



KV02.1AT

Dear Parents/Carers,

China 2024 (Email 2)
Wednesday 17 July to Thursday 1 August 2024

I had hoped to send you a filmed recording in which I go through the attached PowerPoint presentation relating to the China 2024 field trip. Sadly, due to a number of technical issues and having tried to record this using three different apps I have decided to simply send you the PDF copy together with the itinerary. This will allow you to make up your mind without further delay as to whether you wish to avail yourself of a place for your child/ward.

We finally have an itinerary to match the stated budget and so the trip can go ahead.

The only changes to the original letter relate to budgeted items and to the itinerary. I have highlighted these changes (please last page).

This has taken a little bit longer than expected because (as I mentioned in the earlier letter) we doubted whether such a trip to China (as we have been running for over 20 years) would be possible for a figure that is just £200 more than the cost in 2019. Initially the cost of the China tour part arranged by the China based agents of our Travel company 'Select School Travel' together with the international flights meant that there was not enough in the budget to pay for the Hong Kong part of the trip which I organise with my contacts and friends in Hong Kong. However some small changes to the itinerary means that it is now possible to offer this trip at the price stated of £2700. I list below the amended list of what is and what is not included.

Please note that to secure your place you are requested to pay an initial deposit of £350 via ScoPay by Friday 20 October. The trip will cost £2700 (just £200 more than in 2019). You will be advised of the date for the remaining balance once we are made aware. You can pay off the balance at any time up until that date.

Changes to itinerary

Sadly, as I thought likely, the Shanghai visit had to be cancelled. I thought though that if people were to do a private visit to China you are most likely to visit Shanghai. I have moved some of the activities that were to be done in Shanghai to the other cities. This includes a visit to the Beijing Urban Development Museum instead of the one in Shanghai and also a visit to the acrobatic circus in Beijing. A wonderful relaxing foot and head massage is being arranged in Xian – this will be a real experience for everyone.

It has taken a lot of effort to get to this stage, but I am very pleased that the trip should be able to go ahead. I am particularly pleased that cutting the internal flight and replacing it with a bullet train will be more exciting,

because it will allow participants to see so much of the beautiful scenery in southern China – especially as we pass Guilin and the famous limestone Karst scenery.

This journey between Hong Kong Kowloon West and Chengdu is 1000 miles and takes 9 hours 45 mins whilst travelling at speeds over 186mph!! We hope to have half the seats as first class if they are released to us and the rest as standard. Those travelling first class will then swap on the next bullet train between Chengdu and Xian. For fun, I have also included a trip on the hard class sleeper train from Xian to Beijing. It is unlikely that this will be available much longer as China is removing most of its sleeper trains as it seeks to have even more Bullet trains cutting journey times by sometimes 5 or 6 hours. With HS2 in the news in the UK for the last 10 or so years it is worth noting that China has built its entire bullet train network within the last 12 to 15 years.

Guidance

A 'Guide to China' will be sent to you together with a kit list and other guidance. We usually run an optional 'bank' for this trip so that your daughters spending is looked after. We have had students leave their spending money in motorway service stations and airport toilets in the past. We would usually get a better rate for changing Sterling into HK\$ and then HK\$ into Chinese RMB. Your daughter might need some currency to spend at Manchester and Dubai airport though a payment card might suffice for these.

Current Geopolitical situation in China

China is becoming an increasingly difficult place to run a school trip to. Sadly on this occasion we will again not be allowed to visit the schools that we have worked in over the past 20 years last visiting in 2015. This is due to the changing attitudes within the Chinese government towards western backed non-governmental organizations. The NGO we have used in the past (The Hong Kong Salvation Army China Development Department) is still working in China, but with local workers. The current geopolitical situation in China means that it is not possible for a large school group to go into such rural areas, although it may still be possible as we get nearer to the date.

I would at this point make clear that I am fully aware of the possible geopolitical situation in China especially with the USA over Taiwan. Were anything to happen I would state that the insurers RPA who are underwritten by the British Government make things like refunding the total amount paid and repatriation much easier. This has happened when we tried to arrange two fieldtrips to Kenya, which were cancelled due to various security issues. I currently have all FCO updates relating to China sent to my phone.

Please ensure that your child/ ward has a friend to share with. They can come and see me if there is a problem with this.

Please note parents will need to pay the £151 visa cost directly to the Chinese consulate in Manchester at a later date. A trip to Manchester will be organised to facilitate this. This usually takes a day to organise. I will then go to Manchester to collect your passport a few days later. You will need to ensure your passport is updated now. If travelling on a non-UK passport please let me know.

For those aged 16 or over on the date of travel to China, a **separate Scopay balance will be set up shortly to enable this payment of £88 (Air Passenger Duty) to be made.**

Should you pull out of the trip then you would be liable for all outstanding monies. I would request that a claim is made on your behalf by the school Finance Department to Insurers RPA to recover deposits and any

monies paid or owed. It is unlikely that we will have a reserve list because this will be the very last trip to China, and we wish to include as many as possible.

Medical issues and specific details:

A full online medical form/online permission slip will be sent out shortly. It is essential that any issues that you are aware of are mentioned to us, in confidence, especially relating to mental health. This is to avoid any surprises as has happened on trips before. Please email directly to kvane@wkgs.net if you have any concerns.

There will be a chance to have a meeting to go through the kit list, baggage, rooming, vaccinations and all the other issues a trip like this has. We will also be arranging a meal for participants AND parents at the Chung Ku City Rendezvous restaurant (behind the Landrover-Jaguar show rooms near Brunswick railway station in Liverpool). This will give participants chance to sample some Chinese food including Sichuan food.

The details in the last email are still valid.

Any issues please either email or send your child/ward to see me in school.

With regards,

K Vane

Mr K Vane
Head of Geography

The expedition cost will include:

- Travel from West Kirby to Manchester – return by hired coach.
- Return scheduled flights and most taxes (Please note in the present climate airport taxes / fuel surcharges are subject to increase which is not included though this has never happened) **Flights are with Emirates via Dubai with a two hour stopover in both directions.**
- The cost of a hoodie and a polo shirt (possibly 2) with the trip logo etc added.
- Fully comprehensive insurance cover using the School Journey Policy (considered better than that used by the travel company insurance)

In HONG KONG:

- Travel from HK airport to the Accommodation at the Hong Kong Baptist University
- In Hong Kong **you will be given** a card similar to the London Oyster card. Called the octopus card it will have some credit on it.
- All accommodation in Hong Kong - sharing two to a room in the HKBU Halls of Residence. Meals in Hong Kong are extra (though there is a heavily discounted restaurant in our block at the hall of residence).
- Some meals in HK including a dim sum banquet and hopefully a gala banquet to celebrate the final China expedition. Also a vegetarian banquet at the Po Lim Monastery. A sea food dinner (vegetarian alternative in a well-known restaurant) in Sai Kung.
- **An additional bullet train from Hong Kong into China.**

IN CHINA

- All express bullet trains and/or sleeper trains.
- Use of a fabulous English-speaking guide (May) throughout our stay in China plus guides in every city.
- All meals in China (often as banquets)
- Accommodation (3* or 4*) in the Chinese cities to be visited (usually with western or Chinese style breakfast buffets)
- All travel, meals, and accommodation while in mainland China (excluding a few meals (fast food) when out shopping or on the train.
- Cost of all tours and entry fees in China.
- **All buses and trains in China.** Also bike hire on Xian city walls.
- All tips for guides, drivers and train personnel.
- Tea tasting session.

Extra items to budget for:

- **Chinese visa** - £151pp -The Chinese increased visa costs from £65 to £151 in light of the visa rises made by the UK government for Chinese nationals coming to the UK in August 2016.
- **Air passenger Duty - for any student participant aged 16 or above** on date of arrival back in the UK. (Sadly, this is a UK Government tax) This is £88.
- Meals and drinks while in Hong Kong (not mentioned above including breakfasts and the cost of local travel using a card similar to the London Oyster card. (Probably **about £10** per day - total depending on your tastes in eating). All travel in Hong Kong will use the excellent integrated public transport system. Cost is not high.
- A couple of fast-food type lunches while in China.