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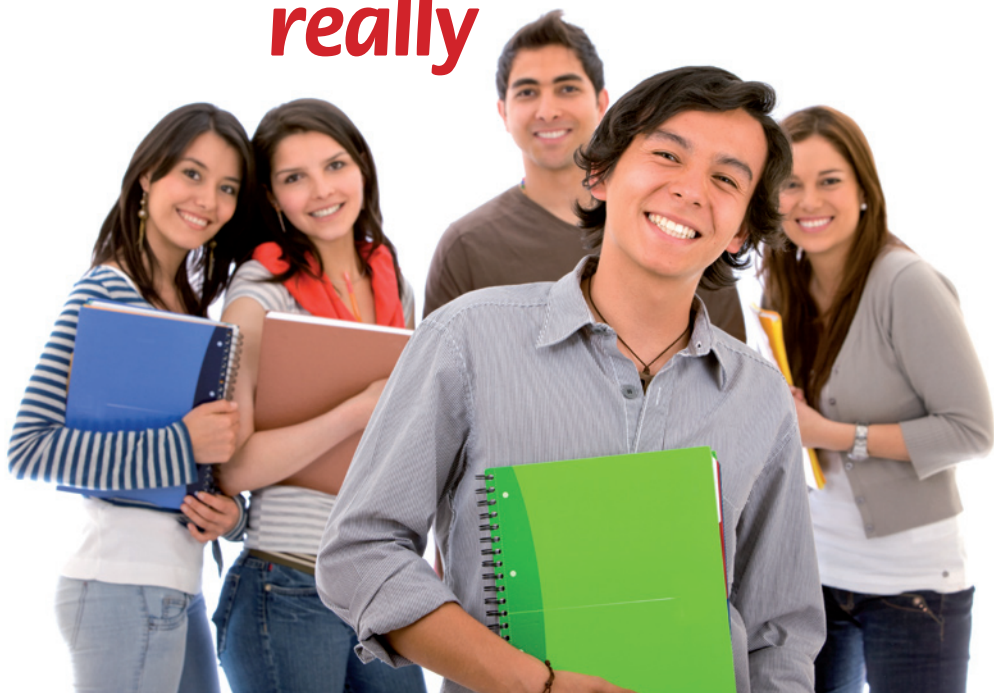


CHINESE
FOR EUROPEANS
欧洲人学中文

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Bulletin

**We are not so different
really**



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‘Chinese people are not like us’. ‘They’re so different’. ‘They think differently’. ‘You never know what they are thinking’. These are some of the comments you often get when you talk to people about the Chinese. But is it really so different? Go to a modern city like Beijing or Shanghai and many things are very familiar – energetic modern cities full of tall buildings shops, restaurants, cinemas and theatres – just like at home. Even some of the brand names are the same – is there anywhere in the world where there isn’t a Starbucks, Hagen Daaz or McDonalds? Every country has symbols of its past and China is no exception. The splendour and sheer scale

of many of the monuments is certainly awe-inspiring. People do what everyone does – go to work, go shopping, hang out with friends, go out to bars, restaurants, cinema... So what is so different? Perhaps we still associate China with the images we learned about from their past. Perhaps the spectacle of events such as the Beijing Olympics made us think what nation could achieve such a precision event on such a scale. Perhaps it is the sounds and the smells that are not what we expect...

If you want to make sense of what you see when you go to China and get the most out of your visit, you need more

than the language – you need to have some insight into Chinese culture. And this is not just the art, the literature, the films, the historical monuments and the sometimes elaborate dancing. If you know a little about the daily life of Chinese people and their values the way they treat each other and the way people may treat you as a visitor make more sense. What is it that Chinese people hold dear? How do they show respect? What is politeness for a Chinese person? Understanding these things will make your stay richer and more enjoyable

portant features of Chinese culture is ‘saving face’.

Face comes together with other values such as modesty, duty, respect for the wisdom of authority. Understand this and you have yet more insight into why the Chinese behave the way they do.

This is where Chinese 4 Europeans can help. Together with the language units comes a brief summary of *Things You Need To Know Before You Go*. This offers practical guidance on traveling within the country, background on how

Here is a small quiz

1. What time to people normally have dinner?
2. Why is a clock not a good gift to give?
3. Where can you bargain and how low can you go?
4. At a business meeting where do people sit?
5. What things can you talk about and what things are taboo?
6. How do you say no?

If you understand these things then you can be far more successful with even just a few words of Chinese. You will know when is the right time to invite people. You won't cause embarrassment with the wrong gift. You will be able to make your money go further. You won't sit in someone else's seat. You will be able to make appropriate small talk – in Chinese if you can or through an interpreter if you have to. The important thing about all these is that you will not cause offence with what you say and do. This is crucial because one of the most im-

students live, on family life, on business etiquette. It also tells you what is important to the Chinese. And what that can mean in terms of eating etiquette, in terms of decisions in negotiations and in terms of what to say and do and what not to say and do.

So we are not so different really. Just like going to meet a friend's family for the first time, knowing a bit beforehand about what they are like can really help.

Answers to the quiz:

1. People normally have dinner around 6 o'clock
2. A clock can be seen as symbolising the passing of time and death
3. You can bargain in any street market, some tourist shops and even in some larger stores – though here it should be more along the lines of asking if you can have a special price. Some people go as low as 50% of the asking price
4. The host sits opposite the door with the most important guest next to them. Other people will be arranged according to hierarchy
5. Sports, world affairs (superficially), interest in ancient Chinese culture and tradition. Avoid politics – especially current politics.
6. You never say 'no' – you find a way around it

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