



Focus on CHINA School Program

China is so vast in area (the third largest country after Russia and Canada) and in population (one-fifth of humanity) that almost anything said about the nation could be true. It is crowded (in cities) and sparsely settled (in remote rural areas); the Chinese are one people, yet the government recognizes 55 ethnic minorities; the Chinese revere centuries-old traditions, but they also embrace Western fashions, music and fast food; ancient architecture survives alongside modern buildings. Chinese people are friendly and welcoming, and country dwellers are especially down-to-earth and warm-hearted. In sum, China is diverse, huge and internationally important.

AFS & Your Experience

AFS has been operating in China since 1982. AFS works with the Chinese Education Association for International Education (CEAIE) to provide all AFS participants in China with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

Landing in China

Your flight will arrive in Beijing, the capital of China. After the plane lands and you collect your baggage, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be met by AFS China staff and volunteers.

Arrival Orientation

Volunteers will accompany you to your arrival orientation, which will last about one week. After many hours on a long, tiring flight, you will have a chance to relax, meet other AFSers and learn about China and Chinese culture. You will also receive some intensive language training.

Living in China

Lifestyle and Family Living

The Confucian ethic of proper social and family relationships forms the foundation of Chinese society. The Chinese have a strong sense of family, and they respect hierarchy and interpersonal obligations. Often, both parents in a family work outside the home. Families generally include one child, and it is not uncommon for a grandparent to live with the family. Parents expect to know when their children are going out and where

they are going. Because parents tend to take a keen interest in their children's education and expect them to study hard, they will typically set limits on going out or on recreational activities that might interfere with schoolwork. In addition, parents often encourage the active involvement of the school in their child's upbringing. Chinese students spend a great deal of their day in school engaged in studying.

Chinese host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

Participants will be placed in the cities of Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Sichuan, Henan, Anhui, Dalian, Tianjin and Beijing. Most Chinese families in the cities live in multi-story apartment buildings. All space within the home is generally considered shared. You may live in your own room or share with your host sibling.

Dress and Appearance

Chinese teenagers, while dressing very much according to popular teenage styles worldwide, wear their school uniforms most of each day during the week and at all school-sponsored events. You should bring jeans or other casual pants, T-shirts, collared shirts, sweaters, comfortable shoes for walking, a bathing suit, raincoat and a full range of warm clothing for the winter months, including warm underwear, snow boots and a heavy jacket. For special occasions, more formal dress is expected: for women a dress or blouse and skirt; for men a jacket, slacks and tie.

It would typically be unacceptable to wear torn, worn out, or revealing clothing. Note that Chinese students do not usually have large wardrobes (or closet space), so limiting the number of items you bring will not only help keep your luggage compact but will also help you fit in with your Chinese peers.

School uniforms will be required and typically consist of a jogging suit worn over street clothes, and a more formal uniform for special school occasions. The typical cost of a uniform is 300 RMB, but some schools can provide you with one.

Diet and Meals

Typically, the Chinese diet consists more of vegetables, rice and noodles than of meat. Noodles and dumplings are popular in the north, while rice dishes are more common in the south. Chinese cuisine is varied and delicious with a wide spectrum of textures and tastes. It is important to note that Chinese families are not expected to provide Western-style food. It is also not advised that participants make a habit of buying Western-style food for themselves. While it is fairly widely available in the form of Western fast-food chains, it is comparatively expensive and will tend to create a distance between you and your peers and host family.

School

The school year typically runs from early September through the end of July. School is usually in session from 7:30–8:00 a.m. to 4:00–4:30 p.m., with some optional sports, music, club or study sessions taking place after 4 p.m. The school day is typically divided into seven lessons, with a lunch break between noon and 1:30 p.m. Chinese schools and classrooms are typically large, with 35 to 50 students in a classroom.

There is a set curriculum, and a class remains together throughout the day, with teachers typically coming to the class, except in some music and laboratory classes. You will also participate in exercising or eye-massages. Most AFS participants will be placed in the Senior 1 level. AFS students are not placed in the Senior 2 or 3 levels, because they are the graduating classes, and students in those classes are typically fully engrossed in study for the university entrance examinations, leaving nearly no time at all for social activities.

Academic achievement is extremely important to most Chinese students and their families. Therefore, a great deal of time is devoted to study. School days are long and emphasis is placed on math and science. Chinese students often devote several hours to study outside the classroom each day. Classroom work often means reciting and being tested orally by the teacher and sometimes evaluated by the teacher in front of the class. Criticism from teachers in the classroom is frequent and accepted.

All of the schools in which AFS participants are placed are top academic high schools. The standard of behavior and academic engagement is very high and adherence to school rules and behavioral standards will be expected of AFSers, just as they are for Chinese students.

Teen Life

As described above, much of a Chinese teenager's life revolves around his or her school. When not at school or engaged in school activities, teenagers get together at friends' homes, go to movies, watch television or play sports. Soccer, ping-pong, handball, volleyball, basketball, Chinese traditional martial arts exercises and dance are all popular pastimes.

Chinese teenagers seldom date. Instead, they often socialize with their classmates and go out in single-sex groups. Dates are not unheard of, but neither are they encouraged. Public touching or displays of affection between a male and female of any age is unusual, though it is not unusual for schoolmates of the same sex to walk hand in hand or with an arm around one another.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS China will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) to talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

There will be a mid-stay orientation for several days at the local level. You will get together to talk about your progress, share experiences and renew friendships.

At the end of your stay, there will be a national End-of-Stay orientation in Beijing. The End-of-Stay is about looking back at your exchange experience and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in China, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS China. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

AFS recommends you bring no more than US\$900 in traveler's checks and cash to meet your spending needs for an entire academic year. It is best to carry well-recognized traveler's checks such as American Express. Credit cards are not widely accepted for everyday transactions. You should be prepared to plan ahead and budget accordingly, as traveler's checks cannot be cashed in every bank. You will probably have to plan a special trip to a bank that may be far from your school or host family. Bring some money with you, and do not wait until you are entirely out of cash to think about exchanging a traveler's check.

Safety and Support

China is relatively safe, and you should do well if you follow the normal precautions you would use in your home country.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Chinese. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS China may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for China (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

Program Prices

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

China is the third largest country in the world after Russia and Canada. It occupies most of eastern Asia south of Siberia. It is bordered on the south by Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, India and the Himalayan mountains. It lies almost entirely in the temperate zone, although some sections of the southern provinces lie within the tropics. In summer, warm, moist air brings heavy rains to the eastern part of the country. In winter, dry cold Siberian air pushes south into China bringing a fair amount of snow. Despite its huge area, the country observes one time zone.

Population

China, with a population of about 1.3 billion, is home to more than 20% of the world's people.

Language

Mandarin Chinese (the national language) is spoken by more than 70% of the population and is also used in Singapore and Malaysia. China has 55 different ethnic groups, each with its own language or dialect.

Government

The National People's Congress is the chief legislative body. The State Council has executive authority. Congress elects the premier and deputy premiers. The Chinese Communist Party controls the government.

Religion

Officially China is an atheist country, although it is not unusual to find some small religious groups as Taoists and Buddhists. Muslims represent 1%-2% of the population and Christians 3%-4%.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Chinese words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in China, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about China and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to China. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Chinese. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS China will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Chinese people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

Curiously Chinese

- Great Wall - Its construction started in the 7th century B.C. and took 200 years to complete. It was built for defense purposes. Today, with a total length extending more than 6,000 km (3,800 mi), it is said to be visible from outer space, though astronauts have not confirmed this.
- Chinese Horoscope – “This is the animal that hides in your heart.” According to legend, Lord Buddha summoned all the animals to come to him before he departed from Earth. Only 12 animals came to bid him farewell. As a reward, he named a year after each one in the order they arrived.
- Mount Everest – The highest peak in the world 29,035 ft. (8,850 m.) was formed about 60 million years ago. Its name in Nepal is Sagarmatha (goddess of the sky); in Tibet it is Chomolungma (mother goddess of the universe), and around the world it was named after Sir George Everest in 1865, British surveyor-general of India.
- The Chinese physician Hua T'o, born sometime between 140 and 150 A.D., was the first doctor known to perform surgery using general anesthetic. The potion that rendered his patients unconscious was a mixture of hemp and strong wine called *ma fei san*. Prior to the Communist revolution, a national holiday commemorated his birth.
- Fingerprinting was used in China as early as 700 A.D.

- It is not true that the early Chinese used gunpowder only for fireworks. They had forms of guns (invented in 1288), bombs, grenades, rockets, land mines and other arms.
- The manufacturing process that produced porcelain, or "china," was a mystery known only to the Chinese until around 1700. Although imitation porcelain was made earlier in Italy, it was Johann Friedrich Böttger, of Saxony, who first made true porcelain (Dresden china) in the West.
- Paper was invented in China around 105 A.D. by the eunuch Ts'ai Lun.

How to Apply

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	15 y to 18 y	
Country data	Size	9,596,960 km ² , 3,705,000 mi ²
	Population	1,286,975,500
	Official language	Mandarin Chinese
	Government	Communist state
Currency	Yuan (CNY) divided into 10 fen	
Useful websites	http://www.chinatoday.com/ http://www.travelchinaguide.com/ http://www.cnto.org/	
AFS China website	http://afsweb.afs.org/countryp.nsf/pages/china	

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>