

If you are traveling in China and interacting with strangers, you'll find many recurring questions. "Where are you from?" will be the most common but you may find topics you consider taboo to be openly questioned eg "What is your salary?" "How old are you?" "Are you married?" Try not to be offended as these aren't considered sensitive issues in China.

Dialogue

Wǒ jiào Steve

Ní hǎo
Nǐ shì nǎ guó rén?
(Where are you from?)

The Literal Translation

nǐ	=	you
shì	=	to be
nǎ	=	which
guó	=	country
rén	=	person

Pronunciation

The tone on the word 'nǎ' is important here. Nǎ in the third tone means 'which/where', while 'nà' in fourth tone means 'that/there'.

1st Tone	2nd Tone	3rd Tone	4th Tone	Neutral tone
a single, constant pitch, almost like you are singing	a rising tone	a dipping tone	an 'angry' tone, abruptly falling in pitch	Neutral tone words are said lightly and without emphasis
	guó, rén	nǎ, nǐ	shì	



Extension

Another similar question is:

- Nǐ cóng nǎ lǎi? (Lit = You from where come?)
Where do you come from?