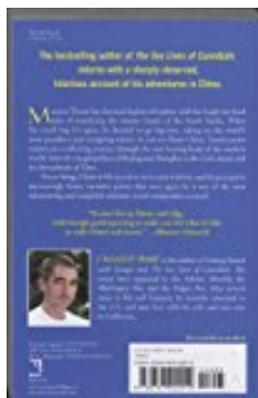


# [PDF] Lost On Planet China: One Man's Attempt To Understand The World's Most Mystifying Nation

J. Maarten Troost - pdf download free book

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#### Books Details:

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Author: J. Maarten Troost

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#### Description:

: Maarten Troost is a *laowai* (foreigner) in the Middle Kingdom, ill-equipped with a sliver of Mandarin, questing to discover the "essential *Chineseness*" of an ancient and often mystifying land. What he finds is a country with its feet suctioned in the clay of traditional culture and a head

straining into the polluted stratosphere of unencumbered capitalism, where cyclopean portraits of Chairman Mao (largely perceived as mostly good, except for that nasty bit toward the end) spoon comfortably with Hong Kong's embrace of rat-race modernity. From Beijing and its blitzes of flying phlegm--and girls who lend new meaning to "Chinese take-out"--to the legendary valley of Shangri-La (as officially designated by the Party), Troost learns that his very survival may hinge on his underdeveloped haggling skills and a willingness to deploy *Rollerball*-grade elbows over a seat on a train. Featuring visits to Mao's George Hamiltonian corpse and a rural market offering Siberian Tiger paw, cobra hearts, and scorpion kebabs (in the food section), *Lost on Planet China* is a funny and engrossing trip across a nation that increasingly demands the world's attention. --Jon Foro

**Maarten Troost's Travel Tips for China**

- 1.** Food can be classified as meat, poultry, grain, fish, fruit, vegetable and Chinese. Embrace the Chinese. If you love it, it will love you back. True, you may find yourself perplexed by what resides on your plate. You may even be appalled. The Chinese have an expression: *We eat everything with four legs except the table, and anything with two legs except the person.* They mean it too. And so you may find yourself in a restaurant in Guangzhou contemplating the spicy cow veins; or the yak dumplings in Lhasa, or the grilled frog in Shanghai, or the donkey hotpot in the Hexi Corridor, or the live squid on the island of Putuoshan. And you may not know, exactly, what it is you're supposed to do. Should you pluck at this with your chopsticks? The meal may seem so very strange. True, you may be comfortable eating a cow, or a pig, or a chicken, yet when confronted with a yak or a swan or a cat, you do not reflexively think of sauces and marinades. The Chinese do however. And so you should eat whatever skips across your table. It is here where you can experience the complexity of China. And you will be rewarded. Very often, it is exceptionally good. And when it is not, it is undoubtedly interesting. And really, when traveling what more can one ask for. So go on. Eat as the locals do. However, should you find yourself confronted with a heaping platter of Cattle Penis with Garlic, you're on your own.
- 2.** To really see China, go to the market. Any market will do. This is where China lives and breathes. It is here where you will find the sights, sounds and smells of China. And it is in a Chinese market where you will experience epic bargaining. The Chinese excel at bargaining. They live and breathe it. It is an art; it is a sport. It is, above all, nothing personal. If you do not parry back and forth, you will be regarded as a chump, a walking ATM machine, a carcass to be picked over. And so as you peruse the cabbage or consider the silk, be prepared to bargain. The objective, of course, is to obtain the *Chinese price*. You will, however, never actually receive the Chinese price. It is the holy grail for *laowais*--or foreigners--in China. Your status as a *laowai* is determined by how proximate your haggling gets you to the mythical Chinese price. But you will never obtain the Chinese price. Accept this. But if you're very, very good, and you bargain long and hard, and if you are lucky and catch your interlocutor on an off day, you may, just may, receive the *special price*. Consider yourself fortunate.
- 3.** Travelers are often told to get off the beaten path, to take the road less traveled, to march to a different drum. You don't need to do this in China. The road well-traveled is a very fine road. The French Concession in Shanghai is splendid. The Forbidden City is a wonder of the world. So too the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an. Indeed, the Chinese say so themselves. There is much to be seen in places that are often seen. And yet... China is not merely a country. It is not a place defined by sights. It is a world upon itself, a different planet even. And to see it--to feel it--means leaving that well-traveled road. And China is an excellent place for wandering. From the monasteries of Tibet to the rainforests of Yunnan Province and onward through the deserts of Xinjiang to the frozen tundra of Heilongjiang Province, China offers a vast kaleidoscope of people and terrain unlike anywhere else on Earth. This may seem intimidating to the China traveler. Will there be picture menus in the Taklamakan Desert? (No.) Is Visa accepted in Inner Mongolia? (Not likely.) Still, one should move beyond the Great Wall. And if you can manage to cross six lanes of traffic in Beijing, you can manage the slow train to Kunming.
- 4.** Hell is a line in China. You are so forewarned.
- 5.** Manners are important in China. How can this be, you wonder? You have, for instance, experienced a line in China. Your ribs have been pummeled. You have been trampled upon by grandmothers who are not more than four feet tall. You have learned, simply by queuing in the airport taxi line, what it is like to *eat bitter*, an evocative Chinese

expression that conveys suffering. This does not seem upon first impression to be a country overly concerned with prim etiquette. But it is. True, hawking enormous, gelatinous loogies is perfectly acceptable in China. And a good belch is fine as well. And picking your teeth after dinner is a sign of urbane sophistication. But this does not mean that manners are not taken seriously in China. It's just that they are different in China. And so feel free to spit and burp, but do not even think of holding your chopsticks with your left hand. You will be regarded as an ill-mannered rube. So watch your manners in China. But learn them first. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**From Publishers Weekly** Starred Review. In his latest, veteran traveler Troost (*The Sex Lives of Cannibals*, *Getting Stoned with Savages*) embarks on an extended tour of "the new wild west," China. Troost travels from the megalopolis of Beijing to small, remote trails in the hinterlands, the fabled Shangri-La and all points in between, allowing for a substantive look at an incredibly complex culture. He does an admirable job of summing up the country's rich history, venturing to Nanjing to learn about China's deep-seated animosity toward Japan; he also visits the Forbidden City, and the tomb of Mao Zedong, still very much revered despite his horrific record of human rights abuses. Gross disparity in wealth, omnipresent pollution and the teeming mass of humanity that greet Troost at every opportunity wear on him and the reader alike; the sense of claustrophobia only relents when he gets into more remote areas. Throughout, Troost is refreshingly upbeat, without a hint of ugly American elitism; he often steps aside to let the facts speak for themselves, and rarely devolves into complaints over the language barrier or other day-to-day frustrations. Those looking for tips on Hong Kong night life or other touristy secrets will be disappointed-few names are named-but readers interested in a warts-and-all look at this complicated, evolving country will find this a rich education. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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