



Chinese phrasebook for travellers

Phrases for taxis, restaurants, the metro, shops, hotels and emergencies, in characters and pinyin.

Point at a phrase and show it, or read the pinyin aloud. Most people you meet will read the characters faster than they will understand your pronunciation.

The Latin line is pinyin: it shows how to say the phrase. If you are not understood, show the characters.

..... is a place for a name: say it or point to it on the map.

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你

Basic phrases

Greetings, thanks and the phrases that save a conversation when you don't understand each other.

Hello

你好

nǐ hǎo

Hello (polite)

您好

nín hǎo

Thank you

谢谢

xièxie

You're welcome

不客气

bú kèqì

Sorry

对不起

duìbuqǐ

Excuse me

不好意思

bù hǎoyìsi

Goodbye

再见

zàijiàn

Yes, right

对

duì

No, that's not it

不是

bú shì

No, thank you

不用了，谢谢

bú yòng le, xièxie

I don't speak Chinese

我不会说中文

wǒ bú huì shuō Zhōngwén

Do you speak English?

你会说英语吗？

nǐ huì shuō Yīngyǔ ma?

I don't understand

我听不懂

wǒ tīng bu dǒng

Please say it again

请再说一遍

qǐng zài shuō yí biàn

Please write it down

请写下来

qǐng xiě xiàlai

Please speak into my phone

请对着手机说

qǐng duìzhe shǒujī shuō

Just a moment

等一下

děng yíxià

How much?

多少钱？

duōshao qián?

Good to know

- 你好 nǐ hǎo is the everyday hello. With older people, officials and hotel staff, 您好 nín hǎo is more polite.
- 谢谢 xièxie goes a long way: people appreciate the effort even if the rest of the conversation happens through a translator.
- If someone answers you in fast Chinese, “请写下来 qǐng xiě xiàlai” (please write it down) or “请对着手机说 qǐng duìzhe shǒujī shuō” (please speak into my phone) moves the conversation to a translator app.
- Numbers are often shown with one hand: six is the thumb and little finger, seven is the fingertips pinched together, eight is the thumb and index finger, nine is a hooked index finger, ten is crossed index fingers or a fist.

路

Directions

How to ask the way, understand the answer and read the signs you will see everywhere.

Where is the toilet?

洗手间在哪里？

xǐshǒujiān zài nǎlǐ?

Where is the metro station?

地铁站在哪里？

dìtiězhàn zài nǎlǐ?

How do I get here?

去这里怎么走？

qù zhèlǐ zěnmē zǒu?

Is it far?

远吗？

yuǎn ma?

How long does it take on foot?

走路要多久？

zǒulù yào duōjiǔ?

Can you show me on the map?

能在地图上指给我看吗？

néng zài dìtú shàng zhǐ gěi wǒ kàn ma?

Go straight on

一直走

yìzhí zǒu

Turn left

往左拐

wǎng zuǒ guǎi

Turn right

往右拐

wǎng yòu guǎi

It's right here

就在这里

jiù zài zhèlǐ

I'm lost

我迷路了

wǒ mílù le

Is there a convenience store
nearby?

附近有便利店吗？

fùjìn yǒu biànlìdiàn ma?

Where is the exit?

出口在哪里？

chūkǒu zài nǎlǐ?

Sign: Entrance

入口

rùkǒu

Sign: Exit

出口

chūkǒu

Sign: Men

男

nán

Sign: Women

女

nǚ

Good to know

- Have the address of your destination in Chinese characters: copy it from the booking or ask the hotel. People can read it even when they don't know the English name.
- Pointing at a map works better than describing the place.
“能在地图上指给我看吗? néng zài dìtú shàng zhǐ gěi wǒ kàn ma?” asks the person to show you on the map.
- Toilets are signed 洗手间 *xǐshǒujiān* or 厕所 *cèsuǒ*; 男 *nán* is men and 女 *nǚ* is women. Carry tissues: many public toilets don't have paper.
- Metro exits are numbered and lettered (A, B, C...). Check which exit is closest to your destination before you leave the station.

吃

Restaurants and food

From getting a table to paying the bill, with the phrases for spice, allergies and diets.

A table for two

两位

liǎng wèi

The menu, please

请给我菜单

qǐng gěi wǒ càidān

Do you have an English menu?

有英文菜单吗？

yǒu Yīngwén càidān ma?

Do you have a menu with pictures?

有带图片的菜单吗？

yǒu dài túpiàn de càidān ma?

What do you recommend?

有什么推荐的？

yǒu shénme tuījiàn de?

I'd like this one

我要这个

wǒ yào zhège

Not spicy, please

不要辣

bú yào là

Mildly spicy

微辣

wēi là

No coriander, please

不要香菜

bú yào xiāngcài

I'm vegetarian

我吃素

wǒ chī sù

I don't eat pork

我不吃猪肉

wǒ bù chī zhūròu

I'm allergic to peanuts

我对花生过敏

wǒ duì huāshēng guòmǐn

A bottle of water, please

请给我一瓶水

qǐng gěi wǒ yì píng shuǐ

Do you have it cold?

有冰的吗？

yǒu bīng de ma?

Do you have a fork?

有叉子吗？

yǒu chāzi ma?

It's delicious

很好吃

hěn hǎochī

The bill, please

买单

mǎidān

Can I take it away?

可以打包吗？

kěyǐ dǎbāo ma?

Good to know

- In many restaurants you order by scanning the QR code on the table (扫码点餐 sǎo mǎ diǎn cān): the menu opens in Alipay or WeChat, with photos, and you pay in the same place.
- 微辣 wēi là “mildly spicy” in Sichuan or Hunan can still be very hot for a visitor. If you don’t eat spicy food, say 不要辣 bú yào là.
- Water and tea are often served hot or warm. Ask 有冰的吗? yǒu bīng de ma? if you want a cold drink.
- Tipping is not expected in China. 买单 mǎi dān asks for the bill; in many places you pay at the counter.
- For a serious allergy, write it down in Chinese and show it each time you order: “我对花生过敏 wǒ duì huāshēng guò mǐn” is a peanut allergy.

车

Taxi

Phrases for street taxis and ride-hailing cars: where to go, how much, where to stop.

Please take me to this address

请带我去这个地址

qǐng dài wǒ qù zhègè dìzhǐ

To the airport

去机场

qù jīchǎng

To the railway station

去火车站

qù huǒchēzhàn

To this hotel

去这家酒店

qù zhè jiā jiǔdiàn

How long will it take?

要多长时间?

yào duō cháng shíjiān?

How much is it to get there?

到那里多少钱?

dào nàlǐ duōshao qián?

Please use the meter

请打表

qǐng dǎ biǎo

Please stop here

请在这里停车

qǐng zài zhèlǐ tíngchē

Please drive slower

请开慢一点

qǐng kāi màn yìdiǎn

Please wait for me

请等我一下

qǐng děng wǒ yíxià

Please open the boot

请打开后备箱

qǐng dǎkāi hòubèixiāng

Can I pay by QR code?

可以扫码付款吗?

kěyǐ sǎo mǎ fùkuǎn ma?

A receipt, please

请给我发票

qǐng gěi wǒ fāpiào

I'm waiting for you at the entrance

我在门口等你

wǒ zài ménkǒu děng nǐ

Good to know

- Show the address in Chinese characters: drivers rarely know English names of streets and hotels. Ask your hotel for its card (名片 míngpiàn) with the address.
- Official taxis run on the meter (打表 dǎ biǎo). If a driver offers a fixed price at the airport or a station, go to the official taxi queue instead.
- Ride-hailing apps (DiDi, or the DiDi section inside Alipay) show the price in advance, translate the chat with the driver and pay automatically.
- When a ride-hailing driver calls, they are usually asking where you are. “我在门口等你 wǒ zài ménkǒu děng nǐ” means “I'm waiting at the entrance”; it is easier to send your location in the chat.



Metro, trains and buses

Tickets, lines, changes and gates on the metro, high-speed trains and city buses.

One ticket to

一张去……的票

yì zhāng qù de piào

Where is the ticket office?

售票处在哪里？

shòupiàochù zài nǎlǐ?

Which line goes to

去……坐几号线？

qù zuò jǐ hào xiàn?

Does this train go to

这趟车去……吗？

zhè tàng chē qù ma?

Does this bus go to

这路公交车去……吗？

zhè lù gōngjiāochē qù ma?

Where do I change?

在哪里换乘？

zài nǎlǐ huànchéng?

What is the next stop?

下一站是哪里？

xià yí zhàn shì nǎlǐ?

Where do I get off for

去……在哪站下车？

qù zài nǎ zhàn xià chē?

Where is the staffed gate?

人工通道在哪里？

réngōng tōngdào zài nǎlǐ?

Where is the ticket gate?

检票口在哪里？

jiǎnpiàokǒu zài nǎlǐ?

This is my seat

这是我的座位

zhè shì wǒ de zuòwèi

When is the last train?

末班车几点？

mòbānchē jǐ diǎn?

High-speed railway station

高铁站

gāotiězhàn

Good to know

- Metro signs and announcements in big cities are also in English. Station names are written in pinyin too, so you can match them to your map.
- In many cities you can ride the metro by scanning a QR code in Alipay or WeChat instead of buying tickets each time.
- For trains, your passport is your ticket. If the automatic gate doesn't read it, use the staffed gate (人工通道 réngōng tōngdào). Arrive 30–40 minutes early: there is a security check at the entrance.
- Big cities have several railway stations, and high-speed trains (高铁 gāotiě) often leave from a different one. Check the station name on your ticket.

买

Shopping and paying

Prices, bargaining at markets and the question you will hear at every till: who scans whom.

How much is this?

这个多少钱？

zhège duōshao qián?

That's too expensive

太贵了

tài guì le

Can you make it cheaper?

能便宜一点吗？

néng piányi yìdiǎn ma?

I'm just looking

我只是看看

wǒ zhǐshì kànkàn

I'll take this

我买这个

wǒ mǎi zhège

Do you have a bigger one?

有大一点的吗？

yǒu dà yìdiǎn de ma?

Can I try it?

可以试试吗？

kěyǐ shìshì ma?

Can I pay by card?

可以刷卡吗？

kěyǐ shuā kǎ ma?

Can I pay with Alipay?

可以用支付宝吗？

kěyǐ yòng Zhīfùbǎo ma?

Can I pay with WeChat Pay?

可以用微信支付吗?

kěyǐ yòng Wēixìn zhīfù ma?

Can I pay in cash?

可以付现金吗?

kěyǐ fù xiànjīn ma?

Will you scan my code, or shall I scan yours?

你扫我还是我扫你?

nǐ sǎo wǒ hái shì wǒ sǎo nǐ?

A bag, please

请给我一个袋子

qǐng gěi wǒ yí ge dàizi

Is there a cash machine nearby?

附近有取款机吗?

fùjìn yǒu qǔkuǎnjī ma?

Good to know

- China pays with QR codes. Either the shop scans the code in your Alipay or WeChat, or you scan theirs and type the amount.
“你扫我还是我扫你? nǐ sǎo wǒ hái shì wǒ sǎo nǐ?” asks which.
- Shops must accept cash, but small vendors may not have change. Carry some small notes anyway.
- Bargaining is normal at markets and souvenir stalls, not in shops and malls with price tags.
- Prices are in yuan: 元 yuán on tags, 块 kuài in speech. 十块 shí kuài is 10 yuan.



Hotel

Checking in and out, the Wi-Fi password, luggage and the things that break.

I have a reservation

我有预订

wǒ yǒu yùdìng

I'd like to check in

我要办理入住

wǒ yào bànlǐ rùzhù

I'd like to check out

我要退房

wǒ yào tuì fáng

What time is check-out?

几点退房?

jǐ diǎn tuì fáng?

What's the Wi-Fi password?

WiFi密码是多少?

WiFi mímǎ shì duōshao?

What time does breakfast start?

早饭几点开始?

zǎofàn jǐ diǎn kāishǐ?

Can I leave my luggage here?

可以寄存行李吗?

kěyǐ jìcún xínglǐ ma?

The air conditioning doesn't work

空调坏了

kōngtiáo huài le

There's no hot water

没有热水

méiyǒu rè shuǐ

My key card doesn't work

房卡不能用了

fángkǎ bù néng yòng le

Please clean the room

请打扫房间

qǐng dǎsǎo fángjiān

One more towel, please

请再给我一条毛巾

qǐng zài gěi wǒ yì tiáo máojīn

Could you call me a taxi?

能帮我叫一辆出租车吗?

néng bāng wǒ jiào yí liàng chūzūchē ma?

May I have the hotel's card with the address?

请给我一张酒店的名片

qǐng gěi wǒ yì zhāng jiǔdiàn de míngpiàn

Good to know

- Not every hotel in China may accept foreign guests: when you book, check that the hotel takes foreign passports. You will need your passport at check-in.
- Take the hotel's card (名片 míngpiàn) with its address in Chinese: it is the easiest way to get back by taxi.
- Most hotels will store your luggage for free after check-out:
“可以寄存行李吗? kěyǐ jìcún xíngli ma?”.
- Reception staff can call a taxi or order a ride for you:
“能帮我叫一辆出租车吗? néng bāng wǒ jiào yí liàng chūzūchē ma?”.

救

Health and emergencies

Phrases for the pharmacy, the doctor and the police, and the numbers to call.

Help!

救命!

jiùmìng!

Please help me

请帮帮我

qǐng bāngbang wǒ

I don't feel well

我不舒服

wǒ bù shūfu

I need a doctor

我需要看医生

wǒ xūyào kàn yīshēng

Please call an ambulance

请叫救护车

qǐng jiào jiùhùchē

Please call the police

请报警

qǐng bàojǐng

Where is the nearest hospital?

最近的医院在哪里?

zuìjìn de yīyuàn zài nǎlǐ?

Where is the pharmacy?

药店在哪里?

yàodiàn zài nǎlǐ?

I have a headache

我头疼

wǒ tóu téng

I have a stomach ache

我肚子疼

wǒ dùzi téng

I have a fever

我发烧了

wǒ fāshāo le

I'm allergic to penicillin

我对青霉素过敏

wǒ duì qīngméisù guòmǐn

I've lost my passport

我的护照丢了

wǒ de hùzhào diū le

I've lost my phone

我的手机丢了

wǒ de shǒujī diū le

I need to contact my embassy

我要联系大使馆

wǒ yào liánxì dàshǐguǎn

Good to know

- Emergency numbers in China: 110 police, 120 ambulance, 119 fire. Operators may not speak English; ask someone nearby to call for you: “请帮帮我 qǐng bāngbang wǒ”.
- Large hospitals in big cities have international departments (国际部 guójìbù) with English-speaking doctors.
- Pharmacies (药店 yàodiàn) are signed with a green cross. Show the phrase or a photo of your medicine's packaging.
- If you lose your passport, report it to the police first, then contact your embassy or consulate: you need the police report for a new document.