The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about travelling

宿 = 留宿 (liu su = stay-sleep) = staying the night somewhere: 酒店 (jiu dian = wine-shops = hotels), 汽車旅館 (qi che lu guan = steam-car-travel-house = motels), 旅舍 (lu she = travel-lodge = hostels), 民宿 (min su = people-sleep = English “bed-and-breakfast” = Japanese “minshuku”). 宿費 (su fei = sleep-fees) means staying rates.

Students 寄宿 (ji su = attach-sleep = live in dormitories/hostels). Homeless people 露宿街頭 (lu su jie tou = exposed-sleep-street-head/surface = sleep/live without shelter).

宿 also means dormant/resident: 宿敵 (su di = long-term-enemy), 宿疾 (su ji = dormant/long-term-illness). 星宿 (xing xiu = star-residence/mansion) are stars in their constellations. 宿命論 (su ming lun = star-life/fate-theory) means belief in predestined fate.