family. If your phone is wifi enabled then you'll have no problem accessing the internet as wifi is readily available. Ensure you have suitable padlocks with you for locking up any valuable items.

If you will bring any electrical items, make sure that you purchase an adaptor before you leave the UK as you may not have chance to do this once in China.

## Can I use my current mobile phone and sim card in China?

Using your current sim card in China will be very expensive. Sim cards in China are regional so we recommend waiting until you arrive at your final teaching destination before buying a Chinese sim. There are two providers; China Mobile (中国移动) and China Unicom (中国联通). If the sim card doesn't work in your current phone you can buy a cheap or second hand mobile to use and often these are sold in the places where you buy your sim cards.

## What clothes should I take with me?

This all depends on where you will be living – make sure you research the local climate before you leave! Regardless of climate, we suggest you take some smarter clothes for any formal occasions. Some schools also require their teachers to be smartly dressed in the classroom, so taking at least one set of 'work' clothes is advisable.

## The Opportunity China Ambassador Scheme

Opportunity China's ambassador network is an innovative educational community to help you as a teacher at first with resources and educational advice, and then go on to develop your craft and add to your CV by helping to train other teachers within the community once you gain experience.

Should you wish to do so, you will be paired up initially when taking up your teaching position in China with an experienced teacher, sometimes in the area near to where you will be teaching. You will also be given contact details for our education department, and so this gives you a helping hand and handy resource base when you first start teaching in China to ask any classroom questions you have, or seek out lesson plans and ideas for lessons. Your ambassador contact in China might even be able to show you around the city, go out for a meal, and provide a warm welcome when you get to China, helping you to settle.

After about six months, your ambassador can provide you with some feedback on your lesson plans and provide a listening ear to challenges and successes you will have gone through teaching in China! You can then start to continue your professional development and add different coaching and professional skills to your CV by working with us to become an Opportunity China ambassador yourself and help to provide advice and guidance on international education in the Chinese classroom to other new teachers that start out in China.

**If you have any further questions then please do not hesitate to contact your personal Recruitment Coordinator directly. We are here to help!**

Disclaimer: Every care was taken to ensure the accuracy of information in this document at the time of publishing, however Opportunity China cannot be held liable for any actions undertaken as a result of out of date information.