



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Drive on the right in mainland China; drive on the left in the administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.
- ❑ A resident permit, Chinese driver's license and proof of insurance are required. International Driving Permits (IDPs) are not recognized.
- ❑ Visitors are required to carry a valid passport and Chinese visa at all times. Passports must have at least six months' validity from arrival; photocopies are not valid. Police may carry out random checks for passports.
- ❑ Driving is not recommended. Foreign drivers involved in a crash are subject to harsh penalties. Drivers suspected of being at fault may be detained for multiple years.
- ❑ Visitors must register at the local Public Security Bureau within 24 hours of arrival; in some areas, registration may be made at a local police station or with hotel staff.
- ❑ Pedestrians do not have right of way. Exercise extreme caution, even at marked crosswalks.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is below 0.02 g/dl for all drivers. Enforcement is high.
- ❑ There are 17.4 road deaths per 100,000 people in China, compared to 2.2 in Sweden and 2.9 in the UK.



Source: CIA Factbook

## ROAD CULTURE

- **Many drivers** are inadequately trained and receive licenses after driving only on controlled courses; these drivers may be unfamiliar with real-time traffic situations and behave unpredictably on busy roads.
- **Some drivers** may purchase driver's licenses without taking classes.
- **Drivers often** behave recklessly and ignore traffic rules.
- **Many drivers** are unaware of who has right-of-way at intersections.
- **"Scrambling behavior"** occurs frequently when left-turn drivers "scramble" to rush through intersections to turn without first yielding to straight-flow priority traffic coming from the opposite direction.
- **Many motorists** speed. Tailgating is common.
- **Drivers typically** disregard pedestrians and cyclists. Motorcyclists, motorbike riders and E-bike riders drive onto sidewalks among pedestrians.
- **Many drivers** including motorcyclists enter roads against traffic, make illegal U-turns, stop without warning in traffic, or block intersections.

## ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** 45.2 million km (27.9 million miles) of roads; 4.5 million km (3.1 million miles) including 168,000 km (104,390 miles) of expressways are paved; 622,000 km (386,492 miles) are unpaved.
- **Road conditions** differ significantly by area.
- **Paved road** networks include China National Highways, expressways and express routes.
- **Rural road** networks are undergoing substantial expansion. Construction is widespread.
- **Severe traffic congestion** including bicyclists, animal-drawn carts and heavy equipment is common in cities, and on ring roads outside of city centers.
- **China National Highways** are generally signed in Chinese characters. In major cities, these roads may include English translations.
- **On expressways** and highways, traffic signs are generally in English and Mandarin.
- **Speed limits** on express routes are lower than on expressways.
- **Most expressways**, express routes and national highways are toll roads. Smart transportation cards and phone apps may be used for payment.
- **Many cities** mandate traffic controls. These may include limits on days when cars with even or odd-numbered license plates may enter the city.
- **There are** many motorcycles, bicycles and E-bikes (electric bicycles). In some towns and cities, there are designated lanes for E-bikes.
- **Motorcycles** and bicycles are frequently involved in serious and fatal crashes.



## Road Conditions, continued

- **Pedestrian** infrastructure is underdeveloped. Road safety awareness, training and education are lacking.
- **Pedestrians** may ignore crosswalks, pedestrian bridges and walking tunnels and instead cross roads in traffic.
- **Open manhole covers** pose a danger to pedestrians, drivers and cyclists, especially in and near construction zones.
- **Avoid all** demonstrations and large gatherings. Demonstrations are illegal unless granted prior approval from the Chinese government. During public demonstrations, access to transportation and communication systems (including cell phones, internet service and international phone lines) may be blocked.
- **Avoid** Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Security measures, including searches of persons and vehicles by armed officials, may be used throughout the region and affect travel. Authorities engage in invasive surveillance techniques against individuals including drivers, and impose curfews and restrictions on short notice.
- **Do not attempt** to travel to Tibet without first obtaining special permits. The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) can be closed to foreigners without notice. In general, only organized group travel tours are allowed.
- **Driving** and travel near military installations is restricted.
- **Many roads** (including most roads and towns in Tibet, Qinghai, parts of Xinjiang and western Sichuan) are located at altitudes above 3,000 meters (10,000 feet). Be alert to symptoms of altitude sickness. Dizziness, lack of coordination, headache, fatigue, shortness of breath and nausea can all impair driver judgement and increase road risks.
- **The following roads** may present particular challenges to motorists:
  - » **The Beijing-Zhuhai Expressway** in Beijing is part of **China National Highway 105** linking Beijing to Zhuhai on Guangdong Province's southern coast, and is one of the world's most congested roads. The road has an asphalt surface and 50 official lanes, but motorists frequently disregard demarcations and attempt to travel between lanes. A section of road running through northern Guangdong is called "Vehicle Killer" due to a high number of fatal crashes involving overloaded trucks. Many sections are steep and subject to severe weather during winter. Traffic is particularly dense on and around the Chinese New Year.
  - » **National Highway 318/318** (also known as the **Shanghai Tibet Highway**) connects Shanghai to Zhangmu on the western border of Nepal, with a section of road between Lhasa and Zhangmu known as **Friendship Highway**. The road is paved, but surface conditions vary widely. The challenging, high-altitude road is 5,476 km (3,403 miles) long and crosses eight provinces. Severe weather conditions are common, including ice and snow.
  - » **The Road to Heaven** connecting Chuanhegai and Pingma is a high-altitude asphalt route with 45 hairpin turns. Nearly the entire road is bordered by sheer drops. Many sections lack adequate guardrails. Avoid this road.

## REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **China** is subject to typhoons, monsoons, flooding, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides and avalanches.
- **Typhoon season** is typically from May to November. The heaviest storms tend to occur along southern and eastern coastal regions. Monsoons and heavy rains generally occur from April to November.
- **Flooding may** follow heavy rains and interrupt road travel and transportation. Roads may be impassable and bridges may be damaged.
- **Standing water** may obscure deep potholes, obstacles and other road hazards. Areas along the Yangtze River are particularly susceptible to floods. Do not drive into standing water.
- **China** is located within an active seismic zone. Earthquakes may be

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	50 kph (30 mph)
Rural roads	70 kph (43 mph)
Highways	120 kph (74 mph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

Road curves to left	Stop	Toll gate accepts electronic payment	Follow alternate route	No overtaking	Pedestrian underpass	Continuous descent	No right turn for small vehicles	Follow pattern for cloverleaf exchange

**Regional and Seasonal Conditions, continued**

followed by strong aftershocks; tsunamis may occur during times of seismic events.

- **Landslides** and avalanches present a risk in mountainous regions.
- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

**TRANSPORTATION**

- **Transportation** includes cars, chauffeur cars with hired drivers, taxis, motorcycle taxis, rickshaws (also called pedicabs), buses, rideshare services, subways, light rail, trains and ferries. Chauffeur cars are available in large urban areas.
- **Safety records** for buses, trains and subways are generally good.
- **Public transportation** shut-downs may occur without notice depending upon Covid outbreaks. Shutdowns may take place in some locations and not others.
- **Use only** licensed taxis. Taxis may be found at hotels and official taxi stands in cities.
- **Avoid** unlicensed “black cabs,” particularly at airports.
- **Request** that taxi driver use meter and provide a receipt for amount of fare. If no meter is available, negotiate fare prior to travel.
- **Do not enter** taxis already occupied by passengers. Insist that driver not pick up additional fares.
- **Taxi drivers** may choose to not accept passengers who do not speak Chinese. Carry your destination written in Chinese characters to show taxi or bus drivers.
- **Taxi**, motorcycle taxi and rickshaw drivers may overcharge or attempt to make change with counterfeit currency.
- **If traveling** by taxi with luggage, do not pay fare until driver has removed luggage from vehicle trunk.
- **Taxis** are scarce at rush hours and when it is raining.
- **Rickshaws** are legal but unregulated. E-rickshaws (electric rickshaws) are increasing. Drivers may engage in risky road behavior.
- **Extensive** local and long-distance bus networks include BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) options in major urban centers.
- **Train networks** are well developed and include many high-speed routes. Passports are required to purchase tickets, and must be carried when traveling by train.
- **Use only** rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.

- **Ferries** are often overloaded. Many boats are not seaworthy and lack adequate life-saving equipment. Navigational equipment may be outdated or nonfunctional. Bring your own life jacket.

**TRAFFIC REGULATIONS**

- **Traffic enforcement** is generally poor.
- **Traffic rules** and regulations vary widely throughout China. Enforcement of road laws is inconsistent; arbitrary enforcement of traffic and other laws may result in heavy fines or detainment.
- **Road entry** and exit controls for travel between different parts of the country may change rapidly or be enforced differently from one location to the next. This includes isolation requirements due to disease outbreaks.
- **Drivers must** be a minimum of 18 to drive and 21 to rent a car. Age requirements may vary according to individual rental agency.
- **Overtaking** is on the left. On highways with many lanes, drivers often pass slower vehicles on either side.
- **Motorcycles** and scooters are banned in many cities.
- **Drivers** who use headlights during daylight hours are subject to fines.
- **Seat belt use** is mandatory in front and rear seats in vehicles fitted with seat belts.
- **Children under** the age of four years must be seated in child safety seats.
- **Children** are not restricted from riding in front seats of vehicles. For safety, children should be seated in rear seats with appropriate restraints.
- **Child safety** seats may not be available. If traveling with young children, bring your own safety seat.
- **Helmet use** is compulsory for drivers and passengers of motorcycles and scooters.
- **Laws do not** require helmets to be fastened. For safety, helmets should be securely fastened.
- **Children** under 12 years in age may not be passengers on motorcycles.
- **Bicyclists** are not required to wear helmets. For safety, bicyclists should wear safety helmets.
- **Pedestrians** must not cross red lines marking sidewalks on some streets. Jaywalking carries stiff penalties.
- **The city of Shenzhen** has legalized the use of fully autonomous vehicles in some areas. Be alert to driverless cars and trucks.
- **Police may** issue on-the-spot fines.

**Beijing (Capital)**

- » Transportation includes cars, chauffeur cars with hired drivers, taxis, motorcycle taxis, rickshaws, buses, rideshare services, subways, light rail, trains and ferries.
- » Driving is not recommended. Traffic is dense, chaotic and undisciplined. Traffic jams lasting multiple hours are common, particularly on and around holidays.
- » There are six ring roads surrounding the city. In addition to a valid Chinese driving license, a special permit is required to drive a non-Beijing licensed vehicle in the city within the 6th Ring Road. Permits are only valid for up to seven days.
- » Non-Beijing licensed motorcycles are prohibited from entering any road within the 6th Ring Road.
- » The bus network is extensive and includes local and long distance service. There are ten main stations in downtown Beijing.
- » Beijing BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) runs on busways (bus-only roads or lanes).
- » Bus and subway fares require a cash ticket, Yikatong Smart Card or phone app/digital wallet. Apps for some phone systems may be in Chinese only.
- » Use only official taxis, which have license plates beginning with the letter “B.” Unofficial “pirate cabs” may be painted to look like official taxis, but license plates begin with letters other than B.
- » Taxi drivers may not activate meter unless passenger insists.
- » Most city taxis accept Yikatong Smart Cards for payment. Cards may be purchased at subway stations or at Yikatong service centers.
- » Taxis are difficult to find during rush hours.
- » Rickshaw fares must be negotiated with driver prior to service.
- » There are 24 subway lines and 428 stations. The network includes two airport express lines, two light rail lines and 19 rapid transit lines.
- » Some subway lines are numbered, others are named by station.
- » Stop announcements are made in Chinese and English.
- » Most subways cease service at 11 pm and resume around 6 am.
- » Subways and trains are often overcrowded, particularly at rush hours. Professional “train pushers” who push passengers onto crowded trains are present at many stations.
- » The rail network is highly developed, with more than 800 trains daily to local and long distance destinations.
- » There are high-speed trains to destinations including Shanghai, Guangzhou and Tianjin.
- » Main train stations are Central, West and South Stations.
- » Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped. Motorists typically disregard the presence of those on foot, even at crosswalks and pedestrian lights and when police officers are present.
- » Many people travel by bicycle. There are numerous bike lanes but cyclists may ignore them. Pedestrians should be alert to cyclists riding on sidewalks.
- » There is a city-wide bicycle rental system. Bicycles may be rented at docking stations. Payment for rental may be made with Yikatong cards.
- » A ferry passenger terminal is located at the Port of Tianjin, Northern China’s largest port.
- » Ferries are often overloaded, unseaworthy and lack adequate life-saving and navigational equipment. If traveling by ferry, bring your own life jacket.
- » There are two international airports: Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport.
- » Beijing Capital International Airport is 26 km (16 miles) northeast of city center.
- » Capital Airport Express trains connect all terminals to city center. Trains leave approximately every ten to 15 minutes from the airport.
- » Beijing Daxing International Airport is 46 km (28 miles) from city center.
- » Daxing Airport Express connects to the Beijing Subway system.
- » Beijing–Xiong’an high-speed intercity railway runs to Beijing West Station, with connections to the subway and to



## Beijing, continued

the long-distance rail network.

- » There are multiple shuttle buses to city center from both airports.
- » Official taxis can be found in queues outside of the arrivals hall at both airport locations.
- » Major rental car agencies are located at both airports. Drivers wishing to rent a vehicle must acquire a Chinese driving license.

## Shanghai

- » Largest city. Transportation includes cars, chauffeur cars with hired drivers, taxis, motorcycle taxis, rickshaws, buses, rideshare services, scooters, subways, light rail trams, trains and ferries.
- » Driving is not recommended. Traffic is highly congested. Road networks are complex, with many one-way streets.
- » Expressways link the city to Beijing and other major urban centers.
- » Central districts have elevated, limited-access expressways that run above main surface-level roads.
- » Route numbers for municipal expressways have an “S” prefix.
- » There are four ring roads surrounding the city. Traffic jams are common, particularly at rush hour and on holidays.
- » Public transport is well developed. Yikatong smart cards/Shanghai Public Transportation Cards provide access to taxis, buses, trains and subways, and may be purchased at stations, some banks, service centers and many stores.
- » The bus network is extensive and includes city, rural and long distance routes.
- » Announcements on some bus lines are made in Chinese and English.
- » Rural buses may not be numbered, and are marked as XX.
- » Buses designated as XX Special Line are typically express buses.
- » There are two tram lines. Trams run every three minutes from 5:45 am to 11 pm.
- » The Shanghai Metro network has 18 lines identified by both number and color, and an additional line called the Pujiang Line, which is an elevated section of Line 8.
- » Subways typically operate from 5 or 6 am to about 11 pm.
- » Taxi colors are strictly controlled and indicate individual taxi company.
- » Use only official, licensed taxis. Taxi plates that contain the letter X are not official, and are privately owned.
- » Insist that taxi driver activate meter, or agree on fare prior to travel.
- » Many people travel by bicycle. Cyclists often ride against the flow of traffic, disregard pedestrians and fail to use bike lanes where they are available.
- » A city-wide bike share program requires users to download an app and register to use bicycles.
- » Motor scooters and E-bikes are popular. Motorcyclists and E-bike users share bicycle lanes with pedal bicycles.
- » Rail service is well developed. There are three main stations: Shanghai Railway Station, Shanghai South Railway Station, and Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station (Shanghai West Railway Station).
- » Main railway stations are connected directly to subway lines.
- » There is daily train service between Shanghai and Beijing.
- » Ferry routes include Kobe and Osaka in Japan.
- » Ferries are often overloaded, unseaworthy and lack adequate life-saving and navigational equipment. If traveling by ferry, bring your own life jacket.
- » Pudong International Airport is 30 km (18.6 miles) from city center.
- » The Maglev high-speed magnetic levitation train connects the airport to Jin Mao Tower in city center.
- » The airport is also connected to the city by Metro Line 2.
- » Use only official airport taxis. Avoid taxis with the letter “X” in license plates.
- » Multiple local and long-distances buses connect to the airport.
- » Major rental car agencies are represented at the airport.



## ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **Persons with** mobility challenges may face difficulties while traveling in China. Many sidewalks do not have curb cuts and many streets can be crossed only via pedestrian bridges or underpasses accessed by stairways.
- **Assistive technologies** for those with impaired vision are unreliable.
- **Elevators** may not be available in public buildings and few buses are equipped with ramps or automatic lifts.
- **Newer subway lines** are usually wheelchair-friendly and have elevators between levels, or have stairways fitted with vertical stair crawlers positioned along the sides of stairs.
- **Subway trains** have space for wheelchairs, but train car entrances may not be level with platforms.
- **High-speed** bullet trains and stations were designed with accessibility in mind. All trains offer priority boarding for persons with mobility challenges; station staff can direct passengers to the appropriate waiting area.
- **Some newer** bullet trains are equipped with wheelchair accessible restrooms. Older railway stations are accessible to some degree, assistance from station staff may be necessary.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Pre-program emergency numbers** into your phone before departure.
- **Responders** to emergency numbers often do not speak English.
  - » Police: 110 / Traffic police: 122 / Ambulance: 120 / Fire: 119
- **Response** to emergency situations is typically slow. Most ambulances do not have trained responders or up-to-date medical equipment.
- **Hospitals and care** are generally below western standards. English-speaking patients may find it difficult to navigate cultural, language and regulatory differences. Supplies of Rh-negative blood may be difficult to acquire.
- **Facilities** in rural areas are poorly equipped and inadequately staffed. Request that medical staff use sterilized equipment when administering care.
- **Some hospitals** in major cities may accept credit cards. In general, cash payment is required prior to treatment, including emergency procedures. Non-residents are typically required to make a cash deposit prior to admission that is adequate to cover the anticipated cost of treatment.
- **If involved in a crash:**
  - » Call police. Do not move vehicles until directed to do so by police.
  - » If possible, take photographs of crash scene.
  - » The driver determined to be at fault is responsible for all medical costs of those injured. Police may hold the passport of the at-fault driver until other parties are satisfied with compensation.
  - » Foreign drivers involved in a crash are subject to harsh penalties. Visiting drivers suspected of being at fault, or drivers and passengers suspected of leaving the crash scene, may be prohibited from leaving China and detained for multiple years.
  - » If involved in a crash without injuries and only minimal damages, drivers may come to an agreement without involving the police.



### ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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Association for Safe International Road Travel, 11769 Gainsborough Road, Potomac, MD 20854 USA,

Phone: 1-240-249-0100; Email: [asirt@asirt.org](mailto:asirt@asirt.org); Website: [www.asirt.org](http://www.asirt.org); Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ASIRT.org/>