

Why are goods cheaper in the US than China?



Chinese tourists wait in line out of a shopping store in the U.S. [file photo]

Going shopping is a must-do thing for Chinese tourists travelling to the U.S. Thanks to low prices, they can always find something they badly need.

From t-shirts to sneakers, watches to iPhones, it seems that most consumer goods in the U.S. are cheaper than they are in China.

For example, the price of a pair of Levi's pants in a U.S. store is about 30 to 40 dollars, while the price may go as high as 600 to 700 yuan (US\$87.4-102.1) in China. An iPhone 7 (128G) is sold in the U.S. for 749 dollars, while in China you have to spend 6,188 yuan (US\$901.2) to get one.

Chart 1: Price comparison between the U.S. and China

| | The U.S. (US\$) | China (US\$) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Pair of Levi's pants | 30-40 | 87.4-102.1 |
| iPhone 7 (128G) | 749 | 901.2 |
| hair cut | 20-30 | 2.9-4.7 |
| taxi starting price | 10 | 1.5 |
| per-capita annual income | 40,000 | 7282.1 |

The per-capita annual income for an average American is about 40,000 dollars, but in China, people only earn 50,000 yuan (US\$7282.1) a year on average – which means the American per-capita annual income is five or six times than that of Chinese.

However, some overseas Chinese found that it's not cheap at all living in the U.S.

For example, if you want a haircut, you have to pay 20 to 30 dollars excluding tips in a Los Angeles salon; but in Beijing, it only costs you 20 to 30 yuan (US\$2.9-4.7). The starting price for a taxi in Chicago is 10 dollars, but in Beijing and many Chinese big cities, it's only 10 yuan (US\$1.5).

Generally speaking, the price of consumer goods in the U.S. is lower than in China, but the price of service is higher. In other words, the U.S. has cheap manufactured goods, while the Chinese advantage falls on lower labor costs.

Downtown Beijing to increase underground parking lots

Dongcheng District and Xicheng District of downtown Beijing will build multi-floor car parking towers this year to help citizens park their cars more easily, as parking is often difficult in these densely populated areas.

Dongcheng District announced on Feb.15 that it would build 13 parking towers this year. The district is home to a huge number of cars but limited parking spaces, often resulting in difficulty parking. The parking lots will be built in Nanluoguxiang, Dongsì and other sub districts, with parking space both on the ground and underground. The district also decided to scrap parking locks in hutongs, or narrow alleyways.

The downtown area in Beijing also plans to create more space in its bypasses. The Xicheng District will smooth Shoubi Street, a narrow road which often impedes traffic as it links two main streets, and build an underground parking lot there which can provide 500 parking units.

Moreover, Dongcheng District is also drafting an agreement which enables residents to park their cars at night in the parking lots nearby office buildings, in order to make more use of the parking space. A total of 2,800 such parking units are expected to be open to the public this year.

China's H7N9 bird flu mutates, no immediate added threat to human

The H7N9 bird flu has mutated to a new strain in south China, which is proven more dangerous to poultry but poses no new threat to humans, the country's disease control and prevention authorities said Sunday on its website.

The mutation was found in January in two people who had contracted H7N9 bird flu in Guangdong Province. Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) has lately confirmed the finding and reported the case to the World Health Organization (WHO), according to China CDC's website.

The agricultural sector has also found the mutation in four poultry samples from Guangdong, China CDC said.

On the basis of joint study with experts from the agricultural sector, China CDC has concluded that the mutation "does not make the virus more infectious to human at the moment."

Chinese health and agricultural authorities will continue to study the mutated strain's source and its impact while intensifying monitoring to detect H7N9's further mutations, according to China CDC's website.

China has stepped up prevention of H7N9 avian flu transmission. It has been linked to at least 88 deaths since January. About 271 human infections cases were reported.

Most infected humans have had contact with poultry or dead birds. Among them were the two patients from Guangdong.

Bird flu is known to easily mutate. The public are concerned that a mutation might make it more infectious to humans, China CDC said on its website.

Charity group launches Belt and Road first-aid project

The Chinese Red Cross Foundation (CRCF) Monday launched a first-aid project under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing.

The project will offer first-aid resources, including ambulances and medical professionals, and public health services along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a 3,000-km network of roads, railways and pipelines linking Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and southwest

Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

The first emergency medical center under the project will be built in Gwadar Port, according to the CRCF.

The project is sponsored by the CRCF Silk Road Bo'ai Fund, a non-profit program which aims to contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative by providing humanitarian services. The fund was also launched Monday.

As part of the fund, a project on helping children with congenital heart disease in Afghanistan was announced by the CRCF on the same day.

China to improve gov't service in townships

The central authorities have issued a document calling for improved public services at the township level.

The document was issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council.

Township governments should provide quality education in rural areas with suitable teaching environments, safe campuses and support for underprivileged students, according to the document.

It called on township governments to offer better training and vocational opportunities to rural residents, and ensure basic social services for special groups including the disabled, migrant workers, and children living in poverty.

Governments at the township level should implement national insurance policies and improve public health services, said the document.

It stressed that ancient villages of great historical and cultural value should be properly protected and developed, adding that township governments should also improve their service in areas such as environmental protection, food safety and juvenile protection.

The document urged governments of county-level and above to provide financial support for infrastructure, public services and other social undertakings in townships, and to encourage loans and investment to small towns and villages.

Township government budgets and spending should be strictly regulated to fend off local debt risks and guarantee fiscal balance, it said.

The document also called for preferential policies for township officials, such as easier promotions and subsidies, to attract talent to work in

townships.