

## People > Umbrellas



### Why is everyone carrying an umbrella?

There's not a cloud in the sky, but up and down the street, umbrellas bob above the river of people. China is where the umbrella was invented, and here is where it is evolving.

Protection from the sun is important, as you know. In China, fair skin has been culturally valued for centuries; but today, the awareness of skin cancer and environmental degradation has increased people's anxiety. So umbrellas here now feature UV-blocking fabric – it beats applying sunblock cream every time you want to walk down to the supermarket. This feature also helps some as the summers have been getting hotter than usual

.Another evolutionary pressure comes from the sheer numbers of people using umbrellas. Imagine the confusion when another person at your workplace stumbles in from the rain with the same umbrella you walked in with, and multiply that by thousands. As a practical matter, and as a mark of individuality in a culture still getting used to the idea, you'll encounter umbrellas in more colors and designs than you are ever likely to see in the West. They have now become an inexpensive fashion item for the masses.

So for the rain, and the shine, and the smog; for a cheap, memorable souvenir, and to get an appreciative nod of recognition from the locals, pick up a "sunbrella" from your hotel gift shop or nearby convenience store, and be sure to use it on your walking adventures.