

January 9, 2009

TO: Fellow Members and Friends of the Academy
FROM: Bob King
SUBJECT: AAA's 2009 Asia-Pacific Conference

With considerable pleasure the American Academy of Advertising announces its 2009 Asia-Pacific Conference in Beijing, China, May 27 – 30, co-sponsored by the China Advertising Association of Commerce (CAAC) and the Communication University of China (CUC).

Beijing, political and cultural center of China for 700 years, is the site of many of China's national treasures, including the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, and the nearby Great Wall. More recently Beijing achieved new prominence by hosting the acclaimed 2008 Summer Olympics. Today, one may explore highlights of both the old and the new China in Beijing, which has experienced a dizzying construction boom and massive upgrading to its urban transportation system.



Attendees at AAA's 2005 (Hong Kong) and 2007 (Seoul) Asia-Pacific Conferences will recall meeting delegations from the People's Republic of China which expressed interest in bringing a future event to Beijing. Following these and other meetings and much correspondence, AAA, CAAC and CUC have developed a strong and attractive program, presented at a very affordable cost. Here are some details:

The program.

Professor Hairong Li (Michigan State University) and Professor Zhang Shuting (Communication University of China), supported by a team of dedicated reviewers, have organized a very full and comprehensive professional program for the Beijing conference. Sessions will be conducted all day on Thursday, May 28, all morning on Friday, May 29, and all day on Saturday, May 30. Friday afternoon will be reserved for a tour of the Summer Palace. The preliminary conference program offers a topical overview of the planned professional presentations.

This conference promises to be the largest gathering of colleagues from the People's Republic of China with members of the American Academy of Advertising. In addition to attracting a substantial attendance from universities in the P.R.C. there will be a consequential number of papers offered by P.R.C. professors of advertising. Also, a number of Chinese students of advertising will attend the professional sessions.



Our meeting place.

Conference sessions will be held on the grounds of the Communication University of China, located on the eastern side of the city. Our Chinese partners will provide coach transportation from the Capital Hotel to the university each morning, and return transportation at the end of each day's sessions. Facilities at the university are very good. The main meeting room is a comfortable, modern hall, which seats about 400 persons. It is equipped for simultaneous translation, and the plan is to offer the program in both Mandarin and English. Two adjacent smaller breakout rooms will also be used for presentations. Lunch will be taken at the university on each meeting day.

Our hotel.

We have negotiated an excellent contract with the Capital Hotel, which is a centrally located, twin-towered hotel with 596 guest rooms located on some 20 floors. Guests enter an attractive two-story lobby with touches of "old China" in its furniture and decorations. On the lobby level a fine buffet offers a wide selection of Asian and Western food. Other options include the 20th floor Ristorante Bologna and the Verona Bar. The comfortable guest rooms are larger than in most Chinese hotels, although somewhat smaller than in America. And the location is great for sight-seers and shoppers: the hotel is situated in the Wangfujing downtown shopping area, and walking time to Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City is only 10 to 15 minutes.

Room rates are "inclusive" of room, buffet breakfast, service and tax, a great bargain for a hotel of this quality and location in Beijing. The inclusive daily rates below reflect two types of rooms ("superior" and "deluxe") and single or double occupancy:

<u>Category of Room</u>	<u>Single Rate (RMB)</u>	<u>Double Rate (RMB)</u>
Superior	650	750
Deluxe	750	850

As of the time of this writing (January 9) the official exchange rate of the U.S. dollar for the Chinese yuan is 1:6.83398. This means that a single superior room costs about \$95.11 (inclusive), and a double deluxe room costs \$124.38 (inclusive). But remember that exchange rates fluctuate, and there is generally a small difference between the official and the "retail" exchange rate. Still, these rates are remarkable bargains! And the hotel has agreed to offer these rates for stays several days before and/or after our conference dates. But remember that this hotel is very popular with western tourists during tourist season, so it is important to reserve early.

To obtain these rates, one must make reservations no later than April 27. On that day, the hotel will release back to its inventory any unclaimed rooms from our very limited room block. After April 27 the hotel may have no more rooms available, and in any event the rate would be higher than our contracted rate. There are several options for making reservations:



- 1) Online booking at www.capitalhotel.com.cn with user name “AAA” and password “12345678”.
- 2) By e-mail at reservation@capitalhotel.com.cn, but be sure to indicate that you are attending a conference of the American Academy of Advertising, and verify that you are offered our conference rate.
- 3) By fax at “86-10 6512 0307” again indicating that you are attending a conference of the American Academy of Advertising.

In all cases you will need to indicate your arrival and departure dates, the type of room you prefer, whether single or double, smoking or non-smoking (the local joke in Beijing is that non-smoking means nobody is smoking there at the moment!), and credit card information to guarantee your reservation. The hotel will need to know the name of the cardholder as it appears on the card, the card number, and its expiration date. Guaranteed reservations will be held until noon of the day following the confirmed arrival date. A one-night room charge will be made for “no-shows” on the confirmed arrival day.

Conference registration.

The Communication University of China will process all conference registrations coming from within the People’s Republic of China. All other registrations will be processed through the normal American Academy of Advertising channels: either through mail-in registration or online. Payment of fees must accompany mail-in registrations. Persons who prefer to register online using a credit card for payment may click onto the electronic registration form on AAA’s website (www.aaasite.org). Early registration is suggested, and if payment is received by April 10 the “late fee” of \$50 is avoided.

AAA’s registration fee is intended to cover attendance at all professional sessions, 3 lunches, 2 dinners, coffee breaks, daily transportation by chartered coach to and from the university meeting area, and a half-day tour of the Summer Palace. Given the international nature of this event, some modification of this “package” may be necessary. While the Academy reserves the right to make such changes, none are anticipated.

The registration fee schedule is as follows:

<u>Membership Category</u>	<u>Registration Status</u>	
	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Student</u>
AAA member	\$190	\$135
Non-member	\$225	\$145

Note: Non-members of AAA are invited to join before registering for the conference, immediately after which they may register at the AAA member rate. See www.aaasite.org for membership information.

Sightseeing opportunities.

Remember the old adage about “all work and no play”? It would be unthinkable to travel to China and not experience its culture and visit some of its famous sites. And that need not happen! In fact, our Chinese partners are sponsoring a half-day tour of the beautiful Summer Palace on Friday afternoon (May 29) as part of the conference program. Also, two optional tours will be available:

- 1) A daylong tour of the city of Beijing on Wednesday, May 27, including Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Hutong area with a rickshaw ride, the Bell Tower, and the Prince Gong’s Mansion. Cost = \$40, lunch included.
- 2) A daylong tour to the Great Wall on Sunday, May 31, including time enough to exhaust yourself “walking” (climbing??) the Great Wall, and visiting Ming Tombs and a Jade factory. Cost = \$40, lunch included.

Conference registrants are welcome and encouraged to bring their family members and other guests on either or both of the two optional tours. However, since we will be organized as a special charter tour, it is essential that tickets be ordered in advance along with your conference registration.

Note: since these two tours are “optional”, i.e., not included in the conference registration, everyone who attends will need to purchase a ticket.

Tickets for dinner on Wednesday (May 27) and Thursday (May 28) evenings are included in the registration fee. However, registrants are most welcome to bring their family members and other guests to these events. Guest tickets should be ordered directly on the conference registration form. They probably will not be available once we arrive in Beijing. We hope to accommodate guests of registrants on the Summer Palace tour on Friday afternoon (May 29) at no charge.

Extended touring in China.

Many conference attendees may wish to arrive in China early or to remain after the conference closes in order to explore more of the country’s wonders. (My favorite places are Xian with its terracotta army, and cruising Guilin’s Li River valley with its beautiful mountain scenery.) The gentleman who is arranging our optional tours is in an excellent position to advise and arrange your touring beyond that which is part of our conference. His name is Richard Jye, Director of





the Euro-American Department of Tour-Beijing. His email address is market@tour-beijing.com.

A suggested travel schedule.

Each visitor to Beijing will have his or her unique travel plans, but here are some suggestions for your consideration. Leave home on Monday (May 25) at mid-day or early afternoon at the latest. After crossing the International Date Line you will arrive in Beijing on Tuesday (May 26) afternoon or early evening. Get a good night's sleep, enjoy a good breakfast on Wednesday morning, and join the optional daylong tour of Beijing. On Wednesday evening there will be an informal orientation, distribution of registration materials, and dinner for persons who register through the AAA system (and their guests for whom tickets have been purchased in advance). After another good night's sleep, you'll be ready to attend conference sessions on Thursday morning (May 28). The conference ends late on Saturday afternoon (May 30), too late to fly out, but just right for taking the optional tour to the Great Wall on Sunday (May 31). Then plan to fly home or to continue your China excursion on Monday (June 1). Of course, you are welcome to arrive earlier than May 26, or to stay beyond June 1, but you are encouraged to enjoy the events planned for the conference to the fullest.

Airline ticketing and China visa.

The question of airline travel to China for AAA members is not simple, but not so difficult, either. We are all aware of the ups-and-downs in airfares, and the occasional short-lived offer of air travel bargains. Some travelers will use frequent flyer credits for free tickets or to upgrade to Business Class. Others will be more, or less, concerned about number of flight segments and lapsed travel time of their itineraries. And some may look forward to accruing additional frequent flyer credits by using a particular airline, while others may actively avoid flying on a particular airline. Some of us by nature are frustrated would-be travel agents, and that is fine if you wish to make your flight arrangements on your own.

For those who prefer to hand the task over to a professional travel agency, I suggest Covington International Travel (call toll-free number 1-888-747-7077 and ask for an international agent). We used their good services for a previous Asia-Pacific conference with excellent results. They have expressed interest in helping us again this year, and they will be hoping to receive your call. Just be sure to identify yourself as associated with the American Academy of Advertising conference. They will search for the best fares (including consolidator tickets), which meet your travel plans.

One thought: non-stop flights to Beijing are available from Newark (Continental), Chicago (United), Los Angeles (United, US Airways and Air China), and San Francisco (United). Typical flight time westbound is 12 to 14 hours, but an hour or so shorter eastbound. Many other connecting flight combinations are available (for example, Northwest via Detroit, which requires a change of planes in Tokyo and passing through

Japanese security at Narita Airport), but these flights will probably add 2 hours or more to your total travel time. Even so, they may result in a lower fare – it is worth exploring the possibilities!

Finally, China does require a visa to enter the country. The application form is quite simple, requiring no more than 10 minutes to complete, even for a slow writer. But the physical process for obtaining the visa is another matter. It must be taken by hand (not by mail) to one of several PRC consulates (locations are Washington, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston). But interestingly, it does not matter by whose hand! If you are located in or near one of these six cities, you may walk in with your passport and visa application during morning hours, and pick up your visa in the afternoon by paying a special “express” service fee. Or you may go back three days later and not pay the express fee. Or you may use one of the commercial services, which can obtain the visa for you. Their fee is typically no more than the express service fee. And yes, there is a charge for the visa, whichever way you obtain it. Apparently, the United States and P.R.C. governments set the fee reciprocally. Our friends at Covington International Travel can advise you regarding a reliable service organization, if you are interested.

Regarding the visa, there are two other thoughts. First, be sure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date from China and has a couple of blank pages. Your visa will be pasted onto one of them. Second, do not apply for your visa too soon or too late: one must enter China within 90 days of obtaining the visa, but you must also allow ample time for its initial processing.

Note: I was asked to show proof of my airline reservations when I applied for my visa. Apparently, the process varies from one visa agent to the next, and the rules do change with some frequency.

A word about travel insurance: going to China is more of an “experience” than is going to more familiar places. Illness and accidents (either overseas or within one’s family back at home) happen, and changes to your travel plans can be quite expensive. It is wise to have travel insurance. Again, the agents at Covington International Travel can provide suggestions.

In conclusion.

First-time visitors to China should be prepared for a jolt to the senses: new and different sights and sounds, smells and tastes, most of which will be a joy to experience. You will find most Chinese people to be quite friendly and eager to welcome you to their country in which they have great pride. Beijing is a very cosmopolitan city sitting amidst beautiful historical sites, which are many centuries old. Take along lots of film or memory card capacity to help preserve your memories.



Previous visitors to Beijing will certainly be surprised by the massive changes made during the past five or so years. Massive and dramatically unique skyscrapers seem to have popped up everywhere. The boulevards seem wider and more numerous, and flooded with private automobile traffic unlike a few years ago. The city seems to have a new fleet of taxis, no two of which seem to be the same color. And the taxi fares remain quite reasonable by U.S. standards. Beijing's traditional sites remain, as before, but cleaned up in preparation for hosting last summer's Olympic Games.

In short, the 2009 Asia-Pacific Conference promises to be a most memorable event, both professionally and socially. Come and make new acquaintances with our Chinese colleagues, and renew acquaintance with old friends in the traditionally cordial environment of the Academy's conferences. I look forward to greeting you in Beijing in late May.

Bob King
Director of Conference Services
American Academy of Advertising