

2026 China Arrival Checklist

Work through this before you fly, then keep the arrival section on your phone.

Not legal advice. Visa-free rules and payment limits change. Confirm your nationality, transit routing and travel dates with China's National Immigration Administration and your airline before booking non-refundable travel. Policy checked 19 October 2026.

1. Before you book

- ❑ **Passport valid for at least six months** beyond your return date, with blank pages.
- ❑ **Check your entry route.** Use the [30-day / 240-hour visa checker](#). If you rely on 240-hour transit, your itinerary must be A → mainland China → C, and C must be a different country or region (Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan count).
- ❑ **Confirm your hotel accepts foreign guests.** Ask in writing that they can complete police registration for your passport. This matters most for small homestays.
- ❑ **Check the visa-free policy end date.** Most 30-day policies currently run through 31 December 2026. Do not assume they will be extended.
- ❑ **Travel insurance** that covers China, including medical care and evacuation.
- ❑ **Book flights and hotels.** Compare [flights](#) and [Chengdu hotels](#); read the cancellation terms before paying.

2. Two weeks before departure

- ❑ **Buy a China travel eSIM** and install it while you have home Wi-Fi. Compare [Airalo](#), [Trip.com](#) and [Klook](#). Read the hotspot and fair-use terms.
- ❑ **Install a VPN if you will use hotel Wi-Fi or a laptop.** Read our [China VPN guide](#), and keep the eSIM as a backup.
- ❑ **Set up Alipay and WeChat Pay** with your home number, complete passport verification and link at least two cards. Follow the [payment guide](#).
- ❑ **Tell your bank you are travelling** to reduce the chance of a fraud block on your first payment.
- ❑ **Download apps:** Alipay, WeChat, Trip.com, your eSIM app, a VPN (if using), Google Translate or Apple Translate, and Amap (Gaode Maps) if you want local mapping.
- ❑ **Download offline language packs and maps** before you leave home.
- ❑ **Pack a universal power adapter** (China uses Type A/C/I, 220V) and a compliant power bank in your carry-on.
- ❑ **Carry essential medication** in original packaging with a copy of your prescription.

3. 48 hours before departure

- ❑ **Keep the eSIM installed but switched off** until you land. Check the provider's activation rule; most start validity on first connection in China.
- ❑ **Open your VPN and confirm it launches** before you leave. VPN provider sites are often blocked inside China.
- ❑ **Save your hotel name and address in Chinese characters**, plus a screenshot of the booking confirmation.
- ❑ **If using 240-hour transit:** save your confirmed onward ticket to a third country or region, and check that your entry port and route are within the permitted area.
- ❑ **Book time-sensitive trains and attractions.** Use [Trip.com trains](#) and [Klook attractions](#) when booking windows open.
- ❑ **Carry ¥200–¥300 in cash** as a backup for vendors that cannot accept foreign cards.

4. On arrival

- ❑ **Turn on the eSIM as your data line.** Keep your home SIM active for SMS codes if your bank needs 3-D Secure.
- ❑ **Test data before leaving the airport:** open a map, load a webpage and send a message.
- ❑ **Test Alipay:** buy a small item or scan a merchant QR to confirm your card works.
- ❑ **Use the official taxi queue or Didi inside Alipay.** Avoid unlicensed drivers approaching you inside the terminal.
- ❑ **Check in with your passport.** The hotel should register you with the local police; confirm that it has done so.
- ❑ **Save emergency numbers:** police 110, ambulance 120, fire 119. Save your embassy or consulate contact too.

Useful phrase to show a driver

请带我去这个地址

"Please take me to this address." Show the Chinese address on your phone.

可以分两次付款吗?

"Can I pay in two transactions?" Ask before splitting a bill; the merchant may not agree.

Sources checked 19 October 2026: China National Immigration Administration, Civil Aviation Administration of China, Alipay/WeChat Pay public fee notices, and provider plan terms. Affiliate links are marked and may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. See our [disclosure and privacy policy](#).