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## Internet and Email Monitoring

**Not to be paranoid, but you are being watched.**

Whether you bring your own computer, use one provided by the hotel, or go to a local "internet cafe" (called *wang ba* 网吧), all your browsing, uploading, and email have to pass through one government-controlled gateway. Expatriates and business travelers call this central server the "Great Fire Wall" or GFW, in a poetic allusion to the physical Great Wall's job to control access to the frontier.

Beijing uses the GFW in several ways. First, it can block access to any specific domain outside China. Second, it can filter all the Internet traffic inside China. That's a lot of traffic, and they employ thousands of people to watch what is going on.

Regardless of your personal views, this is something that the government claims the right to do to protect its citizens from "dangerous, objectionable, or immoral" material. Western governments do some of this too, especially in the name of fighting terrorism.

In practical terms, you specifically, as an adoptive parent, aren't being watched. Our experience was that we could upload our blog posts and photos to Blogspot, Flickr, Yahoo, etc., but we couldn't [view](#) the finished version of what we had just posted. (This is the most common feedback from Western travelers.)

Major news sites such as CNN, the New York Times, Huffington Post, and Fox are often censored or blocked entirely. However, your local newspaper, TV station, or less well-known news source is probably unblocked. During our stay in 2007, even Yahoo! News was unblocked. Beijing does realize its citizens need access to the outside world in order to compete economically and socially, but has to juggle that with

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[Coming Home \(your return flight via Guangzhou\)](#)

**External Links** (will open in a new window)

Australia's effort to build a similar firewall (BBC)  
[The Chinese government's Internet Control Portal site \(in the Industry and Information Ministry\)](#)

**What was your email/browsing experience? Tell your fellow travelers at [weninchinainfo@mac.com](mailto:weninchinainfo@mac.com)**

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maintaining 'the party line'.

Shopping and airline sites are unblocked, so you can check in online for your flight home. (A good time-saver, especially since you'll be up freakishly early for the flight home.)

If you browse around on Chinese-based websites, you'll see logos at the



bottom of the page such as  or  -- or code that says "ICP number number." These certify that the website has been registered with the government, as is the law.

Your email goes through the GFW as well, even if you're using a Yahoo!, MSN, or Gmail account. It is supposedly screened for keywords to make sure you are not passing along state secrets or inciting unrest. No one we talked with seemed to have any kind of problem sending email back home. To be safe, don't write about the Things You Are Not Supposed To Talk About In China, and you won't be bothered.

(Editor's note: We keep this site on an independent server and try to steer clear of "sensitive topics" to give no reason to be blocked. We want [weninchina.com](http://weninchina.com) to be available to you during your time in China.)