



# PROGRAM COUNTRY: CHINA



*STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world*



Situated in eastern Asia on the western shore of the Pacific Ocean, China has an area of 9.6 million square kilometers, a continental coastline extending for about 18,000 kilometers, with more than 5,000 islands. China is one of the world's largest countries, with almost the same size as the USA

one fifth of the world's population.

but with

## COUNTRY INFORMATION

As one of the world's earliest civilizations, China offers exciting traditions, culture and extraordinary sights. The Great Wall is probably the first you come to think about, but there are many other spectacular sights such as the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and the Terracotta Warriors. The more modern attractions include the Bird's Nest stadium, Water Cube pool and The Olympic Green Park. As known, China held the successful Olympic Games in 2008. People from all over the world are invited to come to China and explore the Chinese culture!

With a recorded history of 5,000 years, China is one of the world's earliest civilizations, rich in its splendid traditional culture. The opening ceremony of 2008 Olympic Games presented Chinese culture through Chinese calligraphy, Peking Opera, shadow play, kung fu, inscriptions on Oracle Bones, Four Great Inventions of ancient China, paper cutting art, and kite etc. It also expressed the symbolic meaning of Confucianism and Taoism.

China abounds in natural resources, leading the world in many proven mineral deposits. No country in the world boasts more wildlife than China, many of species which are native to China, such as giant panda, the snub-nosed golden monkey, and the Chinese alligator; China's Dawn Redwood and Cathaya Argyrophylla are known as the living fossils of ancient plants.

China is characterized by a continental climate. The latitude spans nearly 50 degrees. The greater part of the Chinese territory is situated in the temperate zone, its southern part in the tropical and subtropical zones, and its northern part near the frigid zone. Temperatures therefore differ rather strikingly across the country.

China is a unified, multi-national country, with 56 nationalities in all. The Han people account for 92% of all the population.

Minority people consist of Hui, Uygur, Zang, Korean people etc. The majority of the 55 ethnic groups have their own languages. China is home to many religions, mainly Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and Christianity. Most people belonging to ethnic minorities in China hold religious beliefs. Freedom of religious belief is a governmental policy, and normal religious activities are protected by the constitution.

China's official language is Chinese. Character Chinese is commonly used in modern China and has been used for 5,000 years. Although different provinces have different dialects, most people can use Mandarin and this is the language the students will learn while on exchange in China.

China is developing, changing and expanding rapidly. This includes adopting many of the Western habits. For example, ten years ago many Chinese had not even tasted coffee. Today there are many coffee shops in all the big cities. Nowadays, more and more Chinese can speak fluent English, especially in Beijing and Shanghai.

Beijing is the capital of China. It is not only the nation's political centre, but also a cultural, scientific and educational heart and a key transportation hub. Beijing has served as capital for more than 800 years. The city has many places of historic interest and scenic beauty, including the imperial palace (also known as the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace and the Great Wall, etc. The Olympic Games 2008 made Beijing transform itself into an attractively modern, international metropolis.

## SCHOOL LIFE

There are both public and private high schools in China. Most of the Chinese students study in public schools. The Chinese high school year begins in September and ends in July. There are two semesters each year. The summer holiday runs from July to September. The winter holiday begins from the end of January and ends at the beginning of March. High school consists of Grade 10–12. Exchange students can choose to apply for short term, half a semester or a full academic school year.



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Exchange students go to school from Monday to Friday. They arrive at school at 8 o'clock in the morning. The courses finish at 12 o'clock. They have courses together with Chinese students in the morning. Then the students participate in Chinese courses in the afternoon from 14:00 to 17:00. There are four periods of classes in the morning and two in the afternoon. Each session is normally about 45 minutes. Different subjects are offered at school. Chinese, English, maths are compulsory subjects. History, geography, chemistry, biology, computer science, physics and other courses are elective subjects. Chinese students spend a long time at school to prepare for the entrance examination for the university.

It is more flexible for exchange students in the afternoon. Generally speaking, exchange students have the intensive Chinese course and courses about Chinese culture, such as Chinese calligraphy, Chinese painting or for instance kung fu. Extra curricular activities include basketball, football, tennis, table tennis etc. The annual athletic meeting is a great opportunity for exchange students to make new friends.

In most cases, exchange students take extra Chinese courses to improve their Chinese proficiency. Students are encouraged to talk freely about a variety of topics about real life situations and all aspects of Chinese culture and modern society. Additional practice of word usages and sentence drills and other helpful class activities are organized. From the beginner level to advanced level, students will fully develop their Chinese speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Almost all schools have their own uniforms. It varies from school to school. Sometimes students do not need to wear the uniform every day but in some schools uniform is mandatory. A neat appearance is expected at all the times. Punctuality is required for both Chinese students and exchange students. Most of the schools have canteens on the campus. Students can choose to eat lunch at school or at home.

Both teachers and students are friendly. Students do not use teachers' first name at school. Normally, they say "Li Laoshi" = "Teacher Li" for example. To not use the first name directly does not mean that the teachers are strict, it is merely a cultural difference. Speaking English is not a requirement for Chinese teachers at school. Generally speaking, young teachers can speak English well. We highly encourage exchange students to communicate in Chinese, which will improve their Chinese proficiency quickly. If exchange students have some difficulties, they can ask for help from the English teachers or their area representatives.

## HOST FAMILY LIFE

The host families are carefully selected. The area representatives are required to visit the host families personally to discuss each host family's expectations and prepare them for the responsibilities of a successful hosting. Through the whole year, the area representatives will keep in close contact with the host families and the students, to ensure that everyone has a good experience and understands the nature of cultural differences.

The host families in China are open to the acceptance of other cultures. At the same time, exchange students are required to obey the STS rules and the host family's rules, such as curfew times, no smoking, no drinking etc. Some host parents can speak good English. Most of the time, our exchange student will have a host sister or brother who can speak English. Some students go to school by bike or by bus, while some students can walk since the host families live near the schools.

While living in a Chinese family, the students get the chance to taste the real Chinese food. The students are encouraged to introduce their countries' food culture too. Apart from forks and knives, the students will experience using chopsticks in China. Western influenced restaurants are becoming more and more common these days. Students therefore still have the chance to have Western food when they miss it.

During the whole year, students will celebrate the Chinese festivals with the host family, such as the Chinese Lunar New Year (the Spring Festival), Dragon Boat Festival, National Holiday, Mid-Autumn Day etc. The Spring Festival is as important as Christmas in Western countries. It is a time for family reunion, sitting together and making "dumplings", setting off firecrackers and watching the special entertainment programs.

China is renowned for valuing ritual and ceremonies ever since ancient times. Manners and etiquette between the elder and younger are very important. In China, it is regarded as very rude to call elderly people by their first name. On the whole, young people are polite, respectful, friendly and easy to talk to. It is particularly nice to discover their respect and fondness, not just for their grandparents, but for all elderly people.

## CHINESE PREPARATION COURSE

It will be a big challenge to learn Chinese, a language which is completely different from Western languages. STS China organizes a three to four week "Chinese prep course" for all students at the beginning of the academic year. This preparation course is included in the price.

During these three to four weeks the students get to learn the Pinyin form, which will be very helpful in their Chinese studies. By knowing some basic Chinese, students can make simple conversations early. Besides Chinese courses, the students will cover some interesting topics on Chinese culture together with our area representatives. Some short excursions will also be arranged on the weekends. These three to four weeks are great fun for the students.



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After the prep course, the students will be invited to take part in the farewell party. Then the students will move to the host families, often in another city, to start the exchange experience.

## PROGRAM EXTRAS

There are many interesting places worth visiting in China. During the exchange year the students will have the opportunity to visit Beijing and Shanghai together with other exchange students and area representatives.

### Shanghai Trip

Once nothing more than a small village, Shanghai changed forever when the British opened their first concession here in 1842. Already by 1900, Shanghai achieved international status as Asia's foremost center for commerce. Today Shanghai is a vigorous and energetic international metropolis. With its rich heritage of ancient Chinese culture, Shanghai offers much to see and do. The students will have the chance to explore Shanghai during the winter holiday!!

During the guided tour of Shanghai, we will visit the Old Town and Yuyuan Garden, the local market or antique market in the old street. We will then take a walk along waterfront in Puxi Side, appreciating the international settlement from the old days. We will also take the ferry to Pudong, on the other side of Huangpu River, to see the Lujiazui Financial Center with the tallest building in Asia. We will also visit the Shanghai Museum in People's Square, the nearby Shanghai Art Museum and the Urban City Planning Exhibition Museum. We will explore the French concession area, appreciating the old architecture and then enter into a contemporary art district in Shanghai. For the young people of Shanghai it is also famous for its shopping possibilities and glamorous night life. There will be time for shopping on Nanjing Road too!

### Beijing Trip

As the capital of China, Beijing is known by people from all over the world. When joining our Beijing Trip at the end of the exchange year, the students will be able to explore this fantastic city and have great fun.

The first stop will be the olympic venues (Bird's Nest and Water Cube etc.) Then we drive to the Great Wall if the weather permits. After returning to Beijing in the late afternoon, we will watch a kung fu performance and taste the traditional "Beijing Roast Duck."

There will be a walking tour through the impressive Tian'anmen Square and the Forbidden City – a monumental palace where the Emperors of China resided for about 600 years.

We will begin the next day with a visit to the Temple of Heaven, one of ancient China's most sacred sites, which was once used by the Emperor as a place to mediate affairs between God and Man. Later in the day, the students will spend time at the delightful Summer Palace, a retreat built exclusively for the Empress Dowager Cixi. The students will be shown how to make "dumplings" and have dinner in a nice restaurant.

A visit to the Urban Planning Museum will show the evolution of old Beijing and development of new Beijing. Then we will visit the "798 Art Zone". In the late afternoon, we will have a boat ride on the famous Houhai lake area. A pedicab tour through Beijing Hutong is recommended. The hutongs reflect the culture of grassroot Beijingers.

Welcome to China!



*All information is subject to change.*

