

Special Tips For China Travel

As a foreigner preparing to travel to China, there are some special things you should consider before your departure.

1. Get an eSIM Card or a Chinese SIM Card.

If your smartphone supports embedded eSIMs, you can purchase an online eSIM data package for China before your departure to China. For details, please refer to our file: "Exploring China with eSIMs".

Upon arrival at international airports like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu, you can purchase a Chinese SIM card with your passport. However, these SIM cards may not provide access to foreign social media, apps and news channels you use daily outside China, such as Facebook, Google services, YouTube, WhatsApp, and TikTok. You may need a VPN for access.


2. Get a VPN.


Even if you have an eSIM, you may need a VPN (Virtual Private Network) where there is wifi available to save your data. According to our customers' feedback, LetsVPN(<https://letsvpn.world/>) and Astar VPN (<https://astarvpn.com/index.html>) work well in China.


3. Download useful apps for your phone.

1) **E-payment and social tool:** Alipay  , WeChat  . Please refer to our files: "Mobile Payment In China - Alipay", "Mobile Payment In China - Wexin Pay". In addition to making payments, you can also communicate with us via the chat boxes in Alipay and WeChat. Please note that Alipay also works well for transportation purposes.

2) **Map:** Maps.Me, Apple Map (works for public transportation), google Map (not

accurate sometimes), and Chinese maps like Baidu  百度地图 and Amap(with English

names for places, Chinese app name is Gaode ). We recommend you copy and paste the Chinese names of the locations you want to go so that there will not be any problems caused by translation errors.

3) **Ride-hailing:** Didi  滴滴出行 - the Chinese equivalent of Uber. Go to

settings-general-language and you can choose between the Chinese or English version. The app allows you to input the destination in both Chinese and English. In fact, you can find Didi's mini-program in both WeChat and Alipay. If your Chinese is proficient enough, you can also hail a ride using Baidu Map and Gaode Map.

4) **Translation:** Not many people speak English in China. Translation apps are essential. We suggest you download some offline languages from the translation apps you have, such as Google Translate or Apple Translate. In China we use Baidu Translate or Youdao Translate. You can also use the translate mini-program in Alipay.

4. Bring an adapter for China.

China utilizes 2 or 3 thin-pin sockets at 220V, which may differ from your home country's outlets.

5. Get a portable water bottle.

Generally, we do not drink tap water directly. It's common in China to drink boiled hot water, easily found for free at train stations, airports, restaurants, and even on trains. If you would like to make your own tea or coffee at any time, it's advisable to bring your own reusable bottle or cup, which not only offers convenience but also promotes sustainability. In your hotel rooms in China, there is always an electric kettle and teacups available.

6. Mobile Payments, Cash, Credit Cards

China is increasingly becoming a cashless society, with mobile payment apps like Wexin Pay and Alipay widely accepted. You may not need to use any cash at all during your whole trip.

But some people may still worry that they don't work, or they may not want to use them. Cash is still widely accepted in China, especially in larger shops and restaurants. It's just that sometimes street vendors or smaller shops may not have enough change for you. It's advisable to exchange an appropriate amount of cash at the airport when you first arrive in China, especially if you rely on ATMs or banks for withdrawals. Due to the rapid development of electronic payment systems, there may be fewer ATMs or banks available, making it sometimes challenging to access cash.

Foreign credit cards are generally accepted in large shopping malls and well-established businesses in China, rather than in smaller street shops, supermarkets, local restaurants or tourist sites etc.

7. Always carry your passport.

When going out for sightseeing, always carry your passport, as it is required for entry to most key tourist sites in China. When you have reserved tickets in advance, you do not need a booking voucher; instead, show/swipe your passport for check-in. The same applies when checking in at train stations or airports.

8. Toilets

In China, public toilets usually have both sitting and squatting options, with squatting being more common. Don't forget to bring your own toilet paper since it's not always provided, but public toilets are always free of charge.

9. Advance Online Ticket Reservation

Many popular tourist sites especially museums in China require online reservations, ranging from 1 to 7 days in advance. Those popular tourist sites include but not limited to:

Beijing: Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, National Museum

Xi'an: Terracotta Warriors, Hanyangling Tomb, Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Stele Forest, Shaanxi History Museum

Shanghai: Yuyuan Garden, Shanghai Jade Buddha Temple, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Oriental Pearl TV Tower

Chengdu: The Giant Panda Breeding and Research Center, Leshan Giant Buddha Jiuzhaigou.

If you plan to visit these sites, we strongly recommend you book tickets with your travel company at least 15 days in advance. Please be aware that obtaining tickets for the Forbidden City may not be guaranteed, especially during high seasons and holidays due to the significant disparity between supply and demand. For additional tourist sites that may require advance online reservations or if you are not sure, please always consult with your travel company or local travel agents for assistance in advance.

10. Arrive at train stations early.

It's advisable to arrive at the train station at least 30-40 minutes before the scheduled departure time. For details, please refer to our file: "Tips For China Train Travel".

Hope the above helps. Enjoy your trip in China!