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Olympic Souvenirs

(While the Games have now passed, we will keep this page up for a while as it describes well some of the things you need to keep in mind as you shop for just about anything in China...)

You will NOT escape the marketing blitz around the 29th Olympiad being held in Beijing and other cities this August. The BOCOG (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games -- an acronym you'll see frequently) is hoping to earn US\$70 million in royalties from licensed merchandise, so, they're going to make it very convenient for you to spend some money.

The mascots are collectively called "Fuwa," and are about the cutest, most adorable, most toyetic ever fielded for the Games. Which is what BOCOG wanted all along -- they've authorized over 300 different Fuwa products, from pins to hats to t-shirts and backpacks.

Prices for legitimate, officially licensed items are going to be comparable for what you'd pay for something similar back home (\$16 for a t-shirt; \$5 for a set of pencils.) There won't be any discount just because you're inside China, and no haggling at the legitimate outlets.

Those official shops are not just at the Olympic Village on the north end of Beijing, but in the Forbidden City, at the Great Wall, in the major shopping centers around the country, and the big airports. Your guide knows where to go, and probably has it already on your itinerary...

This being China, and with this volume of merchandise, the counterfeiters have been hard at work for quite some time, manufacturing all sorts of knockoffs. Generally the quality of the fakes is inferior, and the media has been repeating stories of unauthorized Fuwa dolls stuffed with moldy wood shavings and contaminated waste products. There have been some well-publicized raids on offending factories, but bloggers and Western

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External Links (will open in a new window)

China Sprout - US-based licensed outlet for Olympics and Fuwa products, as well as clothing, gifts, and cultural items from China

Beijing 2008 Olympic Store - the China-based official ecommerce website.

YouTube video of the Fuwa animation you'll probably see a dozen times at your hotel, shopping mall, tour bus, etc. if you stop over in Beijing on your trip. It's cute.

Contact us with your ideas, questions, and feedback! weninchinainfo@mac.com

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journalists say it is still amazingly easy to find counterfeit goods.

Of course you should do your best to buy legitimate merchandise, and these are ways to keep a clear conscience (and set a good example for your new child!):

1. Does the item come from an official shop, or one of the big retailers in town? Then you're OK. Is it being sold at an outdoor market or outside a subway station? Those aren't real...
2. Does the packaging say "Beijing 2008 Official Licensed Product" and give not only the manufacturer's name and address, but also contact info for the Olympics licensing service? Good.
3. For clothing and larger pieces of merchandise, does it have an attached tag featuring holographic security thread (as shown in the photo)? Such tags also have a watermark and microembossing which you can feel, but are too subtle to show in a photograph.



Don't want to haul all that merchandise back home, or want some more? We do recommend the catalog / Internet merchant China Sprout, as they are an authorized reseller in the USA, and their shipping fees are reasonable.