



# Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 48

January, 2012

## American Citizen Services (ACS) Contact Information

U.S. Consulate General,  
 Shanghai, China  
 1038 West Nanjing Road,  
 8/F Westgate Mall  
 梅龙镇广场 (Méi Lóng Zhèn Guǎng Chǎng)  
 Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650  
 Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071  
 Open 8:00am - 11:30am  
 and 1:30pm - 3:30pm  
 Monday to Friday \*Closed  
 on Wednesday  
 afternoons, weekends,  
 and holidays.  
 After Hours Emergencies:  
 (86-21) 3217-4650  
[ShanghaiACS@state.gov](mailto:ShanghaiACS@state.gov)  
 Homepage:  
[shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html](http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html)

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## Upcoming IRS workshop Notice

The American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is happy to announce that this year again an attaché from the IRS will visit Shanghai to conduct a tax workshop on Wednesday, March 7 from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

To reserve a seat for the workshop and receive additional instructions, please send an email to

[ShanghaiACS@state.gov](mailto:ShanghaiACS@state.gov)

We are also able to offer a **very limited** number of one-on-one sessions

with the IRS attaché. If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, please send your request by email to [ShanghaiACS@state.gov](mailto:ShanghaiACS@state.gov)



## Upcoming Holidays And Other Closures

A full list of all of our holiday closings is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/holidays.html>. The Consulate will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

**January 23-25, 2012, Mon.-Wed.:** Chinese Lunar New Year (中国农历新年 Zhōngguó Nónglì Xīnnián)

**February 20, 2012, Mon:** Presidents' Day (总统节 zǒng tǒng jié)

## Pension Plan For Foreigners

SOME foreigners who sign up to a new social security system will be allowed to retire in China so they can claim their pensions, Xinhua news agency said yesterday, offering details of a new tax that foreign businesses fear will push up costs.

The government has so far given only basic details about the scheme, which all foreigners who work in China are supposed to have started paying into from October.

Foreign executives in China have expressed concern that the tax will increase already rising costs, and that the plan is too vague and will be hard for companies to implement.

One of those concerns has been that foreigners will not be able to access

money from unemployment benefits or pensions because work visas are tied to jobs and become invalid when a person is no longer employed.

Citing an unidentified Beijing social security official, Xinhua said the government had made a decision on pensions at least.

"Those foreigners who contribute to social insurance and fulfill conditions will get social security, and will be able to, for example, retire in China and draw a pension," the report said, without providing details of how that might happen.

Money will also be paid back upon "written application at the end of the social insurance relationship," it said. Otherwise, the money will be kept

"until (the person) returns to work again in China."

Of the 30,000 foreigners working in Beijing, only 2,000 had so far registered to pay the new tax, it said.

Foreigners are also expected to pay contributions from October, although many local tax bureaus have said they are still unsure how to collect the money.

China's rules will make it more like policies in many European Union countries, where citizens and foreigners alike pay into the system. China's existing social security net offers meager protection for its citizens, compared to schemes in Europe.

## Travel Warnings And Alerts

*Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and be aware of your surroundings at all times.*

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Congo, Democratic Republic of the</u>	01/12/2012
<u>Nigeria</u>	01/12/2012
<u>Sudan</u>	01/11/2012
<u>Syria</u>	01/11/2012
<u>Philippines</u>	01/05/2012
<u>Central African Republic</u>	01/04/2012

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted condi-

tions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html).

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

<u>Tunisia</u>	01/13/2012
<u>Chile</u>	01/10/2012

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at :

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/pa/pa\\_1766.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html) .

## China to Crack Down on Expats Working Illegally

CHINA aims to curb illegal entry, stay and employment of foreigners, something which has developed into a "prominent problem" in the world's second largest economy.

The State Council recently submitted a draft law on exit and entry administration to the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the country's top legislature, for its first review.

The existing law on exit and entry administration, established 26 years ago when China was far from "the world's workshop," barely mentioned illegal employment of foreigners in China.

**Under the draft, foreigners must get work permits and residence certificates before being employed.**

**Foreigners who work illegally in China will be fined between 5,000 RMB and 20,000 RMB, and may be detained from five to 15 days for serious violations.**

**Those who illegally provide job placement services for foreigners or illegally employ foreigners would be also fined.**

"We shall put forth efforts on regularizing foreigners who are working in China, do better in visa issuing, and

strengthen residential management of foreigners," Yang Huanning, deputy minister of public security, said yesterday.

As a populous country, China would like to introduce more high-end professionals and limit the inflow of low-end workers, Yang said.

If a foreigner holds a visa allowing a maximum stay of 180 days, he or she will not need to apply for a residence certificate. If the visa allows a stay longer than 180 days and indicates that a residence certificate is needed, he or she must apply for it within 30 days after entering the country.

According to the draft law, the period of validity of a residence certificate will vary from 180 days to five years.

During their stay in China, foreigners should carry valid identity documents and submit to police inspection, according to the draft law.

It also stipulates that foreigners can apply to the police for a permanent residence certificate if an individual makes a significant contribution to China's economic and social development, or meets relevant requirements of permanent residence.

Foreigners who apply to stay in China as refugees will be granted a temporary-stay permit during an investigation and receive a refugee identity document for living in China after an application is approved.

An article about the collection of biological information for the use of border control is in the draft. It grants police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the right to issue regulations on the collection and storing of biological information, such as fingerprints of travelers entering and exiting China.

Collecting biological information will help identify travelers, improve the efficiency of border control and protect state security, Yang said.

According to the government, the number of people entering and exiting China has increased by 10 percent annually since 1990. In 2010, the number reached 382 million, including 52 million foreigners.

## Foreign Service Officer Test Will Be Offered in Shanghai in February

The list of overseas posts offering the February 2012 Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) is now available. To see the list and to view the steps in the Foreign Service Officer selection process, please go to

[www.careers.state.gov](http://www.careers.state.gov) to register.

Please visit [Careers@State.Gov](mailto:Careers@State.Gov) forums if you have any questions, or to search for answers regarding the Officer selection process.

We appreciate your interest in a career with the U.S. Department of State.

U.S. citizenship is required.

## Holiday Safety and Security

Every year in Shanghai there is an increase in the incidents of theft preceding holiday seasons. These crimes generally take the form of purse snatchings and victimization by pickpockets. People are victimized while shopping or visiting public shopping markets such as Pearl City in Hongqiao or Yu Yuan Gardens. Pockets, purses and backpacks are picked, or surreptitiously cut, with the loss of money, credit cards, and valuable identification.

Shanghai commuters were warned to keep a good eye on their personal belongings, especially wallets and mobile phones at crowded places, with police saying that thieves in the city, who have proven to be masters of their art, are bound to be more desperate for cash as the end of the year closes in.

The bureau added that extra officers are being dispatched at bus and subway stations, where countless people fall victim to thieves during the year-end period.

Shanghai Municipal Subway Police said "They know what to look for; people's earphones let them know in which pocket their phone or digital audio player is - and makes it easy for them to snatch without the person realizing until too late."

Video surveillance showed that theft victims were commonly approached while they were boarding or exiting trains, or passing through turnstiles and

busy crowds, when they were more vulnerable to theft, said police.

The thieves often work in teams, and are exceptionally gifted at concealing their intentions. While there is no foolproof method of eluding thieves, the information below may help reduce the possibility of your becoming a victim:

1. Before leaving the house, think about ways to protect yourself. Think about where you want to carry your money, credit cards and identification. Don't take valuable jewelry and watches with you. Separate valuables; don't put all your money in one place.
2. Reduce the possibility of becoming a victim by securing valuables in a waist belt or pouch, covered by a shirt, sweater or coat. **NEVER FLASH MONEY AROUND.**
3. Don't make it easy for the thief; don't carry large amounts of money in easily accessible jacket pockets or purses. Don't use a wallet. Use your front pants pockets and inside shirt pockets for your money and other valuables. Placing valuables in a purse around your neck or shoulder and secured inside a shirt, sweater or jacket is a useful habit to get into. Waist packs are better than purses or handbags, but they should also be hidden under a shirt or coat.

4. Never advertise your intention to spend a large amount of money. Why become a prime target?

5. Avoid shopping alone. Awareness of your surroundings and advanced planning are your best weapons for defending against thieves.

6. Always be aware of your surroundings. Look at people near you and watch for "accidental" nudging and touching.

7. Do not carry anything in your wallet or purse that you are not willing to lose. Most shopping in Shanghai is done on a cash and carry basis; leave unneeded credit cards and your passport in a safe place. Your Chinese ID card and drivers license are replaceable; family photographs and other personal items may not be as easy to replace. Remember; carry only what you are going to need for your outing.

### Vacations

Tenants and homeowners should prepare their residences to avoid advertising their absence regardless of the length of the absence. This includes:

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- (1) Being aware that there are many indicators that a residence is unoccupied (i.e., forgetting to cancel newspapers, mail or deliveries, leaving the home unlighted and the blinds or drapes drawn, and closing the shutters).
- (3) Being aware that you may choose to purchase automatic timers or photoelectric switches to turn on lights, a radio, or even an air-conditioner to create the illusion that someone is home.
- (4) Consider asking close friends or neighbors to look after the home (e.g., to turn on and off different lights, put out trash, etc.).

The precautions listed above can help to make you a harder target. The fact is criminals look for the easy target, the path of least resistance.

By making yourself a difficult target you can help ensure your own safety and that of your family. Please remember that thinking about what to do in an emergency is not as frightening as not knowing what to do when faced with an actual emergency.



## Dragon Dance of Dragon's New Year

**Dragon dance** (simplified Chinese: 舞龙; traditional Chinese: 舞龍; pinyin: wǔ lóng) is a form of traditional dance and performance in Chinese culture.

For over 2,000 years, the dragon has turned from a symbol of deity, emperor and imperial power into a symbol of the rising Chinese nation. The Dragon Dance, accordingly, has been elevated from asking for God and rain to expressing people's courage, pride and wisdom.

The Dragon Dance has diversified models and forms. The dragon is a totem of the Chinese nation. The farming tribes worship it very much. People think dragons can make clouds and bring them rain.

Playing dragon dances in the spring will hopefully bring people favorable weather; playing in dry seasons will bring them rain; playing to different families will drive ghosts out. Therefore, the custom goes on.

The longer the dragon is, the more performers there are. One person uses a pearl-like thing to lead the dragon. The dragon will rise or fall, slowly or rapidly. Sometimes, it flies up to the sky, and sometimes it is like hiding under the ocean and breaking waves. The fire dragon is made with candles put into each section of the dragon body. When performed at night, firecrackers are set off.

We see an extremely excellent scene of the fire dragon shuttling back and forth among fireworks. The grass dragon, also called "burning incense dragon", is made from rice straw and green vines, with burning incenses inserted into it. Played during summer nights, the dragon is like a meteor attracting a lot of insects. When the play is over, the dragon is put into a pool to drown the insects. Therefore, playing with the grass dragon helps get rid of insects.

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## Holiday Travel Tips

For those planning holiday travel, we offer a few tips to make your holiday travel smoother.

### Check our Country Specific Information Sheets to learn the Entry and Exit Requirements for your destination.

These information sheets are available online at <http://travel.state.gov/>. Please keep in mind that if visas are required, you will need to visit the respective embassies or consulates of your destination countries. In addition, some visas may take several days or weeks to be processed, so plan ahead and make your visa appointments early.

### Do you need a new passport or additional visa pages?

Please carefully review the validity of your current U.S. passport. Many governments require US travelers to have at least six months validity left in their passports for entry into their countries. China also requires 6 months passport validity to enter or reenter the country and airlines will deny boarding to those who do not meet this requirement or you may be refused entry by Chinese boarder authorities.

Regular passports are processed in Washington and are usually available for pickup at the consulate within 10 business days. More information about the passport renewal process can be found at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/passports.html>.

Only two sets of additional pages may be added to a passport; after that, you must replace the passport, even if it has not yet expired. Additional pages cannot be affixed to a limited validity passport.

### Make an appointment.

With the holidays approaching, ACS is likely to become increasingly busy. Passport services are by appointment only so as you plan holiday schedules and activities, please remember to book appointments early. See our website for further details: [http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/appointment\\_system011309.html](http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/appointment_system011309.html).

### Shorten your wait time at the Consulate: Fill out your forms in advance!

When applying for passport services at U.S. Consulate Shanghai, you can help to shorten your time in the Consulate waiting room by bringing your completed forms with you.

(Please ignore the part of the form that instructs you to mail the form to the U.S. If you mail the form to the U.S., your application will be considerably delayed.) Forms can be completed and printed out online at <https://pptform.state.gov/FraudAbuseNotice.aspx>.

### Register with Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).

If you are traveling abroad, register your trip online with Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html). The registration information is used to communicate with US citizens and assist them in case of an emergency.

You can find more information about international travel on the Department of State website at [travel.state.gov/](http://travel.state.gov/).



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Usually, the Dragon Dance is performed by many people with specially made stage props in their hands.



At first, they sing and dance, like butterflies among flowers. Then, they turn the stage props to form the head and tail of a dragon with some pieces of the lotus-like tools entering the dragon's body. When the dragon shoots into the sky, the audience feels the elegance and uniqueness of the dance.