

# IRISH CHINESE CONTACT GROUP

## Referral to Travel Handbook

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The purpose of this handbook is to provide adoptive parents with practical information on what needs to be done as that wonderful day approaches when you finally receive Article 17 from China.

This handbook is designed to be a complete reference from Article 17 to meeting your child.

A handbook of this nature is constantly evolving as procedures and systems change, to ensure that the information is completely up to date parents are asked to give feedback and observations on their journey to China.

The validity of this Handbook is noted on the end of the page - you can check the website for any updates when it comes to be your turn to use the Handbook. Updated copies will be available to print from Please do not copy this ICCG Handbook to others outside ICCG. Information is for ICCG member families only.

### **What has happened to date?**

Home assessment complete, declaration secured and your Dossier has been completed and sent to China EITHER by the AAI or HHAMA . The date that your Pack is SENT to China is called the DTC (Documents to China).

The date that your Dossier is SIGNED for in China is called the Chop date (CHOP being the signature reference on the Courier Document).

The important date, however, is the LID (Log in Date) which is the date that your Pack is officially logged in to the CCCWA (Chinese Centre for Adoption Affairs).

In time the Dossier is **translated** by BLAS (Bridge of Love Adoption Service) and the process of **reviewing** and **matching** with baby is undertaken by the CCCWA.

The most recent Lids to have received referrals are also shown on the CCCWA website. Current waiting times for the Non –Additional Needs Program is over 8 years.

Waiting time for the Additional Needs program depends on a number of Criteria. HHAMA will give you more information relevant to your application.

Should you be advance matched by HHAMA you will have received a Proposed Placement in Principle. In this case when you submit your dossier it is prioritised through BLAS Translation and on to matching and review rooms.

This document takes you from receipt of the formal referral, LOSC – Article 17. The process for proposed placement is one you should discuss with HHAMA

## **Section 1 Preparation for Referral**

## Documents Renewal

The following document needs to be renewed and kept in date.

1. Article 15, Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability for Adoption from the AAI

Allow 3 months for the extension of the paperwork for a FIRST extension. Only 1 extension is allowed for 1 year and this is done by applying directly to the AAI. If it is your second renewal of Declaration you will need to contact your Social Worker for re – assessment, In this case you should allow 6 months minimum for renewal.

**The Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability for Adoption** document - Article 15 , must be requested first. Forward a letter requesting renewal to the Adoption Board, who will send you an Affidavit to complete to confirm that the original document has been forwarded to China with your dossier etc. You will complete the Affidavit, have it witnessed by a Solicitor and return to the AAI.

Your renewed Article 15 will be issued in time.

- This document must be notarised and apostilled as with the original Dossier.
- You must bring the renewed document to China when you travel to collect your child, unless you have been asked to submit them to the CCCWA – this request will come via the HHAMA if applicable.
- Send HHAMA a scan of your revised Article 15.

## Passports

[for **all** those intending to travel] must have a validity remaining of at least six months [180days] after the date of travel. You will need to renew your passport if this is not the case. Renewing your passport at this stage has no impact on your Dossier. **You will, however need to get an affidavit of ID declaring your passport number has changed.**

## Vaccinations

You should seek medical advice from your GP /Travel Clinic in relation to the vaccinations necessary for travel to China. ICCG provides details of recommended vaccinations below but advises that you **should** consult your doctor.HHAMA does not provide vaccination advise

It is recommended that you get Typhoid, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Hepatitis A and B injections. You may also need medication for malaria depending on province you are travelling to .You can consult the following websites for information: [www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm) or [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) (World Health Organisation)

## Section 2 Referral. [Non additional needs program]

Referral = Article 16, China call it a Letter of Seeking Confirmation [LOSC]

The AAI will contact you by telephone with referral details :

**Make sure the AAI have you correct contact details in advance of the expected call. Ensure they know you will be away and who to call in your absence.**

When the AAI ring – record

- the Child's name \_\_\_\_\_
- the Social Welfare Institute (SWI) \_\_\_\_\_
- Province \_\_\_\_\_
- Boy or Girl \_\_\_\_\_
- and Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Get your referral file:

- You can collect your file from the AAI in Dublin or
- You can request it be posted by Registered Post to you

If you are registered with BLAS Consultancy \* you will receive the translated details including medical report and development report by email approximately 2/3 days after referral call is received . If not registered BLAS you can request the services of a translator in Ireland (see List of Translators on ICCG website Useful Addresses)

Details of registration with BLAS Consultancy on ICCG website along with form top complete. Fee \$150 at time of print.

Bring the translated medical report to your GP or paediatrician

Remember you will also receive an updated file approximately 2 weeks after referral documentation if you have signed up with BLAS consulting.

Sites which can help you answer some of your medical questions are;

<http://www.orphandoctor.com/>

And <http://www.fwcc.org/pediatricexam.html>

You may like to translate your Child's name but this is actually impossible to do from the words [pinyin] that you get. The Chinese Character is the important thing as the same word in written [pinyin] Chinese can have many meanings.

The sound of the name is also something you should do phonetically if you want to get it right – show a Chinese person the character and ask them to pronounce it.

If you do this then record the way they say the name [on your phone] so you can practice it yourself. It is actually quiet important as to mispronounce a Chinese name could be to alter the meaning considerably.

### **Accepting your Referral.**

- Timing of this acceptance is completely up to yourself. Once you accept - and your **original** acceptance letter is received by CCCWA from the AAI: CCCWA will begin to work on your letter of Invitation to Travel. So if you accept in a timely manner your travel will be approx. 5 weeks after acceptance. If you decide to wait to accept your travel date will move out accordingly.

You can travel any time after your letter of Invitation to travel (LOITT) is provided within 6 months from referral date, although if delaying a significant time do please get confirmation from your Agent that this is acceptable to CCCWA.

### **To Accept your Referral.**

You can either sign and send back your acceptance while collecting the file [**ask the AAI to copy it for you** ] or when you receive it in Post you can sign and copy and return [REGISTERED POST] or have the information and medical report assessment translated and accept in your OWN time [REGISTERED POST] .

If using BLAS for travel, ICCG recommends that you scan a copy of the acceptance to BLAS.

Forwarding a copy of your acceptance to BLAS means they can give you the go ahead for travel. You can then arrange your flights.

### **Send a Care Package or Camera to China**

Assume you advise ICCG of your referral details of SWI etc. ICCG can provide you with an address label for the SWI in Chinese Characters in English. [www.blessedkids.com](http://www.blessedkids.com) is the source of these address labels.

We suggest you either:

- Send a disposable Camera with a letter requesting that photographs are taken - Letter available to download on [www.iccg.ie](http://www.iccg.ie).
- Send a letter with Questions you would like answers to as supplemental information about your child
- Questionnaire available to download on [www.iccg.ie](http://www.iccg.ie)
- Contact the services of BlessedKids themselves to send a care package on your behalf.

Some send toys, blankets and all sorts of treats in a care package. Others think it is unwise and not practical for the SWI to have to give this parcel to one baby.

Decide the agent you want to use for **IN – CHINA itinerary**.

Bridge of love Adoption Service Travel Department. Email [lx1@mail.china-blas.org](mailto:lx1@mail.china-blas.org) This agency is part of the CCCWA and very experienced in adoption facilitating, at present ALL of travelling families from Ireland use the service of BLAS.

BLAS will advise you of the EARLIEST arrival date, based on your acceptance of referral and the availability of LOITT

You can PROVISIONALLY book flights but do not FIRM THEM OR PAY FOR THEM without this confirmation from your agent that CCCWA will have the LOITT ready. This is a critical document to be able to process your adoption and province officials will NOT proceed with the adoption without it. BLAS services organise all internal flights, transfers, translation and accommodation as well as co-ordinating the adoption process .

**TO – CHINA Travel Arrangements**– ICCG recommends Travel Focus in Cork, Ruth at Travel Focus has a lot of experience with adoption travel.

Contact details on ICCG website Useful addresses.

Experienced Adoption Travel Agents understand the adoption travel business. In particular, the need for a single ticket for your baby/babies coming home. **This ticket must be in your Child /Children’s Chinese /Name to match his /her /their Passport and VISA**. It is important that tickets are correctly named.

**Note: if your child is OVER 2 you need to be aware of a difference in booking their return ticket as they require a seat booking and not just a baby ticket. Please ask us for specifics.**

Decide the route you want to take TO/FROM CHINA

We recommend only Amsterdam or Paris or Frankfurt – Transit VISAs are not required, via London an additional VISA is necessary. It is possible to DO but adds more unnecessary complications.

Decide on the travel CITIES- TO/FROM CHINA

**TO** ... for the journey TO CHINA you can land in Beijing or Shanghai. You should check with your BLAS for availability of guides if not using Beijing or Shanghai. In particular note if you want to travel via Hong Kong a multiple entry VISA is required.

**FROM** ...You have the option to use **Shanghai** or **Beijing** for the return leg as both cities have an Irish Embassy where you will need to secure your baby’s VISA. **You must go to one of these cities on the return leg to get a VISA to allow your baby back into Ireland.**

### **Sample Itinerary when using BLAS**

BLAS like you to arrive in China on a Wednesday or Thursday and do some sightseeing in Beijing (to allow you time to see your baby's Motherland). Then they arrange for you to travel to the Province at the weekend to meet baby/babies.

You will usually need to stay one week in the Province to get the paperwork completed, a working week runs from Monday to Friday. Then back to either Beijing or Shanghai for baby's VISA – You must allow the Monday for getting Baby's VISA and so earliest travel back to Ireland is Tuesday - if following the normal itinerary but can stay longer if you like.

2015 – it is now necessary to make an appointment with Embassy in Beijing or the Consulate in Shanghai and to have applied online for the child's visa before arriving at the Embassy or Consulate. HHAMA make those appointments even for LID families if you engage their services after referral.

### **Are you going as part of a group?**

Make contact with others in your group if you wish to travel as a group.

Note: you can travel out and back with different arrangements and via different cities and still be a group in the province for the adoption process.

Once travel arrangements have been decided contact BLAS and advise them of your arrangements. For BLAS there is a travel form which you should complete. Blank forms are available from [www.iccg.ie](http://www.iccg.ie) you will receive an itinerary for your time in China with costs detailed. Payment for this service [BLAS] can be wired in advance.

### **Once travel TO/FROM CHINA is booked – apply for your own VISA [s]**

#### **VISA Application for the Irish Travelling party**

You can organise your VISA from the Chinese Embassy once you have your travel arrangements made. **You do not need to wait for the letter of invitation to travel.** List BLAS as the people you are visiting and take your referral documents with you to the Chinese Embassy in Dublin. The Embassy opened Monday to Thursday 9 am to 12 noon. You do **not** have to attend yourself to get your VISA you can send a friend. You **cannot** apply for a VISA by POST. You can ask for fast service there and then but more often than not you have to leave the application for a week and collect later.

There is also a VISA application available for download at the embassy website :

<http://ie.china-embassy.org/eng/qzs/>

#### **Applying for VISA**

Make sure the VISA is correctly completed. Check it while at the counter and bring any queries to the attention of the Embassy staff. The VISA is dated from date of issue and is valid for 3 months so any minor changes in your travel dates are not critical to your VISA validity

#### **VISA – Bringing other Children to China**

If you are bringing other children to China we **recommend** they have their **own** Passports and VISA **ensure the Embassy clearly indicate that on the VISA.** If they have their own passport, then you will have to get them a VISA in the normal way.

If there are children in your travel party who were adopted from China and now have Irish passports, we have been advised you may need to bring their Chinese passports to the Embassy when getting the VISA. There is lack of clarity on this point so until we get a statement from the Embassy perhaps

it is best to have them in your pocket in case they ask for them but don't surrender them as they are a vital souvenir.

**Packing List** – Remember pack light – China has shops too!

A comprehensive recommended packing list is printed for you in the appendix section of the Handbook.

**Money** - US Dollars are not necessary

- Euro can easily be changed for Yuan in China.

For a pocket converter we recommend this link that has a calculator with exchange rates and also generates a pocket converter for you to print out for your wallet.

<http://www2.travlang.com/money.Cgi?curr1=USD&curr2=CNY>

### **Currency**

You can exchange € to Yuan at Hotel Receptions. There are ATM machines you can insert your € and get local currency or you can do it in hotels or airport.

Euro can also be exchanged in China without difficulty.

Dollars are preferred currency especially for gifts or tips.

### **Donations /Fees**

You will need Y3500 for the orphanage. You will also require various amounts for the Notary, Registrar, Police etc. – your guide will advise you in advance, budget for €1500.

We recommend you take a number of empty envelopes and count the money out in advance so it is an easy matter of handing over the fee to the recipient rather than scrambling for the correct amount with baby in arms. Label the prepared Envelopes.

These payments are made at the official adoption day or passport application day and you will either have a list if the detail on your Itinerary or will get from your guide in advance.

### **Other**

Phone Cards can be bought in the business centres or hotel receptions; this is an economical method of reaching friends and family in Ireland

### **Credit Cards**

It is a good idea to advise your Credit card Company in advance that you will be using your card in China so they are not alarmed and trying to contact you when they see transactions suddenly appear in your favourite new shop in Shanghai! Put phone numbers for your Bank into your mobile phone in case your cards are lost or stolen.

### **Gifts to take to China – For Whom?**

It has become traditional to give **small** tokens to those you meet in China, officials, carers, SWI staff, and foster families. It is **not** necessary to buy expensive gifts, as they would only embarrass. It is acceptable that you take **small** gifts for your baby's carers and the officials you meet during your adoption journey.

- AS a minimum you could take gifts for Orphanage Director, Orphanage Carer(s) – 3 or 4 gifts. You may end up giving all the SWI gifts to the Director. Toiletries or chocolates are good ideas. Carers can be male or female. You may find one particular CARER is special to your baby so find that out and leave a gift with their name on it in Chinese Characters.
- Foster mother / Family if applicable ENSURE you get the names of the Foster family written in Chinese on the gift tag as the Foster mother will probably not be there and this is to ensure they get a gift from you with their name on it in Chinese Characters.
- Notary and Province Officials. They often present you with a memento of the province so it is nice to have a gift for them. Take your gifts with you for the Official Adoption /Trip to the offices as this is when you will need many of them.
- Guides and Drivers – you may have 1 or 2 at a time. Guides and Drivers prefer tips to gifts

### **Suggested gifts to bring?**

- Something **Irish** can be nice if just as a tokens of your appreciation and you may in fact get some gifts yourself from the province officials.
- Irish music CDs, Irish Made Chocolates or body care products as well as Irish jewellery are all good ideas. Table mats and coasters with Irish Scenes are also ideal.
- Many would consider buying items in China to take to the Orphanage – see below.
- It always helps to have some extra small gifts in the event of meeting several people in any one category. Do take your gifts with you for both Adoption Day and official signing, as you may not know exactly when you need them.
- Red and Gold /Yellow are very auspicious colours in China so try and get Red wrapping paper or gift bags to take your gifts in.

The drivers should be given a TIP – if in a group you can have a collection for the driver at the end of your time in that area. Porters should get a tip

### **Orphanage Donations**

Taking suitcases full of clothes /shoes to the orphanage is not actually a great idea. For one you can buy ten times the amount of clothes in China for the same money. A second reason is that the orphanage will know better what ages, sizes, they need. Perhaps it might be better to consider to consider a donation instead – either of clothes or better still for a specific gift they might need.

Some families buy an item in China, where everything is much cheaper. Others have given the cash and the Director has purchased the item and brought back the receipt to the donor family .others have given the cash and left the spending up to the director. That is your decision. \*\*\* Perhaps you may prefer to find out which Charity, if any works with your baby's SWI and make your donation that way. REMEMBER it is NOT REQUIRED and only mentioned here as families have asked for guidelines.

- REMEMBER gifts for the orphanage could include sweets, colouring, toys [enough for many children] as there is quiet likely to be a lot of children left behind and it would be nice to leave them something they can all enjoy.

### **Adoption Process – What Happens?**

There is a video link you can watch to see an actual handover taking place. Some provinces still operate by bringing babies to the hotel and either handing over baby to all adopters in a conference room or in the privacy of your own room.

Search 'Gotcha Day' on Youtube to see a video, many are very difficult to watch but if you want to prepare yourself for the meeting you might like to watch one or two – PLEASE PLEASE NEVER CALL YOUR CHILD'S ADOPTION "gotcha day" it is a term earnestly rejected as being a wholly inappropriate way to speak about the child's first meeting day.

Most provinces now conduct the adoption process in the Official Office of the Civil Affairs department. Either way you MEET your baby – usually one by one names are called out and baby is brought forward in a carer's arms and handed to you.

PREPARE THE "REASON WHY YOU WANT TO ADOPT AND PROMISE TO CARE FOR BABY" LETTER.

You will need to do this when you meet the babies so have a copy of your original letter or pre-prepare a letter which you can write out. This is why the copy pack is so useful. You can copy details from your original letter and you can reference Salary information etc. to keep everything consistent.

NOTE: both Mum and Dad should be familiar with this because one of you is going to be very busy with baby. If single parent travelling without another adult to mind baby then you have to get the carer to hold baby for you.

**BABY'S PASSPORT** you get this from the officials in the province at the end of the fifth or seventh day.

At some point they will take passport photos of baby. **Request that they give you extra so you have them for the VISA.** To get Baby's VISA (from the IRISH Embassy in Beijing or the Consulate in Shanghai) you will need- baby's passport and passport photo of baby.

**They will need to see the Immigration Clearance Certificate and keep a copy of same. [You must retain the original]**

**Your guide will lead you in all of the formal process.**

**Remember BABY will be very taken aback, surprised and frightened.**

Please proceed slowly, have one small toy to help distract or some simple snack food item like a plain biscuit. Sit quietly and just allow your child to begin to get to know you slowly slowly !

Take pictures of course but remember your child needs to see you and not the lens of a camera.

MDH Adoption Parenting [www.mdhadoptionparenting.com](http://www.mdhadoptionparenting.com) has particular interest in the topic of LIFEBOOKS for our Adopted Children and so we include some recommendations to consider in ensuring you make the most of the opportunities to complete a LIFEBOOK.

### Lifebook – While in China Advice.

If you send and/or get your Camera Back then – It is recommended that camera shots are developed in China so you can ask for names and details of everyone who appears in the photos.

### **Orphanage visits**

*Can you visit the orphanage during your time in the province?* The answer will probably be no but ask anyway. It is against CCCWA policy to allow visit to SWI on the adoption trip, although some allow it. BY joining the SWI Yahoo group before you travel you will have a good idea if those adopted from this SWI are allowed visit.

- ✓ If turned down in advance do then ask your guide again while in China, they are closer to the situation and may get a different answer. If the answer is still no then ask if you can even get to the city /town. If you can get to the city /town perhaps you can see *finding locations*.\**\*Finding locations – this is the exact place where your child was found.*

**\*\* Finding Advertisements – this is a newspaper advertisement placed in a local newspaper picturing each child who has been abandoned. It describes where he/she was found and briefly describes him /her to aid in birth family finding. This is done to enable someone to claim the child. Try to get a copy of the advert. From SWI.**

- ✓ Some find the distances too far to travel but perhaps just One Parent /Adult will go and not put the pressure on baby to make the journey. If you are independent and want to try to get there yourself then at least take a copy of the SWI address label in Chinese Characters to give to a taxi driver

**Remember for Lifebook privacy it would be better to have a separate recording tape for your baby's Finding Location or SWI if you get to visit. You may not want to have these featured in the "holiday " video you want to share with family and keeping them separate avoids the need for editing**

### **Photographs**

Make a list of the photographs you want to have as a minimum- Having a list reduces the stress about getting various photographs and will be very helpful for your child to understand the process.

- ✓ Photograph the **Director** and **Carers** on adoption day. You can ask your guide for their **names**. Take pictures of your child with them if possible. Take pictures of the **Orphanage** and **Foster** family if you can.
- ✓ Take photographs of your **adoption** day, official days, **Officials, getting passport, your guide, consulate**, airport departures and arrival, etc. . . . Ask your guide /others in your group to take family pictures of the whole family at important times ...
- ✓ In particular VIDEO of Adoption MOMENT is very precious. If in group make an arrangement with another family – if you could all tape as much as you can and photograph as much as you can, you can share out afterwards.

### **Information**

Have a copy of the BLANK questionnaire you sent to the orphanage just in case they did not get it. Pass to the Director when you meet your child and they may have answers by the time the passport is handed back.

Most importantly make a list of questions for the director, carer, and foster family. Do this BEFORE you leave when you have time to think. Here are some questions you might like to ask: Either request your guide to ask in Chinese or have your guide TRANSLATE it in advance.

- What is a typical day like? \* What do the people in the area typically do for a living?
- Had he/she a special friend in the orphanage?
- Were there any others in foster care with your child?
- What type of family was he/she in care with? Ages, names, foster parent's occupations?
- Who was your child's special carer in the orphanage, what is his/her name?
- Any special little antics they would get up to, games, nicknames etc.
- Who found your child? \*What was he/ she wearing?
- Was there a note? Can you have a copy of any note
- Can you have a copy of the finding advertisement?

Only you have your child's progress report so you can determine the most appropriate questions. It is important to gather as much information as possible about your child's life before you met to include in the Life Book.

Finally – get to know your guide, get his / her address and email so you can keep in touch.

## Section 5: Medical comments

### Comments and Hints based on Members feedback

#### Health insurance Providers 'Policy on Adopted Children

We queried VHI, BUPA & VIVAS for their policy on adding adopted children to their health plans:

Here is the outcome of the investigation.

**VHI:** "An adopted child can be included onto their parents' policy from date of adoption. The child will be free of charge from date of adoption up to the next renewal date and no waiting periods apply to the child"

**BUPA QUINN:** "An adopted child can be added to policy with no waiting periods if the adopted child is added to your policy within 13 weeks of their adoption date on the adoption order. We do not require a copy of the adoption order. The child will be free of charge up to their first renewal date."

**VIVAS:** "In order for a child not to be subject to any waiting periods he/she would have to be added to the policy within 13 weeks of date of **BIRTH**. If the child is added at a later stage the standard waiting periods apply "

VIVAS are out of line with the market and it is something you need to be aware of if they are your health plan provider.

**Please note the following as the appearance of Mongolian Blue Spot can cause some concern and it is not something you should worry about.**

#### Mongolian Blue Spot

A question has been raised about Mongolian Blue Spot in case you come across it. Your child may have blueish making on his / her lower back or shoulders. This is perfectly normal for Asian children and not a concern. The websites below provide information on the condition:

<http://parenting.allinfoabout.com/glossary/mongolianblue.html>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001472.htm>

#### General Research on Medical Issues:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001474.htm> is a good link to have with you to search any ailment using the computer in the business centre of your hotel.

Medical problems may arise, rare but must be prepared. Recent experience suggests you should request a prescription for antibiotic in powder form to take with you to China. Augmentin was the recommended choice to have as an antibiotic just in case your child has any infection. Early use of an antibiotic can prevent an infection becoming a serious problem. Also note Penicillin is apparently over the counter medicine in China and many bugs are immune to it.

**As ICCG will not give medical advice the above comments are merely reflecting feedback from other families. You can show this to your own doctor who should make the decision with you on what is appropriate and guidelines for use. Put your doctor's phone number into your mobile so you can contact him / her directly if needed.**

Should you have a concern while in China note: Province hospitals may not be acceptable in terms of hygiene and may not have facilities you need. Anaesthetics may not be available in province hospitals. not all hotels have a clinic with a medical practitioner - if THEY DO and they call them Doctor remember they are not always qualified GP's and so be careful , phone your doctor at home if in doubt .

However this is not to suggest that ANY medical concerns you have with baby should not be assessed by the medical practitioner in CHINA. We do not recommend relying solely on self-medicating. In the event of a child's condition worsening or more rarely having a serious adverse reaction to un – prescribed medication a prior medical opinion would seem wise ...So do of course go to the medical advisors available to you.

Some useful Hospital Contact details for you to have on file

Recommended Hospital in Beijing –

Beijing United Family Hospital and Clinics # 2 Jinagtai Lu, Chaoyang district,

Beijing 100016 China Telephone (8610) 6433- 3960

[Www beijingunited.com](http://www.beijingunited.com) or <http://www.unitedfamilyhospitals.com/>

Another recommended hospital is the Vista Clinic in Beijing [www.vista- china.net](http://www.vista-china.net).

## Section 6 – Final Words

### Finally – Reality Check

Please be aware this is not a holiday, it may be very difficult or it may be great. Your child may not take to one of you, they may pine for foster parents, or they may not.

Children may be upset on adoption day and may react very badly to leaving their cares. This is normal and actually indicates a strong bond which experts say is a much better indicator of an ability to attach. Expect your child will feel more comfortable in the presence of Chinese people & language than with new parents.

Remember the SWI and Foster families are caring for your child as best they can but there is real poverty in the provinces in China and cleanliness and hygiene are not always to western standards. You try to do things like bath baby and change into the special clothes you brought and take photos. Baby may be afraid of water when you go to bath him /her maybe just sitting and hugging and talking to baby in a quiet place is all the progress you will make. Plenty of time to wash baby and dress him /her in a nice outfit.

It could be that Dad is the only one to get a look in or it could be Mum. This is very hard to take but it happens and you have a lifetime for the hugs and kisses so take it at a very slow pace first few days. Your child may not eat and may be genuinely afraid of you.

In extreme cases babies can be shocked & frightened that they almost totally fail to respond for a time after adoption. Patience and gentle care are the key. Don't rush it.

All this is not meant to scare you but the one comment families make on return is that we should make parents aware of the fact that this is not easy for anyone and that your expectations should be simple - take it as it comes, it will work out but maybe not straight away . The child may be very unhappy at first but with patience and loving care they will be fine, you might need some patience and loving care yourselves but you will make it. Honestly.

So take it in your stride, your guide is there to help you and you may be with other new parents so support each other. There is however a freedom from guilt in knowing that it is normal to have little settling problems, it is not just you it was many before you and it does work itself out.

Have a great time however it pans out , remember it all and get home safe and happy with no pressure on yourselves , let your families know you may need time to settle in and give yourself some space .

*Mary D. Healy*

ICCG

## CLOTHING

### Weather Check for Beijing

<http://www.wunderground.com/global/stations/54511.html>

**What to pack?** Assuming an average stay of 10-12 days. Depending on what time of year you are travelling you should of course adapt our packing lists to reflect ten local climate which prevails in the city /province to which you are going. pack Light is the recommendation – Hotels and laundries you can use to wash clothes - they are very hot washes so be careful of items that could shrink

### MUMS AND DADS

**\*\*\*\*\*Remember it is normal to find only squat toilets in China for ladies. Skirts may be easier to manage than trousers.** These appear first in the Airports so be prepared. Always have some toilet tissue in your pocket.

Obviously you will know what clothes to take yourself - but here are some suggestions from the wide variety of Internet Pack Lists.

Just remember to take comfortable clothes - lots of planes , buses and playing on the floor

The adoption official process is when they take your photo of you [and partner] and baby so that day you might like to dress up.

### FOR TRAVELLING SIBLINGS

Weather specific obviously – they will attract attention especially if they are blonde but all friendly curiosity. Remember to prepare them for the squat toilets & the attention.

#### Other Sibling “Stuff”

DS, PS or any other handy travel game device - check voltage for plug converter.

If old enough give them their own disposable cameras - you will be surprised at the great photographs they might take.

Books / colouring games for long airport waits.

### FOR THE BABIES

**The Chinese also like to see the babies well covered up. Don't panic if people come over and attempt to pull clothes into place. Avoid bear arms and legs in public no matter how hot it is. You will meet with a lot of disapproval if you go out with bare skin on your baby. They will have been used to lots of layers and skin covered in the sun is as much about keeping it from getting too tanned as about keeping warm. Many Chinese don't like dark skin as it suggests a peasant background. You can do what you like when you get home , when in Rome ...**

Obviously you will know what clothes to take yourself - but here are some suggestions from the wide variety of Internet Pack lists.

5 babygrows /sleepsuits /pyjamas ....allow for little accidents.

Vests – long or short sleeved - as determined by the weather. Lots of tights for babies if outfits are skirts /dresses

6 -9 outfits including a special return trip one .YOU CAN SHOP IN CHINA - keep space in the suitcase.

Baby booties /soft shoes /socks .Some Shops stock non-slip socks for toddlers.

Coat, cardigan, hat and gloves etc. in case it's cold. Sun hats are important in sunny climes!

Pramsuit for cold weather. Or rain jacket for wet weather.

Disposable nappy bags. Baby wipes. Baby changing bag & changing mat – disposable ones take up less room. Vaseline /sudocrem / or other emulsifying lotion.

Nappies\*\*\*\* you will probably be able to buy these locally while in /china bring some to get you through the first few days.\*\*\*\* **Remember the flight back and ensure you have plenty of the best quality nappies – in case of accidents**

## FOOD

**The Chinese tend to mix up porridge type solid food but give it to baby in the bottle and so your baby may be used to getting a bottle with the top of the teat cut off to allow them drink and more solid mix. Western baby formula manufacturers do not recommend this. Formula only in the bottle mixed in accordance with the instructions on the Pack is what would be recommended.**

**WATER CAUTION - Do not use TAP WATER unless it is boiled and cooled. This applies to formula mixing, diluting juice, BRUSHING YOUR TEETH AND SHOWERING. DO NOT EAT ICE-CREAM UNLESS SURE OF THE SOURCE. Make every member of your party aware of this concern and avoid tummy problems.**

**IDEA – PRACTICE : If not familiar with making up/ preparing formula practice at home**

**Formula** - If you have any problems with your baby and food call your guide and get help.

There are some suggestions that Soy formula may be preferred in case of Lactose intolerance. Others say that ordinary formula is fine. Remember if you want to get formula in China you will have to change back to an Irish formula when you get home anyway. May be better to start as you mean to continue – or buy the same formula in China and do your change over at home...your choice.

BLAS recommend you only take formula in cartons as the tins can cause concern with security checks.

You can now get ready mixed formula you just pour into the bottle. Handy to have in case we are out and about.

While there you have the opportunity to ask the carers /director to show you exactly what your baby is used to.

**Solid food** Solid baby food - dried packed food is easy and light to pack -tins are good too, but a large number of tins in one bag can be weighty. Obviously try to avoid glass jars in case of breakages – imagine the mess in your suitcase.

Congee is a rice pudding type of food which many babies /toddlers would be used to. You can probably get this at the breakfast buffet in the hotel so get a serving and put it in a Tupperware bowl to have with you for the day if baby likes it.

Rusk biscuits are similar. – These can be mixed with the baby formula to make a sort of porridge. Organic rice cakes are nice but the babies may not be used to eating hard food so best let any experimenting until we get home.

**Baby Juice.** Can be diluted with cooled water from the kettles in the hotel.

**Bottles** – disposable ones are really handy and can be purchased in most pharmacies.

They are AVENT brand and come with 10 plastic inserts with the holder. You can buy a box of 40 inserts as well. These are brilliant as they are ready sterilised and also considered to be very good for preventing colic as there is no air in them at all. You can buy airflow teats for your bottles so you don't have to decide on how many holes. **Bottle /teat** brush for washing feeding equipment.

**Baby cup** if you are going to bring juice

**Baby bowl** with lid and **spoon** for solids. REMEMBER you will be going a good seal on lot on trips so lids for all of these is a must.

**Steriliser** kit for bottle teats etc. *if necessary* ... Some recommend you bring Milton or similar tablets to sterilise the teats. You should confirm there is a kettle in the hotel rooms for sterilising. **REMEMBER** however your baby is **not** used to sterilising tablets and the taste of them off the bottle could put them off their food. Good old fashioned water is the best.

**Flask** wins best idea! Had boiling water all the time. Used it to sterilise and also to heat. I put 4 oz. of cooled water in the bottle and topped up with 2 oz. of boiling - Did not need to heat bottles then. Most of the Babies had to have bottles that were warm/hot and you are not always able to find a place to heat them up when you are out.

Bibs - disposable ones are handy! Try and get ones with plastic backing – really keep baby's chest dry.

Packets of their favourite snacks in case you cannot get them in China. Of course you can buy lots of snacks or sweets but your older children may feel better with their favourite Kit – Kat or whatever.

Why not bring packet soups , options hot chocolate sachets , teabags and powder milk , coffee sachets ,( remember sugar) or anything similar to keep you going if confined to your room with baby or just for a snack for the kids

### SUNDRY BITS

**Baby Blanket**- can also be handy for keeping your child snug in his/her buggy when you're out and about or travelling on the plane.

**Toys and books** – to entertain your child with. Again you will most likely be able to purchase these in China in one of the larger department stores, but it's good to bring 2 or 3 with you anyway. Many recommend ones that make a gentle noise as being a good distraction at times of upset.

**Baby wipes** – take them with you at all times- at Adoption Trip your baby will have ink on her /his foot for stamping papers and you will want to wipe it off .

**Baby bath formulas and shampoo.** baby talc and sponge and / or face cloth and towel

Many bath baby immediately – and put on fancy outfit but this is more for yourself than for baby and after a long journey to the adoption Hotel or office it may be necessary to let baby settle first. Some take to it very well but just remember if baby is stressed by the bath let it go and maybe just give him /her a clean with wipes and back into familiar clothes. Plenty of time of pretty outfits on a happy baby

Baby/child toothbrush and paste if required. We don't know if they have teeth or not – WOULD NOT BOTHER actually- they have enough changes to deal with without having to brush teeth for the first time. Plenty time when you get home.

**Hairbrush and comb.** You may find baby has cradle cap which can easily be dealt with by using CALENDULA or LIQUID PARAFIN and by rubbing on with a little cotton wool and brushing regularly with a soft baby brush. **Baby manicure set**, in case the nails have not been cut, special baby scissors or baby nail clippers

**Soothers /Pacifiers?** Choice. May be useful; on return flight to prevent ear popping. Even if you don't approve of them have one in your bag just in case. A happy content baby on a flight is a bonus

### Sundry Ideas

**Ziploc bags** are recommended as being handy for transporting all sorts of things. Alternatively bring bag clips to seal open bags / packets .Great to put rusks in and to keep your spoons clean. . Also did not bother bringing big box of wipes out every day, put some in a Ziploc bag and fitted neatly into my pocket.

Pocket packs of **tissues** /toilet paper

**Calculator** would be useful – currency convertor can be made up [**basic conversion 1Euro = 8.5 Yuan.** ..link in Handbook

**Sewing kit**, safety pins, rubber bands, scissors, selotape and spare pens may come in handy.

**Plug converters** for China –voltage in China is: 220V you can buy a universal converter in any department store or in the airport. bring two at least

**Phone Chargers** for your mobile phones. Diary or notebook so you can keep your own journal.

**Camera – of course you will have your cameras and possibly a video recorder with you.**

Have you enough batteries? Have you the **camera rechargers?** Plenty tapes & films (you can of course buy film in /China) but take plenty in case you get caught out.

The rooms in the hotels are air-conditioned which may mean they are very drying on your skin and in particular your throat when you sleep. Some packing lists recommend throat lozenges to ease the problem.

Evian moisture spray is great in hot or dry climates. Just spray on your face from time to time and it counteracts the drying of sun or air-conditioning. Available in boots

Pram /Buggy /Sling

If your child is young enough a **baby carrier /sling** can be a good idea, but be aware that baby can get very warm these are pressed right up against your body, so it could prove uncomfortable for them in warm weather. Great for bonding. ERGO baby carriers are easy to pack & suitable up to 4 years old

Note they do also protect you from too much interference from passers-by – believe me that can get a little much sometimes. However it is well meant so relax with it, smile and stay friendly.

You can bring a **buggy /pram** with you or wait till you get to China and buy one there. You can buy a buggy for 20 euro – light but did the job. Most of the hotels lend them to families also for the duration of your stay. Check with BLAS /CWTS if your hotel does.

**Bring the buggy home with you as hand luggage as you will need it in the airport and if there is any delay with your flight you have the buggy with you.**

### MEDICAL MATTERS for Baby

*So it's a good idea to meet your doctor before you go and ask his or her professional advice on what to bring with you in terms of general medicinal remedies. The items below are ideas based on other's experience and not a list of things you must do. We cannot stress enough that your own Medical advisor or Pharmacist is your only source of accurate advice. However , the experience of others in on a Chinese adoption trip is also available*

**Thermometer.** 3 kinds, strip, standard or ear. Price difference €3 €15, to €51

**Medicine dispenser** is invaluable. Like a dropper or syringe you can measure the appropriate dose and drop the medicine into her mouth. Much better than a spoon.

**Teething** gel, teething ring etc. There is a very good natural product called TEETHA which babies normally like and it is very effective in the relief of teething problems. It is made by Nelsons and available in chemists or health shops.

Some people bring child laxatives with them – **laxatives can be extremely harmful to young children** and should only be administered under medical supervision. Your doctor may advise you on simple remedies for constipation in young children, such as sugar and water or prune juice etc. There is a prune juice in most health food shops but plenty of fluids is the simple and gentler approach.

Some people recommend Dozol or some relaxant to put the babies to sleep on return flight. Note, some of these products actually have the opposite effect so if you are trying one test it the day before the flight to ensure it does not cause hyperactivity. Here again a natural alternative from Mother Nature – Lavender is a lovely natural relaxant and can be got in massage oils for babies and mums & dads.

Based on past members' experience there are those who strongly recommend you take an Anti-biotic for your child

This should be taken in powder format and only mixed if you need it.

**Calpol or Paralink** or similar painkilling child medicine ...be careful not to mix medicine containing paracetamol- give one or the other and adhere to the dosage guideline .

Baby may have a cold or stuffy nose & cough. There are very few cough remedies you can give babies but there is a homoeopathic bottle called SOOHA. Karvol or Olibas Oil to have to use in case of stuffy noses for any of the travellers – give a little relieve when sleeping.

In the event of you needing Hospital details for China please print details of the English speaking US hospitals from the website. Don't forget you will have website access in the Hotel business centre so anything you need to research should be available to you

## MEDICAL MATTERS FOR MUMS AND DADS

**If you are a little nervous then try a little RESCUE REMEDY. It is a natural relaxant and great before a flight or just to relax you in the lead –up to travel.**

Basic first aid kit with wound wipes, plasters bandages etc. . . . A tea tree foot spray is a good idea in case the feet get hot and tired. Pain Killer – whatever works for you .One pharmacist said Solpadine because it also has codeine.

For possible tummy upsets. Mottilium is recommended.

For possible Diarrhoea. Arret is recommended along with Dioralyte to re-hydrate

Sun screen – remember Some of the Malaria prescriptions mean your skin is more susceptible to burn , bring a good high factor

Lip salve for dry lips in both the case of hot sun and the dry conditions we may find in our air conditioned rooms. One with Aloe Vera is recommended.

Insect repellent, Mosigaurd or Jungle Formula .DEET>30% if you want the natural alternative there is NEEM based product in most health shops. Eucalyptus is also a good oil to have

**Antibiotic – for information Penicillin is over the counter in China and many bugs are resistant to it .Perhaps request an alternative from your doctor.**

Antiseptic wipes to have to hand if you worry about any surface. Tea Tree is a good natural antiseptic

## DOCUMENT TRAIL

Double check that you have all your documents with you – it’s a good idea to bring a copy of your pack with you just in case. You more than likely won’t need it, but better safe than sorry! **All hotels have a business centre so it will be possible to get documents copied there, or your guide can arrange it.**

In particular the renewed documents should be brought, Declaration of Suitability & Immigration Clearance. If you have had to submit your renewed documents to CCCWA during the Review Process then bring copies.

Also recommended that you let a full set of documents at home with one person whom you can call to get any mislaid documents faxed to you at the hotel

## In your document folder

**Letter of INVITATION TO TRAVEL** – which will be sent by CCCWA to Adoption /Board for you to collect approx. 4 weeks after Acceptance .You cannot process your adoption in China without this

**IMMIGRATION CLEARANCE CERT** – bring copies so you can keep the original safely for your landing back in Ireland. **REMEMBER DO NOT GIVE YOUR ORIGINAL IMMIGRATION CLEARANCE CERT TO ANYONE** YOU NEED THAT FOR FIRST IRISH AIRPORT YOU LAND BACK IN – WHERE YOU HAVE TO SURRENDER IT. If there is not someone there to take it from you, you must post it back to Department of Justice on your return.

**PASSPORT PHOTOS OF MUM AND DAD** you need to bring at least 4 of each of you.

## AIR FLIGHT

BOOK a basinet for the return journey. Make sure your travel agents put in the request.

Bottle for baby for take-off and landing gear popping but remember new regulations restrict the amount of liquid you can take. This is where readymade formula in sealed containers might be good. Check with your airline as to what is acceptable. Summary document on [www.lccg.ie](http://www.lccg.ie) in the referrals section.

Excess Baggage – Check excess baggage charges and be mindful when buying lots of stuff to bring home. KLM levied € 35 for each kg over 20kg per passenger. People should ensure that they don’t load their checked in luggage with presents! Outbound or Inbound ...

Shipments can be sent by BLAS back to Ireland if you want to ask them to bring boxes to the hotel and pack up your heavier stuff.

We recommend you bring a document folder with you in hand luggage which should include obviously tickets, passports with visa but also copy of the ADOPTION CERTIFICATE you get in the province that has your photos in it. Just in case there is a question relating to a Chinese baby with a Caucasian parent.

Remember our suggestion to have your baby buggy with you in case of long delays or long walks around airports.

**SAFE AND HAPPY JOURNEY**