

Collecting Chinese Phone Cards

Have enough kite pins, patches, caps, and festival tee-shirts to last a lifetime? Well, China has other kite collectibles well worth considering.

New Year's woodblock prints with kite motif are inexpensive and often beautiful. They are a 300-year-old tradition. Kite postage stamps are another option as are low denomination coins with a kite theme. Mass-produced but quite elegant and inexpensive miniature kites are a fourth. Inexpensive and unusual are traditional paper cutouts of kites and people flying them.

But the best by far from the standpoint of price, availability, durability, and esthetic impact are used telephone cards. Cell phones being a huge business in populous China, the choice of phone cards is quite large. Because they



Kites are a popular image on Chinese phone cards. Stamps, paper cutouts, and New Year's woodblock prints often use kiteflying imagery, as do coins---note charming one yuan coin at top left.

are printed on plastic, images are sharp and colors gorgeous. Dozens, even hundreds of the phone cards showing kites or kites being flown are readily available at specialty shops in large Chinese cities----shops that sell postage stamps to collectors, and so forth. Many phone cards have a different image on each side: two kites for the price of one, in short.

Depending on who is bargaining and many other factors, the cards sell in the range of 20 yuan each, or about \$2.50. They are readily preserved and displayed in booklets sold to hold business cards. Business cards are handed out in China like confetti. These card holders are cheap and readily available in stationery stores. Being small and quite tough, the phone cards are easy to ship as souvenirs.

If you want to give collecting phone cards----or Chinese prints, stamps, coins, cutouts, or miniatures----a go, contact a friend there interested in kites and kiteflying. He or she should be able to oblige. If you don't have a pal in that vast country, just get in touch with one of the swarms of Americans and Europeans who travel to China for festivals in particular and tourism in general and maintain kite web sites. They'll put you on the right track.