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Your Hotel Room: Space

It is unlikely that your adoption trip will take you to a Western high-class chain hotel such as a Westin, Inter-Continental, or Hilton. Even though your hotel will feature an impressive number of stars, plenty of marble and shiny metal in the entry and hallways, and a large staff, what your room will not have is something we take for granted at even budget hotels in the West: plenty of space.

Even at the justifiably famous White Swan in Guangzhou, your room will be just over half the size of a typical American hotel room. The long entrance hallway (closet on one side, bathroom on the other) will open into your only room. A pair of single beds will lie on one side; dressers and your TV on the other. You'll have a writing desk, side table with one or two chairs, and just enough floor space to set down your bags and open your suitcase. You could squeeze in a crib or extra mattress, but that's all.

If you are bringing several members of your family, be sure to talk with your travel coordinator in the States well before your trip. In some cities, this hotel room might be as big as it gets. At the White Swan, a family we traveled with (two adults, two teenagers, and their new toddler) was impossibly shoehorned into a standard room their first night. While they were able to get upgraded into a suite, it was expensive. Even then, the suite was only comparable in size to what you'd receive at a Residence Inn or Courtyard back in the USA.

On the adoption discussion boards and blogs, there have been continuing threads comparing space and amenities at the Swan, the Victory (also on Shamian Island), and most recently, the Holiday Inn Shifu (on the mainland, about 15 minutes' walk from Shamian on a nice day.) We ourselves have not been inside the other two hotels - merely walked past them a few times - so we can't make a personal recommendation. The sense from the discussion boards is that there are tradeoffs among personal space, convenient location, and being with your group.

We have also been hearing for a year now about a big renovation project at the Swan, which was supposed to have begun in the 4th quarter of 2007 but has apparently been delayed indefinitely. The talk we had heard

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was that the hotel would be entirely closed while work was underway, but what that work was supposed to be has never been entirely clear.

In summary, you should consider your hotel room only as a place to sleep, bathe, store your gear, and watch TV. It is not big enough to substitute for a living room, kitchen, and dining area, and you'll quickly get cabin fever if you try to do so. Get outside and explore your neighborhood, take the tour opportunities, or just walk around the building. You've traveled a long way, after all. And when you get home, you'll have a new appreciation for just how much space you really have.