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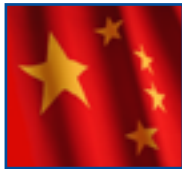
*Living, Working &  
Doing Business in*

**CHINA**

Leo Lacey

# Living, Working & Doing Business in **CHINA**

● A Survival Handbook ●



Leo Lacey



Survival Books ● Bath ● England

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## Swiss News

"Rarely has a 'survival guide' contained such useful advice – This book dispels doubts for first time travellers, yet is also useful for seasoned globetrotters – In a word, if you're planning to move to the US or go there for a long term stay, then buy this book both for general reading and as a ready reference."

## Living France Magazine

"If I were to move to France, I would like David Hampshire to be with me, holding my hand every step of the way. This being impractical, I would have to settle for second best and take his books with me instead!"

## Reader (Amazon)

"I read most of the books available on this subject before migrating to Australia, so I feel confident enough to say that although this guide is sometimes exhausting... if you pick out the information which is relevant to you the information is golden."

## ICI (Switzerland) AG

"We would like to congratulate you on this work: it is really super! We hand it out to our expatriates and they read it with great interest and pleasure."

## The Riviera Reporter

"Let's say it at once. David Hampshire's Living and Working in France is the best handbook ever produced for visitors and foreign residents in this country; indeed, my discussion with locals showed that it has much to teach even those born and bred in l'Hexagone. It is Hampshire's meticulous detail which lifts his work way beyond the range of other books with similar titles. This book is absolutely indispensable."

## Reader (Amazon)

"I have been travelling to Spain for more than seven years and thought I knew everything - David has done his homework well - Excellent book and very informative! Buy it!"

## American Citizens Abroad

"It's everything you always wanted to ask but didn't for fear of the contemptuous put down - The best English language guide - Its pages are stuffed with practical information on everyday subjects and are designed to complement the traditional guidebook."

## Reader (Amazon)

"A must for all future expats. I invested in several books but this is the only one you need. Every issue and concern is covered, every daft question you have but are frightened to ask is answered honestly without pulling any punches. Highly recommended."

## France in Print

"Covers every conceivable question that might be asked concerning everyday life - I know of no other book that could take the place of this one."

## Reader (Amazon)

"This book is highly recommended to serious people who are looking for immigrating to Canada. This book is very useful since you will know exactly what all you must do and what all you must not do when you are in Canada. It gives you an OUTLINE of Jobs and many other things which you must know when you want to settle in Canada. A MUST TO READ FOR IMMIGRANTS"

(We want to thank this reader for their enthusiasm!)

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# Important Note

China is a vast country with many faces, a variety of ethnic groups, religions and customs, as well as continuously changing rules, regulations and prices. We cannot recommend too strongly that you check with an official and reliable source (not always the same) before making any major decisions or taking an irreversible course of action. However, don't believe everything you're told or read – even, dare we say it, herein!

Useful addresses and references to other sources of information have been included in all chapters and in Appendices A to C to help you obtain further information and verify details with official sources. Important points have been emphasised, in bold print or boxes, some of which it would be expensive, or even dangerous, to disregard. Ignore them at your peril or cost!

## NOTE

Unless specifically stated, the reference to any company, organisation or product in this book doesn't constitute an endorsement or recommendation. None of the businesses, products or individuals listed have paid to be mentioned.



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# Author's Notes

- ◆ Times are shown with the suffix am (ante meridiem) for before noon and pm (post meridiem) for after noon (see also **Time Difference** on page 258).
- ◆ Prices quoted should be taken as a guide only, although they were mostly correct at the time of publication, and unless otherwise stated usually all taxes. To convert from other currencies to *renminbi* (RMB) or vice versa, see  [xe.com](http://xe.com).
- ◆ His/he/him also means her/she/her (please forgive us ladies). This is done to make life easier for both the reader and the editor, and isn't intended to be sexist.
- ◆ The Chinese translation of many key words and phrases is shown in brackets in *italics*.
- ◆ All spelling is (or should be) British and not American English.
- ◆ Warnings and important points are printed in **bold** type.
- ◆ The following symbols are used in this book:  (telephone),  (internet) and  (email).
- ◆ Lists of **Useful Addresses**, **Further Reading** and **Useful Websites** are contained in **Appendices A, B and C** respectively.
- ◆ For those unfamiliar with the metric system of **Weights & Measures**, conversion tables are included in **Appendix D**.
- ◆ A physical map of China is shown on page 304 and a map showing the provinces in **Appendix E**.
- ◆ A list of useful Chinese words and phrases is included in **Appendix F**.



FORTUNE COOKIE



Wudang Shan mountain, Hubei

# Introduction

Whether you're planning to live or work in China or thinking about doing business there – this is **THE** book for you. Forget about all those glossy guide books, excellent as they are for tourists; this book was written exclusively with you in mind and is worth its weight in dumplings. It's been exhaustively researched, compiled and written by a long-term resident of China to meet the needs of anyone wishing to know the essentials of Chinese life – however long you're planning to stay, you'll find it invaluable.

General information about China isn't difficult to find and many books are published about this beguiling country (including our sister publication *Culture Wise China*). However, reliable and up-to-date information in English specifically intended for foreigners living, working and doing business in China isn't so easy to find, least of all in one volume. This book is intended to fill this void and provide the comprehensive practical information necessary to ease you into life in China. This country is still a mystery to many Westerners, although its emergence as a major power makes it increasingly attractive, particularly to adventurers, would-be entrepreneurs, and employees of businesses and organisations trading with China. Adjusting to a different environment and culture and making a home in any foreign country can be a traumatic and stressful experience – and this is certainly true of China.

Adapting to life in a new country is a continuous process, especially a country so utterly different as China, and although this book will help you through the 'beginner's phase' and minimise frustrations. It doesn't contain all the answers, but what it will do is help you make informed decisions and calculated judgements, instead of uneducated guesses and embarrassing mistakes. **Most importantly, it will help save you time, trouble, money and 'face', and repay your investment many times over.**

You may find some of the information in this book a bit daunting, but don't be discouraged – most problems occur only once and fade into insignificance after a short while (as you face the next half a dozen!). China is unusual, unpredictable and quite unlike Western countries; it's also addictive and a land of great opportunity, provided you're hard working and adaptable. Most expatriates agree that the longer you spend in this extraordinary country, the longer you want to stay. Certainly, a period of time spent in China is a wonderful way to enrich your life, broaden your horizons and, with luck (and hard work), make your fortune. We trust that this book will help you avoid the pitfalls of living in China and smooth your way to a happy and rewarding future in your new Chinese home.

Hao yun! (Good luck!)

Leo Lacey

January 2013





# 1.

## FINDING A JOB & DOING BUSINESS

**V**ery few people from Western countries migrate to China hoping to find a job, although this may change in the future if the Chinese economy continues to boom. The vast majority of migrant job seekers are from neighbouring Asian countries or developing countries in Africa and most of these are illegal immigrants. Most foreigners who end up working in China either move there to work for an organisation based in their home country, or are living – or travelling long-term – in the country and work to supplement their income. A great many of the latter group teach English.

Western workers in China can be divided into three main groups. There are the employees who've been seconded from a government department or business at home to work at an office, branch or subsidiary in China; some are recruited while living in China but most are relocated by their employer. Then there are people, often retirees, who are attracted to the opportunity of doing something different and seek out teaching work within China's education system. Thirdly there are the travellers, often young people on backpacking holidays, who look for a temporary job in order to stay on in China for a while.

In addition, China attracts an increasing number of hopeful entrepreneurs who want to set up businesses.

### ▲ Caution

No foreigner is allowed to work in China, for an employer or for themselves, unless they have a Z type work visa, and these aren't always easy to acquire. For more information, see Chapter 3.

Many foreigners find the Chinese job market is restricted. Although the economy is accelerating at a rapid pace, so is its population – around 1.35bn in 2012 – and the Chinese are first in line when it comes to work. There has long been a demand for so-called 'foreign experts' in fields such as finance, engineering, telecommunications

and information technology (IT), as well as those which require English language skills, such as teaching. However, foreigners now face increasing competition from Chinese students with degrees obtained in the UK and US, and even the 'experts' are finding their expertise challenged.

China has no 'migrant quota' as such. It doesn't need to attract overseas workers, skilled or otherwise, and doesn't encourage immigration. At the same time, the Chinese accept that foreigners can bring certain skills and knowledge to their society, thus they accept the presence of foreign staff at senior or confidential levels in branch offices established by overseas companies, but they expect companies to replace foreign staff with Chinese personnel as soon as possible. In short, foreign companies are welcome to exploit the benefits of trading in China provided China benefits from their presence, not only in the creation of jobs but also from the knowledge and skills that they bring to China.

### ECONOMY

China has the fastest-growing economy in the world, second only to that of the US. Its nominal gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$7.3 trillion in 2012, putting it ahead of its old rival Japan, and many experts expect it to overtake America in the next decade. Yet the size of its population means that its per capita GDP is much lower – similar to that of Ecuador or Iran – and many of its people have yet to benefit from the economic boom. Nevertheless, China now has over 100 US\$billionaires and tens of thousands

of US\$millionaires and its urban population is becoming increasingly affluent, eating more meat and investing in consumer durables from televisions to cars. However, there's still a great deal of poverty in rural China where many families subsist on as little as two dollars a day.

Industry accounts for the largest slice of GDP (almost 47 per cent), closely followed by services (44 per cent), with agriculture a distinct third (9 per cent) despite the fact that farming employs almost 40 per cent of the population. The major industries include mining and the processing of commodities such as coal, ore, iron and steel, petroleum and chemicals, and manufacturing (cars and other transportation, textiles, food and electronic goods). China leads the world in exports, shipping out over US\$1,900bn in goods in 2012, well up on the previous year, with the US its largest customer. Its trading rivals have accused it of manipulating the value of its currency in order to increase its export power – flooding the West with cheap goods – although this hasn't dented its trading powers.

The downside to this economic explosion is perhaps an overheated economy, but inflation is currently low and stagnant: in late 2012 it was just 1.7 per cent and although there have been rising food prices – a factor which further divides the rich and poor – the incipient property boom seems to be (for now at least) under control. Average house prices increased by only 1.8 per cent in the year to June 2012, with the government having taken a number of measures to reduce property speculation.

What is amazing about China's economic growth is that – unlike its main competitors the US and Germany – it has a planned economy. The communist government has left little to chance. However, national planning is no longer

as all-embracing as it was in the early days of the People's Republic of China and, these days, under a system of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', to quote former leader Deng Xiaoping, it's a far more free-wheeling society than even ten years ago.

Today, after 30 years of massive change, China is still evolving; this time from a country that grew out of the development of a massive overseas export trade to a country that is expanding by meeting increased domestic demand. The credit crunch, which has affected the global economy since 2007, severely influenced even China's export-oriented output and caused a major government re-think. More and more funds are being pumped into improving the country's infrastructure and to opening up the central and western provinces rather than into the already heavily populated and prosperous east and south.

At the same time, the emphasis has shifted from quantity to quality as China seeks to add value to its goods by producing more technologically advanced products and to improve quality to at least the equal of that achieved in developed countries.

It's an incredibly exciting time to be living in China. New roads, railways, airports, factories, offices and homes are springing up everywhere and the pace of change is staggering. Nowadays, China is building more expressway (motorways) each year than the UK has built in total since World War Two. However, such rapid progress comes at a price. The boom in construction has led to overcapacity in some major industries such as cement and steel making, and a rationalisation and closing of some recently-built facilities has been necessary, but this isn't easy to implement as every province is quick to emphasise that their facilities are essential.

No one appears willing or able to admit that even China itself sometimes struggles to keep up with the pace of its progress, and a foreigner entering this maelstrom of productivity is in for a strident wake up call.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

In the days of the Cultural Revolution, unemployment was unheard of as everyone worked for the common good of the country, even if they earned little for their efforts. This attitude lingered on until the end of the 20th century, with many people in state-run enterprises enjoying job security, plus a regular income and benefits – a concept which was known as the 'iron rice bowl'. However, as China began to look more towards the West, privatisation began and labour laws





were introduced, many employers have been unwilling to commit to long-term contracts and the new employment legislation was – and still is – often ignored. The result is a fluid and erratic jobs market where demand dictates supply.

It's difficult to gain a full picture of unemployment in China, as jobless figures are normally only measured within urban areas and exclude migrant workers – those Chinese who move to more prosperous parts of the country to find work. On this basis, in June 2012 the official unemployment rate was recorded as 4.1 per cent, but estimates suggested that if migrant workers were included it would increase to around 9 per cent. Neither figure takes any account of rural areas, where there's considerable unemployment and under-employment.

Migrant workers, who make up the bulk of the 800m strong labour force, regularly move between the city and country, taking jobs in factories and on construction sites when available, and then moving back to an agricultural lifestyle when the contract finishes and the workers are laid off. As such, they're never technically unemployed, although they have no job security and no social assistance to fall back on. In China there's very little social security and unemployment benefit is limited to the lucky few whose boss has made sufficient contributions, therefore many jobless people are dependent on family support.

## EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

As a foreigner you need to have certain specific skills to succeed in China. There's no requirement for blue-collar workers – over 70 per cent of the population is unskilled – and even the trades are well supplied. If you're a skilled tradesman, such as a plumber, and plan to set up your trade in China, think again. There are plenty of plumbers, electricians, mechanics and hairdressers already and, while you could possibly find work, the salary would be nowhere near the level you could earn in your home country. You would find it virtually impossible to live on around 1,000 *renminbi* (RMB or *yuan*) or £100/US\$150 a month.

But there's work in China for expatriates, especially for those with some ability to speak and understand the local language. The main areas in which to look for employment are listed below.

### Government Organisations

Foreign embassies and consulates employ their own nationals in senior positions, although most junior roles are filled by local (Chinese) people. In between, there are a few posts where confidentiality is an important factor – for

example, certain administration posts, and less senior roles in immigration departments such as entry clearance officers – and these jobs may go to locally-based expatriates, often the wives or daughters of diplomats and other foreign executives who already possess the necessary Z visa (see **Chapter 3**). Such jobs are frequently advertised on embassy websites. If you have some knowledge of *Putonghua*, or Mandarin as it's called in the West, then your chances of being taken on are greatly increased.

It's worth noting that embassy staff are sometimes treated as if they were working in their home country and this may have a bearing on your tax situation. For example, if you work for a UK embassy or consulate in China, you may be liable to pay UK income tax as your workplace is regarded by the UK tax authorities as being on British soil.

The British Council, which promotes Britain and its interests, offers employment to teachers of English and other subjects and to examiners for the International English Language Teaching System exams ([☞ britishcouncil.org/china.htm](http://britishcouncil.org/china.htm)).

The addresses and phone numbers of foreign embassies in China, as well as major countries' chambers of commerce, are listed in Appendix A.

### Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) & International Businesses

Major positions are normally filled by personnel from the organisation's home country – who are flown in on a generous relocation package – and most of the jobs available to local foreigners are low level ones. However, sometimes an appointee filling one of the more senior positions becomes sick or has to return to his home country for personal reasons and, in such cases, organisations sometimes look to the market in China for a replacement. To identify such opportunities, check the websites of the relevant chambers of commerce, which publicise vacancies, some of which are surprisingly senior and well-paid.

Vacancies are also sometimes advertised in the various free 'expat' magazines, e.g. *City Weekend*, *China Expat* and *The Beijinger*, which are distributed around the major cities in places where expats gather, such as bars. There are also a number of employment agencies for expats operating in the major cities, although most of these deal, almost exclusively, in recruiting people to teach English.

If you have skills in a particular field that would be useful to a specific organisation, e.g. knowledge of computer-aided design which may be required by an international firm of architects, there's nothing to stop you approaching them directly and asking for an interview. Make sure that you're appropriately dressed and have a copy of your CV (résumé), plus a copy of any qualifications and the names of referees. You need to be realistic and only apply for jobs that you're able to do and where you won't face too much local competition. If you've worked as a clerk in a UK or US bank, you're unlikely to find a similar job in China where the banking system is very different and you'd have to compete with a mile-long queue of Chinese graduates applying for the same job.

As everywhere, your job-hunting success depends on correctly identifying what you can offer to an employer which other candidates may lack. As a Westerner you have the advantage of being a native speaker of English, the default second language in China, and possibly you have experience of relevant businesses practices in your home country – both abilities which a Chinese applicant cannot match. However, to your disadvantage, you probably have little if any ability to speak *Putonghua* and that could be important to your prospective employer. Whatever your skills, you must sell yourself hard, emphasising your good points, while trying to avoid revealing your failings.

### ☑ SURVIVAL TIP

Don't forget the *Yellow Pages*. China has no telephone directories for individuals or residential addresses, but it has a directory of businesses and other organisations called *Yellow Pages China*. They can usually be found in the rooms in larger hotels and can tell you if there's an office of the 'XYZ Corporation' in that city and provide its address and phone number. This resource is also available online ([yp.net.cn/english](http://yp.net.cn/english)). Other useful business directories include Alibaba ([alibaba.com](http://alibaba.com)) and Made in China ([made-in-china.com](http://made-in-china.com)).

## Schools & Universities

Since the '90s China has included the study of English in its school curricula, initially in secondary education and later in primary schools. Nowadays

it's even taught in kindergartens. There's a tremendous demand for the English language and it's become the de facto second language of the country. However, in the majority of cases, lessons only cover reading and writing. Oral English – speaking and listening/comprehending – is rarely taught by Chinese teachers.

As a result, there's a huge demand for native English speakers to teach oral English at every level of education and, if you're aged over 21 and under 65 and possess a bachelor's degree in almost any subject from a reputable university, there are jobs galore. No previous teaching experience is necessary, although it's welcomed.

If you wish to act as an examiner for either International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) tests in China, you must have both a degree and three years' experience of teaching adults. These jobs may also require you to have a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) or TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) qualification from an accredited school, such as Trinity or Cambridge – these qualifications are useful for any would-be English teacher.

The Chinese have quite a rigid view of what constitutes 'a native speaker of English': someone with white skin, fair hair and blue eyes, and preferably from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK or the US. This 'definition' isn't written into any job specification, but applicants who don't fit a Chinese interviewer's image of a native English speaker may find that the vacancy they applied for has suddenly been filled.

If you want to have a job lined up before you arrive in China, there are several possible approaches:

- ◆ UK residents can apply through the British Council.
- ◆ Contact an employment agency in China via the internet, but be careful. Don't pursue the matter further if they ask you for a fee and check that the employment conditions offered are approximately similar to those described in **Chapter 2**. There have been instances of some agencies committing applicants to working excessive hours.
- ◆ Decide where you want to live, then use the internet to identify universities and schools in that city. Most have a website advertising English teaching posts.

To work at a kindergarten or school, rather than a university, the first two options are the only ways to go, other than contacting a specific

'international school' in China. The latter provide a more sheltered introduction to the Chinese education system, although they usually demand some sort of teaching qualification.

If you don't comply with the above criteria, don't give up. Once you're in China, you'll discover that 'rules' aren't always strictly interpreted and it isn't unusual to find 'native English speakers' who come from distinctly non-English-speaking countries such as Russia or Italy. If a school or university wants to employ you, they can tell the provincial Foreign Affairs Department that you're the only suitable candidate for the job and request permission to employ you, which is usually granted.

If you're already in China, the best way to find a teaching job is to check out the expatriate magazines (which often advertise openings), apply to agencies and network among expat acquaintances.

### Chinese Government Organisations & Chinese-owned Businesses

The opportunities for a foreigner to work within a Chinese-managed organisation are very limited, not just because of the language barrier but also because expatriates have different expectations of salaries and working practices. The two sectors where foreigners can gain a foothold in China are professional sport (particularly basketball and soccer) and law. All the large law firms from the US, the UK, Australia and Canada have offices in either mainland China or Hong Kong, and there's a constant demand for lawyers and other legally-trained staff to join partnerships in mainland China.

The only other regular full-time jobs within Chinese organisations commonly available to expatriates are within the media. *China Daily*, the only national daily English language newspaper, regularly employs a number of expatriates. There are also positions available with China Central Television (CCTV), particularly the English-language channel CCTV News, as news readers, weather announcers or presenters for travel or documentary programmes. If you're fluent in French, Russian, Arabic or Spanish, CCTV may also employ you to present programmes in these languages. Local TV and radio stations are becoming similarly open minded towards the employment of expatriates. Such jobs are rarely advertised overseas and you must track them down once you're in the country.

If the idea appeals, CCTV and local TV stations also need expatriates to play bit parts in their innumerable 'soaps'. There's no requirement to



join the Chinese equivalent of Equity – not that there is one – and while the pay isn't brilliant, the experience is priceless. Or you could provide the voice over on promotional films for manufacturers focusing on the overseas market. A clear voice and good enunciation are all you need.

If you're prepared to put your conscience in your pocket and your tongue in your cheek, there's another type of 'acting' job. Some Chinese-owned businesses like to hire foreigners on a freelance basis to impress the competition; bringing along a 'foreign advisor' or 'foreign manager' to a meeting, especially with clients in less sophisticated parts of the country, makes a big impression. As a result, there are opportunities, often advertised by employment agencies, for well-dressed, mature-looking Caucasians to pretend to be members of the bidder's group. Age is an advantage. If you're aged 40 or older – or look older than your years – you could earn anything between 1,000 and 2,000 RMB for attending a single meeting and pretending to be 'our boss from Germany'. All you have to do is nod at appropriate times and say 'xie, xie' (thank you) at the end. Be warned that the meeting often terminates with a lengthy banquet at which the client will do his best to drink you under the table.

Such is the importance of English in China that banks and insurance companies often hold competitions among their staff to find the best English speaker. For this they need judges and are delighted if they can find a native English speaker with a good voice and sufficient gravitas. It may be a one-off occasion, but if word gets around you could find yourself carving out a career as the Simon Cowell of English-speaking contests.

## WORK ATTITUDES

The Chinese are diligent workers, although their number one loyalty is to themselves. Most youngsters study throughout their early years to gain the vital qualifications which will open the doors to a profession, as opposed to a job, that provides more security. Those who cannot make the grade as lawyers, doctors or engineers look to the state-run organisations where they may still achieve a job for life – although there's no longer a guarantee of this – and have the opportunity of gaining some extra benefits on the side. The state employs a large proportion of the workforce, while the remainder work for private businesses or, if they're lucky, for themselves.

Whatever job they manage to obtain, Chinese workers take it seriously. They do as they're asked and rarely question their boss's instructions or think 'outside the box'. If they cannot manage a task they may simply not attempt it for fear of losing face, and hope that their inactivity isn't noticed. This can be a dilemma for foreign supervisors who may need to ensure that a task is within their employees' capabilities before delegating it.



A Chinese office can be a curiously old-fashioned place, with junior staff standing up to welcome their boss and calling him Mr (*Xiansheng*). The Western practice of using first names and inviting input from workers has yet to take hold in China.

However, don't be deceived by the humble and low-key attitude of Chinese workers. Under the surface lurks the soul of an entrepreneur and most are looking for any opportunity which may provide a stepping stone to becoming a boss themselves. Self-employment is the end goal for many Chinese, whether it's running a small shop or 'borrowing' an idea from their employer, improving on it and then setting up

a rival business with a better product and more competitive prices. At the very least they'll be studying the jobs market and poised to move on if another employer offers them a better position.

One of the most unique aspects of the Chinese workforce is its reliance on 'migrant' labour – workers from the countryside who perform the majority of unskilled work in factories and on construction sites. There are some 200m migrant workers providing a source of labour that can be turned on or off as required. If they're no longer required, either permanently or temporarily, they can be dismissed and, in the absence of alternative work, must return to their farms in the countryside and eke out a living on the land.

City residents regard migrant workers as a necessary resource but treat them somewhat unfairly. Migrants almost invariably work under worse conditions than the locals. The *hukou* system of registration makes it difficult to transfer residency from one area to another, so many migrants are permanent outsiders and have city residents' rights denied to them such as schooling for their children or compensation in the event of an accident.

Despite this treatment, their contribution to China's economic success is immeasurable. China now aims to produce goods that achieve international quality standards and, well supervised, the migrant workforce is quite capable of doing this. So much so that many world-renowned companies are basing all their production in China and things that you buy because they're American, German or Japanese, such as Olympus cameras, Sanyo televisions and even VW Polo cars, are manufactured in China by subsidiaries of the original company, and assembled by farmers from the western provinces. And they're none the worse for that.

## WORKING WOMEN

One of the major things that the Communist Party achieved in 1949 was the liberation of women. Mao Zedong famously said that 'women hold up half of the sky', meaning that they could do anything that men could do, and they've not looked back since. Far more than in the West, women in China are treated as equals by men. The majority of women of working age have jobs and women make up over 45 per cent of the workforce, receiving exactly the same remuneration as men doing the same job.

Many women work in more traditional female roles such as nursing, but many others do 'men's jobs', such as car mechanics, bus drivers and construction workers – there are even female

miners. Further up the ladder, there are plenty of women engineers, pharmacists, accountants and so on, while female cadres can be found at many levels within government departments. The one area where women are underrepresented is politics, although this may be due to a lack of interest rather than exclusion.

The 'glass ceiling' is much thinner for women seeking promotion in China than in many developed countries and women can be found at every level of society, business and industry. Some have become famous for their achievements in establishing major businesses and achieving great wealth through their endeavours. In 2012, the Hurun Report (: hurun.net) revealed that the three richest women in China were all multi-billionaires led by Wu Yajun, owner of a property development company, with a cool \$6.5 billion.

In this way, many women are freer than their sisters in the West. They can go to work and seek promotion, knowing that their children are safe at home looked after by grandma (and sometimes grandpa). A close family connection means they don't have to juggle their responsibilities as many Western women do. However, at the same time, many women, particularly migrant workers, work at the expense of their personal life. It isn't unusual for a husband and wife to have jobs at opposite ends of the country and only meet a few times a year.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Although trade unions exist in China, their role is less clear cut than that of unions in the West. They largely act as a buffer between employer and employees and aim for an ideal where bosses and workers work in harmony to achieve optimum production. However, most union representatives are directly employed and paid by employers and therefore often feel duty bound to take the employers' side in a dispute.

Despite or perhaps because of this, the government is keen for workers to have union representation and has successfully put pressure on all foreign joint ventures to allow the establishment of unions; even multinational companies such as US retail giant Wal-Mart, which has resisted unionisation in other countries, has been persuaded to comply.

Strikes and lockouts were a rare and unusual event until recently, but in recent years there's been growing discontent among workers who feel that the softly, softly approach of unions wasn't doing enough to support them. This resulted in some major upheavals at well-known international

companies during 2010, including a strike at a Honda plant in Guangdong province which led to wage increases at a number of industrial plants.

Although it's unlikely that as a foreign worker you'll be asked or expected to join a Chinese union, you might benefit from union support, not just in negotiating better salaries but on issues such as enforcing labour laws, supporting workers with industrial diseases such as pneumoconiosis (black lung) and silicosis (which is rampant in the mining industry), helping workers obtain compensation for work-related injuries, and clamping down on bosses who withhold pay illegally.

About a quarter of the Chinese workforce belongs to a union. The largest is the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (☐ [actu.org.cn](http://actu.org.cn)), an umbrella organisation representing a number of smaller unions with over 190m members. Not surprisingly, the ACFTU has close links to the Chinese government.

## QUALIFICATIONS

Apart from a degree from a major university, which can open many doors in China, many Western qualifications aren't relevant or helpful in China. An NVQ2 in hairdressing or social care won't help you find work in these fields as there are just too many Chinese willing to do these jobs and for a much lower wage. There's no system for recognising other countries' diplomas or certificates unless they have international prestige, such as qualifications in medicine or law.

That said, a dossier of neatly filed certificates looks impressive, and prospective employers will be more likely to give you their time if you show evidence that you've invested in your education, even if it isn't particularly relevant to the job.

If you're seeking employment as an English teacher at a school or university it's **essential** to have a copy of the certificate certifying your degree. This need not be a degree in English but does need to be a bachelor's degree (or higher) in a mainstream subject and awarded by a reputable university. It's worthwhile taking a few copies of this and any other qualifications with you to China. A TEFL/TESOL certificate (see page 20) is also impressive and may be a requirement for some positions.

If you're employed by an overseas organisation, you must satisfy their recruitment criteria regarding the necessary qualifications. However,



for some jobs in China, particularly the more off-the-wall ones, a clear speaking voice may be enough to get your through the door.

The ability to speak and understand Chinese isn't, in most cases, necessary if you're working for a foreign-based organisation or a school or university. You can get by without it, and at educational establishments there's always someone who can speak sufficient English. It's a bonus if you can understand even rudimentary Chinese, but it isn't essential (see **Language** on page 37).

### ☑ SURVIVAL TIP

If you plan to work in China, your employer may insist upon an annual medical (the employer pays). If you're found to have HIV/AIDS or another serious STD you're liable to be summarily dismissed and deported.

## GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Although foreigners in China comprise less than one in 2,000 of the population, there's a government-sponsored recruitment agency aimed at expatriates called China Job (🌐 chinajob.com), which is where prospective employers can post openings for foreigners. Historically, the vast majority of its jobs have been for English language teachers and lecturers, illustrating the importance that the government places on this role, but there are other positions available. In late 2012 it had postings for sales managers, analysts and engineers within the growing industrial sector, an English editor for an expatriate website, and even sales staff to promote foreign wines throughout China.

China Job holds regular job fairs in major cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai which are specifically aimed at expatriates, and are a good place to obtain information about work opportunities if you're already in China. Check out the website for upcoming dates.

## PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

There are a number of private employment agencies run by and for the Chinese, but in addition some of the larger overseas employment agencies, such as Manpower (🌐 manpower.

com.cn), Kelly Services (🌐 kellyservices.cn) and Adecco (🌐 china.adecco.com), have branch offices in China and advertise jobs which are open to foreign applicants. Chinese employers do use agencies to find key staff, therefore it's worthwhile checking their job vacancy postings, although you're likely to be competing with well-qualified Chinese candidates.

For top flight executive positions, there are a number of recruitment and headhunting firms operating in China, such as Bo Le Associates (🌐 bo-le.com), Korn/Ferry International (🌐 kornferry.com) and Stanton Chase (🌐 stantonchase.com). There are also many smaller agencies, sometimes run by expatriates, that tend to focus on locating and recruiting people to teach English (see below). Agencies for temporary staff usually specialise in providing Chinese workers such as cooks and tradesmen to foreign companies, rather than finding temporary positions for foreigners.

## Online Agencies

The rapid development of the internet has led to a huge increase in the number of online recruitment agencies and 'job search' sites (just Google 'jobs in China'). As with employment agencies, a great many of the jobs are for teachers. Some sites charge a subscription fee to access their vacancy lists, but many permit job seekers to view and respond to vacancies free of charge. It's also possible to post your CV online (again, usually free), but it's wise to consider the security implications of this move; by posting your home address or phone number in public view, you

### Leading Chinese Job Websites

chinasemester.com  
 craigslist.com  
 englishfirst.com/trt/teaching-english-in-china.html  
 esljobs4teachers.com  
 expatjobschina.com  
 job168.com/english  
 jobchina.net  
 monster.com.hk  
 shanghai.baixing.com  
 sinoculture.com  
 teachabroadchina.com  
 tefl.com  
 english.zhaopin.com