

JUST IN CASE YOU GET SENT TO: XIAMEN

Xiamen is an attractive coastal city one and a half hours flight south from Shanghai and is the major commercial city (but not the capital - that is Fuzhou) in Fujian Province. Somewhat recently blighted due to the smuggling scandal of a couple of years back, it nonetheless enjoys an excellent living environment and is rightfully regarded as one of China's most pleasant coastal cities. Xiamen has long held close ties with Taiwan - the Taiwanese island of Jinmen is swimming distance just off the coast. With direct links slowly being reestablished between Xiamen and Taiwan the city will boom if this accelerates.

Previously known as Amoy, Xiamen is home to a handful of consulates, and with its initial trading history stretching back to 1516 it possesses a wealth of colonial history -- the island of Gulangyu, easily reached by regular ferry or speedboat from the main port (it is only a 5 minute ride) is a fascinating walk with old colonial mansions. a great beach and no traffic.

Xiamen has an excellent new international airport, just 20 minutes from the city center, with Hotels such as the Marco Polo (0592) 509 1888 and the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza (0592) 202 3333 being the main focus for overseas travelers. The city is also host to the annual China International Trade Fair, which takes place every year in September and showcases all of China by Province with huge stands outlining the commodities and materials produced by each -

fascinating stuff and the place to be if evaluating business prospects in China (this years' is from 8th - 11th September, you can check the fair's website at www.chinafair.org.cn). Places to go? There are a bunch of bars located just to the left of the main entrance to the Marco Polo which get popular amongst expats, while the bar at the Holiday Inn is really the focal point for the local expat community, Xiamen has a variety of discos also - wander up to the Holiday Inn and find out from there what's hot and what's not.

Xiamen is a seafood lover's paradise with all manner of delicacies such as oysters, prawns and crabs in addition to garoupa and lobster which are farmed locally. Xiamen beer is also a decent brew and just right for those warm, sub-tropical summer days - it is humid but bearable due to the ocean breeze that constantly cools the city and makes for such a good environment.

Xiamen itself is a Special Economic Zone - tax rate of 15% against 33% nationally, and as a result has attracted a significant amount of foreign investment - there are excellent port facilities and a successful and well run free trade zone here also. But if nothing else - fly down for a long weekend and enjoy the coastal scenery, sunshine, beaches, water sports, food and local nightlife. Have fun!



Xiamen - an attractive, sub-tropical city surrounded on three sides by open sea



Fishing boats still ply the local harbor



Xiamen as viewed from Gulangyu Island