

Bad Habits of the Chinese

Following is a list of Chinese *warts*. As with any society we inherit many habits, good and bad; some of which are perfectly acceptable or tolerated by our own, but sometimes offensive to people from other cultures.

First time Westerners to China are occasionally shocked by some of the public displays mentioned hereunder, but then some of the customs taken for granted in the West are considered offensive to Chinese; public nudity, open discussion of matters pertaining to sex, etc.

Conversely, most Chinese maintain a reasonable level of personal hygiene and are careful with food preparation.

They may not bathe as frequently as some in the West; however, neither do the Chinese suffer from the same pungent body odour as Europeans.

The bad breath often associated with Chinese is a result of food additives (condiments) and supplements (garlic, etc) and not necessarily indicative of poor dental hygiene. The Chinese have terrific, white teeth, or at least the non-smokers do.

SMOKING

Should you be looking for a job in a smoke free environment – don't come to China.

Seventy percent of men smoke and China consumes annually over half of the total world production of cigarettes.

Chinese, especially the less couth rural dwellers, literally everywhere; yes, including hospitals, buses, elevators and virtually anywhere else you can think of.

They smoke with their mouth full of food, between mouth-fulls and always before and after a meal.

Farmers will often ash cigarettes anywhere and squash their butts under foot on the restaurant floor, hotel carpet and toilet bowl.

Overflowing ash trays with wrappings, fruit peel and anything else not wanted are common sights.

Public rubbish bins are often spotted smouldering. Cigarette burns are frequent on hotel furniture, bathroom fittings and carpet.

Many women also smoke cigarettes; although they do appear to have better manners when doing so.

Care should be taken with clothing when in areas with smokers, especially after they have consumed too much alcohol.

THROAT CLEARING

Throat clearing has a direct correlation to smoking and aerial pollution. Many places in China can be quite dusty.

Not as frequent as it was, but still prevalent outside of the more sophisticated urban areas, such as Beijing, Shanghai etc.

Raucous and obscene, the practice is designed to clear phlegm and mucus that has built-up in the throat and airways. Unfortunately, the less sophisticated are not concerned about where or when.

SPITTING

Again, not as frequent as it was, but still more common than throat clearing, which is always accompanied by the final salvo of goolly being ejected on to the ground, floor or elsewhere.

NASAL EVACUATION

The Chinese do not use handkerchiefs. They feel the European practice of spitting and "blowing the nose" into a handkerchief is revolting, especially as it then returned to the pocket for re-use.

To clear sinus mucus it is either ejected by blocking one nostril and "firing" a shot air through the open nostril or (especially ladies) it is drawn back into the throat and ejected as spit, either into a tissue or on the ground.

A word of caution: Avoid any person performing this feat as the atomised spray can be seen and felt well beyond the performer, and, of course, it must be repeated at least twice, but in any case whatever number of times is needed to satisfy the offender.

BELCHING & FARTING

Belching or burping is not uncommon at and after meals. Farting or 'passing wind' is less common and is frowned upon at meals.

TALKING WITH MOUTH FULL, GUM AND LIP SMACKING

Commonplace. Masticated food is not considered offensive.

NOSE PICKING

Also, very common; not considered offensive but essential. The finds are usually flicked on the ground.

TOOTH PICKS

The hand is usually placed over the mouth when using tooth picks, and exercise that usually finishes the meal.

TOILETING

Toilets, especially outside of hotels and better restaurants, are usually Asian “foot-print” style. More often than not without paper; a small packet of tissues is VERY handy.

The toilets are an area where one evacuates “wind”, so can quite noisy and odorous. Soap dispensers and paper towels/hand-dryers are normally only found in hotels and better restaurants.

In non-urban areas toilets are often of a communal nature, that is no screening walls, albeit separate areas for men and women.

Urinals are common, but vary in standard.

Many public toilets have attendants and it is not unusual that a small fee of 1 or 2 jiao is charged, which also means you get a cleaner toilet and hand washing facilities.

STARING (or GORKING)

The Chinese do stare and intently study foreigners. Rural Chinese will study you quite intently out of sheer curiosity.

To them you are so different: Your skin colour; very fine, different and multiple coloured hair; protruding eyebrows; sunken eyes; big nose; ear lobes; thin lips; prominent, protruding chin and abundant facial hair on both men and women – and that’s just your head.

Foreigners use animation and gestures more so than the Chinese; therefore, your everyday and natural demeanour is often quite theatrical to on-lookers.

Also, European languages combine voice modulation and intonation to emphasise context and meaning. To an impartial observer you sound really funny and appear to be arguing – hence maybe something worth watching.

Ignoring the physical differences, such as (often) large and very strong stature, huge hands and feet, broad waist-lines, large rear-ends, large breasts and pot bellies; you are still a curiosity for many rural Chinese, but becoming less so.

LITTERING

A bad habit that appears to have been passed on to the children. Public litter/rubbish/trash cans are becoming more common in the major cities, but elsewhere, it is just drop it.

The practice is sometimes perpetuated in high-rise buildings where kitchen and other rubbish is merely thrown from the windows.