

FREE CHECKLIST

China Pre-Trip Setup Checklist 2026

Pay. Connect. Ride. Check in. Before you land.

BOARDING CHECKLIST

Land prepared, not panicked.

A practical first-day readiness checklist for foreign visitors to China.

Use it to catch the big gaps before you fly. Use the Full Kit when you want exact app screenshots, airport cards, official links, and backup playbooks.

PAY	CONNECT	RIDE	CHECK IN
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Save this file offline. Print the last backup card if you can. This checklist is independent and does not replace official entry, visa, airline, hotel, payment, or transport guidance.

Want the step-by-step version?

The Full Kit includes visual walkthroughs for Alipay, WeChat Pay, TourCard, DiDi, China maps, 12306 trains, online arrival card, airport cards, official links, and printable phrase cards.

Get the Full Kit

Open: <https://dayonechina.com/full-kit>

How to use this checklist

This free checklist is designed to be completed in three passes: 7 days before China, 48 hours before China, and on boarding day. It gives you the minimum setup plan so your first day is less likely to fail.

1. Check readiness Use the scorecard to find weak spots in payment, internet, maps, transport, and check-in.	2. Fix the biggest gaps Do not try to master every app. Make sure you can pay, connect, reach your hotel, and show your documents.
3. Save backup cards Keep your hotel address, airport plan, payment backup, and key Chinese phrases offline.	4. Upgrade when needed If any critical item is not ready, the Full Kit gives screenshots, official links, airport cards, and failure playbooks.

This is a checklist, not the full setup system.

The free version tells you what to prepare. The Full Kit shows how to do it with step-by-step screenshots, official-source links, airport cards, payment failure ladders, and printable backup cards.

What this free checklist is best for

- Getting a quick first-day readiness overview.
- Finding gaps before departure.
- Preparing your hotel address, payment backup, phone/data plan, and airport-to-hotel plan.
- Carrying a simple backup card in your phone or passport sleeve.

When to use the Full Kit

- You want Alipay, WeChat Pay, DiDi, 12306, arrival card, and map visual walkthroughs.
- You are landing at PEK, PKX, PVG, SHA, CAN, SZX, TFU, or HGH and want airport transport cards.
- You need payment failure, phone failure, taxi, hotel, and train backup playbooks.
- You want a vetted official-links hub with QR codes and visible URLs.

Your DayOne readiness score

Give yourself 1 point for each item you can honestly check. If you score under 9, do not wait until landing to fix the gaps.

12-point scorecard

Area	Action items
Payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I can open my main payment app on the phone I will carry in China. <input type="checkbox"/> I can reach both payment modes: payment code and scan merchant QR. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a second card and small RMB cash backup.
Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have a data plan for landing day: roaming, eSIM, or China SIM plan. <input type="checkbox"/> I saved this checklist offline. <input type="checkbox"/> I have adapter, charger, cable, and power bank plan.
Ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I know my airport-to-hotel Plan A and Plan B. <input type="checkbox"/> My hotel address is saved in Chinese. <input type="checkbox"/> I know when to use official taxi queue instead of ride-hailing.
Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> My passport is valid and easy to access. <input type="checkbox"/> My hotel/host contact details are saved offline. <input type="checkbox"/> If needed, I know where to use official arrival-card channels.
10-12	Ready to fly calm. Keep backups saved offline.
7-9	Usable, but one failure can still cause stress. Fix the unchecked items.
0-6	High risk for first-day problems. Use the Full Kit before you fly.

7 DAYS BEFORE

7 days before China

Do these while you still have time, stable internet, and access to your bank, airline, hotel, and app-store accounts.

Main preparation checklist

Area	Action items
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check passport validity and carry the same passport you will use for trains/hotels.<input type="checkbox"/> Verify visa, visa-free, or transit situation through official sources and your airline.<input type="checkbox"/> Save hotel booking, onward ticket if relevant, travel insurance, and emergency contacts.
Apps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Install Alipay, WeChat, DiDi China or in-app ride-hailing access, a China-ready map app, translation app, and 12306 or a trusted train-booking platform if using trains.<input type="checkbox"/> Open every app once and confirm you can log in on the phone you will carry.<input type="checkbox"/> Do not depend on downloading key apps after landing.
Payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Link at least one eligible international card to Alipay or WeChat Pay where possible.<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare a second card and small RMB cash backup.<input type="checkbox"/> Know that card binding can still fail because of bank verification, risk control, or app rules.
Phone and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Choose international roaming, travel eSIM, or China SIM plan.<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm your phone is unlocked if you plan to use a local SIM.<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare adapter, charger, cable, and power bank plan.
Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Save hotel name, phone number, and full address in Chinese.<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm the hotel can check in foreign passport guests, especially if it is small or you arrive late.<input type="checkbox"/> Screenshot the hotel address and booking confirmation.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Choose airport-to-hotel Plan A and Plan B.<input type="checkbox"/> Screenshot the route, terminal, pickup point, and destination pin.<input type="checkbox"/> Do not plan to follow random drivers; use official taxi queue, hotel pickup, metro, or ride-hailing only when pickup point and payment are clear.
Full Kit unlocks	
Visual app walkthroughs, airport transport cards, detailed payment backup plans, official links, and printable phrase cards for the first 24 hours.	

48 hours before China

This is the high-impact pass. It should take less than 30 minutes and prevents most first-day stress.

48-hour readiness checklist

Area	Action items
Payment test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Log in to Alipay and WeChat; do not wait until landing to discover verification problems. <input type="checkbox"/> Find the payment code and scan functions. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare backup: WeChat Pay if available, second card, and RMB cash.
Internet test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm roaming/eSIM/SIM plan and keep setup instructions offline. <input type="checkbox"/> Save Wi-Fi fallback notes for airport and hotel. <input type="checkbox"/> Download offline translation packs if your app supports them.
Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Save hotel address in Chinese characters. <input type="checkbox"/> Save airport terminal, train station names, and key routes. <input type="checkbox"/> Take screenshots of route overview, transfer stops, and final destination pin.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm airport-to-hotel Plan A and Plan B. <input type="checkbox"/> If using DiDi, register, add payment, switch to English if available, and save Chinese hotel address. <input type="checkbox"/> If unsure, prepare official taxi queue + cash + Chinese hotel address.
Check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Save passport, hotel booking, and entry/arrival-card information offline. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete online arrival card only through official channels if applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm hotel accepts foreign passport check-in and late arrival.
Offline backup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Save this checklist offline on your phone. <input type="checkbox"/> Print or screenshot the First-Day Backup Card near the end of this checklist. <input type="checkbox"/> Share hotel address and emergency contact with a travel partner if relevant.

Boarding day + landing first hour

Before boarding

- Phone fully charged.
- Power bank in carry-on, clearly marked and compliant with current airline/China domestic flight rules.
- Passport accessible, not in checked luggage.
- Hotel address in Chinese saved offline.
- Main payment and backup payment ready.
- Enough small RMB cash for taxi or simple purchase.
- Airport-to-hotel Plan A and Plan B saved.
- This checklist saved offline.

Landing first hour

- Connect: roaming/eSIM/SIM/Wi-Fi fallback.
- Clear immigration and keep passport accessible.
- Collect luggage before choosing transport.
- Avoid unofficial ride offers from strangers.
- Use saved Chinese hotel address for taxi/DiDi/hotel pickup.
- Check in and confirm payment/deposit method.
- Test payment at a low-risk place after check-in.
- Charge your phone before going out again.

The first-hour rule

Do not troubleshoot sensitive payment, passport, or card verification while standing in a taxi queue, airport curb, shop counter, or crowded place. Switch to a backup and solve the app problem later.

Payment readiness mini-check

China can be very convenient once mobile payment is ready. The problem is discovering at the airport, taxi, or shop counter that your setup is not complete.

Payment setup checklist

Area	Action items
Main app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I can open Alipay or WeChat Pay on the same phone I will carry in China. <input type="checkbox"/> I can reach the payment-code screen and the scan merchant QR function. <input type="checkbox"/> I know whether my linked card appears in the app.
Backup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I have a second international card. <input type="checkbox"/> I have small RMB cash for official taxi or simple purchase. <input type="checkbox"/> I know not to rely on one app only.
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I will not share payment codes, SMS codes, card screenshots, passport photos, or CVV with strangers. <input type="checkbox"/> If account verification fails repeatedly, I will stop trying in public and switch to backup payment. <input type="checkbox"/> I will use only official app flows and app-store downloads.
Failure ladder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Try the other QR mode: I scan the merchant vs merchant scans me. <input type="checkbox"/> Try backup app or second card already linked. <input type="checkbox"/> Use cash, staffed counter, official taxi, or hotel front desk help.

Full Kit payment section includes

Alipay visual walkthrough, Alipay real-world failure check, TourCard optional backup, WeChat Pay backup plan, payment failure playbook, and printable payment phrase cards.

See the Full Kit

Open: <https://dayonechina.com/full-kit>

Phone, internet, power, maps

Your phone becomes your wallet, taxi tool, map, translator, train-ticket record, hotel contact, and emergency backup. Prepare it before you land.

Connect and navigation checklist

Area	Action items
Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Choose roaming, eSIM, or China SIM plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep installation/activation instructions offline. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not rely on hotel Wi-Fi for airport transport.
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bring adapter for China plug types and check charger supports 220V/50Hz if relevant. <input type="checkbox"/> Carry a compliant power bank in carry-on, not checked luggage. <input type="checkbox"/> Bring a spare cable.
Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Install at least one China-ready map app and keep Apple Maps available where supported. <input type="checkbox"/> Save hotel address in Chinese characters. <input type="checkbox"/> Save airport terminal, train station names, and key routes.
Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Install translation app before flying. <input type="checkbox"/> Download offline language packs if supported. <input type="checkbox"/> Save short Chinese phrases as screenshots.
Backup screenshots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel address in Chinese. <input type="checkbox"/> Airport terminal and pickup/meeting point. <input type="checkbox"/> Route overview, transfer stop, final destination pin. <input type="checkbox"/> Train station name in Chinese if taking rail.

Full Kit unlocks

Internet plan decision table with official SIM/eSIM links, China Maps Reality Check screenshots, power-bank rules, phone failure backup plan, and map backup system.

Airport, DiDi, train, arrival card, hotel

Ride and check-in checklist

Area	Action items
Airport to hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Choose Plan A and Plan B before landing. <input type="checkbox"/> Use hotel pickup, official taxi queue, metro/airport rail, or DiDi only when payment/data/pickup point are clear. <input type="checkbox"/> Never follow random drivers who approach you.
DiDi / ride-hailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Install/register before flying if you plan to use it. <input type="checkbox"/> Add payment if possible and save hotel address in Chinese. <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm pickup point, license plate, car model, and driver info before getting in.
Official taxi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Follow official Taxi / 出租车 signs. <input type="checkbox"/> Show Chinese hotel address. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for meter and receipt where applicable.
Train	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Book with the same valid passport you will carry to the station. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrive early for security, passport checks, and gate/platform changes. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not treat itinerary sheet or reimbursement receipt as the ticket.
Arrival card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use official NIA channels only if filling online. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not pay a third-party website just to fill an arrival card. <input type="checkbox"/> If you cannot submit before travel, use official port devices/QR or paper arrival card where available.
Hotel check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm foreign-passport check-in, especially for small hotels or late arrival. <input type="checkbox"/> Save hotel address and phone number in Chinese. <input type="checkbox"/> Know that hotel or host may need to complete accommodation registration procedures.

Full Kit ride + check-in section includes

Airport cards for PEK, PKX, PVG, SHA, CAN, SZX, TFU, HGH; DiDi visual flow; 12306 train guide; online arrival card official-channel guide; hotel check-in and accommodation registration cards.

Get the Full Kit

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First-Day Backup Card

Print this page or screenshot it. Fill it before boarding. Keep one copy on your phone and one with your passport if possible.






Hotel name	_____
Hotel Chinese address	_____
Hotel phone number	_____
Airport / terminal	_____
Transport Plan A	_____
Transport Plan B	_____
Main payment method	_____
Backup payment method	_____
Emergency contact	_____

Useful phrases to show

Situation	English	Chinese to show
Taxi queue	Where is the official taxi queue?	请问正规的出租车排队点在哪里？
Destination	Please take me to this address.	请带我去这个地址。
Payment fails	My Alipay/WeChat Pay is not working. Can I pay cash?	我的支付宝/微信支付不能用。可以现金支付吗？
No Chinese	I do not speak Chinese. Could you help me?	我不会说中文。可以帮我一下吗？
Call hotel	Could you help me call my hotel?	可以帮我打电话给酒店吗？

Essential official links

Use these links before you search randomly. Government and app pages can change, so verify close to travel. If a Word preview does not open a link, copy the visible URL or scan the QR code.

Source	Use it for	QR + URL
Alipay+ official guide	Paying in the Chinese mainland with Alipay or supported e-wallets.	 <p>Open: https://www.alipayplus.com/pay-in-the-chinese-mainland/ </p>
NIA official arrival card	Online arrival card filling through the official NIA channel.	 <p>Open: https://s.nia.gov.cn/ArrivalCardFillingPC/ </p>
NIA fraud warning	Warning that arrival card filling is free and fake paid sites exist.	 <p>Open: https://en.nia.gov.cn/n147418/n147463/c191530/content.html </p>
12306 English	Official China Railway English ticketing channel.	 <p>Open: https://www.12306.cn/en/index.html </p>
State Council payment guide	Official payment guide for overseas visitors.	 <p>Open: https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202404/11/content_WS6617c858c6d0868f4e8e5f4d.html </p>

What the Full Kit gives you

The checklist helps you find the gaps. The Full Kit is built to close them before you land.

Full Kit contents

Area	Action items
Payment system	<input type="checkbox"/> Alipay setup screenshots, Alipay failure checks, TourCard optional backup, WeChat Pay backup flow, and payment failure playbook.
Phone + maps	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet plan decision table, China maps reality check, power/battery plan, phone failure backup.
Airport + transport	<input type="checkbox"/> Airport cards for major entry airports, DiDi setup and use, official taxi backup, metro and bus basics.
Train + passport	<input type="checkbox"/> 12306 official-channel guidance, passport booking, identity verification, station entry, gate/platform/carriage/seat checks.
Check in	<input type="checkbox"/> Entry document checklist, online arrival card official-channel guide, fake-site warnings, hotel check-in and accommodation registration notes.
Printable backup system	<input type="checkbox"/> First 24 Hours Card, Payment Failure Card, Taxi & DiDi Phrase Card, Hotel Check-In Card, Official Links Sheet.

Free checklist vs Full Kit

Need	Free checklist	Full Kit
Know what to prepare	Yes	Yes
Step-by-step screenshots	Limited	Yes
Airport cards	No	Yes
Payment failure playbooks	Basic	Full
Printable phrase cards	Basic card	Full set
Official links hub	Essential links	Expanded links + QR

Prepare before you land.

If your scorecard is not green, use the Full Kit before you fly. It is designed for the first 24 hours, not generic sightseeing.

Get Full Kit

Open: <https://dayonechina.com/full-kit>

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