

EMW China

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS – 2008

ARRIVAL IN CHINA

Travel to China for new teachers must be coordinated with the Beijing Office so as to allow enough time to secure a work visa to enter the country. Wherever possible, new teachers will apply for a work visa prior to arriving in China and complete the process on arrival, however, on some occasions, new teachers will be required to arrive in China on a visitor visa and convert it to a work visa within 30 days.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

Full medical examinations are required for all individuals to obtain a work visa. In some cases, this must be accomplished as part of the visa process before arriving in China and in some cases it is accomplished within 30 days after arriving in China. Teachers from most countries are required to have full medicals prior to leaving their country of origin but in the case of Canada & the USA this requirement is waived for some provinces within China. Details for this process will be conveyed to individual teachers from the Beijing Office. It is important that teachers cooperate with requests and directives from the Beijing Office in order to accomplish what is required.

The cost of required medical examinations is the responsibility of the individual teacher. In China the average cost to date has been in the vicinity of Rmb 600/700. The examinations are conducted at facilities that operate under international standards that are very acceptable. If you prefer to complete an examination in your home country be aware that the resulting report may not be accepted by the particular authorities in your destination city. Before the examination is undertaken the teacher must attach a passport size photograph on the top right corner of the front page.

CHINESE DOCUMENTATION

When a teacher is accepted for a position in China and the location of the host school is determined, an application is made to local authorities for the issuance of two documents. One is known as a Letter of Invite and the other is an employment authority.

These documents are applied for by the host school who will forward them to our Beijing Office. We in turn forward the documents to the teacher. They are presented to the Chinese Embassy or Consulate and they play a part in the issuing of a Z visa to enter China for the purposes of employment.

Some schools require a so-called 'Standard Contract' to be signed before they can proceed, the purpose of which is to be able to secure the Letter of Invite and Employment Authority. There are differences between this document and the actual employment contract with WITT/BCIT China, however the WITT/BCIT contract remains as the only actual contract agreement between the teacher and the employer. The 'Standard Contract' is a process document only, sometimes required because the actual employment contract is not held with the host school, who must apply for the other required documents.

VISA PROCESSING

The process for obtaining entry to China for the purpose of employment as a Foreign Teacher will be initiated by the Beijing Office. The visa issued for initial entry is a Z visa and it has a life span of (normally) up to 30 days.

- A visa application form is forwarded to teachers individually. A passport size photograph is to be attached to the form prior to the application being lodged. The visa application accompanied by the letter of invite, the employment authority and the applicant's passport is forwarded to the Chinese Embassy or Consulate office.
- When the Z visa is issued the applicant's passport and original medical examination papers will be returned to the individual.
- The time for processing a visa application varies but is normally close to one working week. Within thirty days of the teacher's arrival in China the host school must apply on the teacher's behalf to the local government authority for further documentation. The documentation consists of a Residence Permit and a formal Foreign Expert Certificate. The residence permit replaces the Z visa issued for entry to China. The school is responsible for the cost of the Residence Permit which may take the form of a multiple entry visa in the teacher's passport.

TRAVEL AND HEALTH INSURANCE

The travel and health Insurance provided varies depending on the teacher's country of origin. Details of the insurance will be made available at the time of contract signing.

MEDICATIONS

Prescription medications can be difficult to source in China, so it is suggested that teachers bring a years supply of what they normally require. When travelling anywhere away from home, it's a good idea to have a supply of Imodium medicine for periodic bouts of diarrhoea and many western doctors will often recommend bringing a strong general antibiotic because most common health issues are related to bacteria infections. Also, common flu or cold remedies and strong pain killers are more difficult to find.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Teachers arriving in China will be asked for personal details in the form of next of kin contact information, allergies, existing conditions, which may have some bearing in the case of any emergency. We will also require full details of bank accounts in the teachers home country to which funds are to be remitted if teachers are going to avail themselves of that option. It is important that full identification of the bank, it's contact details, account details, and routing information are provided. (Check with your bank for what complete information is required for them to receive an overseas bank transfer.) All personal information will be secured in the Beijing office.

PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

All teachers have access to the Beijing Office staff at all times in the event of an emergency or personal problem. Also, the school of assignment takes responsibility for personal support. However, it's a good idea to avail yourself of what steps you would take in the case of a medical emergency, etc in your location.

CASH TO BRING

It is recommended that newly arriving teachers should bring with them at least \$(US) 500.00 which equates ~ RMB 3700, which is comfortably adequate for a month in China – including possible initial “settling-in” purchases that may be made. Most teachers report that they spend around RMB 2000 each month on incidentals and living. The cost of living in China is very low, so people may spend less than this, or more, depending on their individual lifestyle and requirements. Adopting local living practices is always the most effective method of keeping living costs down, but on the other hand, maintaining foreign habits such as only frequenting Western restaurants and Bars will have the opposite effect. Teachers are reminded to convert at least this minimum \$(US) 500 amount into RMB on arrival at the international airport in China as this can otherwise be a time consuming process to be accomplished later at a bank. Major ATM bankcards are accepted at designated ATM machines at most airports in China and at most Bank of China locations.

SALARY PAYMENTS & BANKING

Salary payments are made on the 30th day of each month. Tax audit regulations now require all teachers to open a Bank account, into which the salary will be paid. These accounts will be set up by the Beijing Office on behalf of all new teachers and can be accessed by bank card from the individual cities. Teachers are also free to open a personal account at the bank of their choice in their city into which they can personally arrange to have funds forwarded from their Beijing account.

To an increasing degree bankcards can be used in some of the larger stores, department stores, hotels, supermarkets and some restaurants. Also, they can usually be used when traveling in other provinces at money machines for the account bank and other banks using the same system, but be aware that the banking system within China is not yet accessible outside of the country to the extent to which we are accustomed to in our home countries.

REIMBURSEMENTS

Acceptable accounting practises in China still rely heavily on original documents and receipts. Because of this, teachers are required to obtain very specific receipts for reimbursable expenses such as flight tickets, meals, hotels, etc. All reimbursements must be pre-approved by the Beijing Office and require the proper receipt. Teachers should verify with the Beijing Office what is required in order to be sure beforehand for such items as visa procurements costs, travel costs, and other expenses.

REMITTANCES TO OVERSEAS BANK ACCOUNTS.

For those who wish to have money remitted to their country of origin the Beijing Office will normally accomplish this for teachers every three months. Occasional requests for special transfers are also processed. Fees from the agent for this service are very reasonable (usually Rmb 200).

CHINESE SCHOOL YEAR AND HOLIDAYS

The Chinese school year commences on or about 1 September each year and concludes in either late June or early July of the following year. The year is divided into two semesters. The first semester ends at the beginning of the Spring Festival/Chinese New Year, which falls in either January or early February of each year. The Spring Festival/Chinese New Year is timed on the lunar calendar. The duration of the school winter holiday (which includes the official Spring Festival), depending on the location of the school, is three to four weeks.

The second semester commences at the conclusion of the Winter Holiday and ends in either late June or early July. At the end of the school year schools then take their Summer Holiday, which generally covers the months of July and August.

Other holidays of note in China for 2008 are the National Day holidays (3 days). Work days are adjusted on weekends so as to allow for a total seven consecutive days off (Sep 29 – Oct 05). One day holidays are combined with weekends: Tomb Sweeping Day (Apr 4-6); May Day (May 1-3); Dragon Boat Festival (June 7-9); and Mid-Autumn Festival (Sep 13-15).

ACCOMMODATION

Teachers are provided with accommodation, by the host school on the school campus or nearby. It is provided free of charge together with electricity, water and gas. Some schools cover a base amount for utilities and pass on excessive usage costs to the teachers. In some cases the host schools provide meals for their teachers at little or no cost. Accommodations vary from school to school and are detailed at the time of contract signing, however, all living quarters will provide: bathrooms with western toilet, shower; basic appliances (stove, fridge, microwave, TV, clothes washer, etc); furniture (bed, desk, chair, table, sofa, etc); cooking pots; dishes; and linens.

EMAIL AND TELEPHONE ACCESS

Internet connections at the school are available to teachers at no charge. Usually, apartment internet connections are also made available by the school, but paid for by the teacher. This is the exception rather than the rule. Having your own laptop computer for communications, accessing & working with ESL teaching resources, and for record keeping is becoming increasingly more important for all teachers. Although schools are to provide access to a computer for these purposes, it can be frustrating sharing, working with some Chinese software, or depending on school provided equipment. Telephones are provided and teachers are expected to pay for long distance and international calls. These are usually made with the use of a phone(IP) card which can be purchased for reasonable rates. Most teachers purchase their own mobile phone and network which are very reasonable and do not require long term contracts. Many teachers also use Skype accounts and other web based services for long distance communicating.

CLOTHING

The weather conditions in China vary greatly throughout the country and by season. All types of clothing are readily available, but in relatively small sizes. Tailor made clothes are very inexpensive but it can take time to find a shop that you can successfully work through the language barrier with. Larger sized shoes and

accessories also take time to source. The experiences of shopping in China should not be missed, but be prepared for frustration if you are under tight time frames to secure specific items.

ENGLISH READING

All the major cities in China have decent access to English teaching resources, classic literature, and English Chinese newspapers, however, the latest English book releases, and English magazines are not readily available.

TRAVEL TO AND IN CHINA

The employment contract provides for air travel from the individual's country of origin (or point of contract signing) to the school of placement and return to the home country at the end of the contract period. A travel allowance option of Rmb 4000 for each direction is available for teachers from the end of their first contract and subsequent contracts.

All teachers will be met on arrival in China by either EMW China staff or staff from associate schools. For teachers starting in September it is intended for them to arrive in Shanghai in time for a 3-day Orientation & Professional Development Seminar before continuing on to their school of assignment.

EXPECTATIONS

Information regarding: living and working in China; Performance expectations, including course content, teamwork, semester & lesson planning, and learning outcomes will be reviewed with teachers upon their arrival in China. Teachers starting in September will do so at the Orientation & Professional Development Seminar held in late August. (Accommodation, meals and internal transport will be provided as necessary.) Teachers starting at times other than September will cover the Seminar content through meetings with the Human Resource and Academic Managers as can best be arranged.