



CHINA STUDENT STARTER GUIDE

A pre-departure and arrival handbook for international students coming to China

Presented by Konrad @ CrosslineEdu



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A Practical Welcome Guide for International Students in China

Welcome to China. This guide is written for students who are preparing to arrive, have just landed, or are still adjusting to campus life. It is meant to help you make decisions without feeling more complicated. You do not need to understand everything before departure. In the beginning, you only need a few things to work well: your documents, your first place to stay, your route to campus, your phone, your payment method, your daily food, and the right contacts.

How to Use This Guide

If you are still preparing for departure, start with Part 1. If you have already arrived in China, begin with Part 2 and Part 4. If you mostly need help with daily life, go directly to Part 3, Part 4, and Part 6. If you read the handbook in order, it follows the normal student journey from departure to arrival to settling in.

| Part | Focus | What you will find |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Before You Leave | Documents, visa, flights, hotel, insurance, luggage, packing, and first preparation |
| 2 | Your First Days in China | Arrival, registration, first priorities, and essential setup |
| 3 | Your Room and Daily Setup | Dorms, housing, room basics, canteens, deliveries, laundry, and household routines |
| 4 | Phone, Payment, Apps, Delivery, Food, and Transport | The systems that make daily life work |
| 5 | Study, Health, Safety, and Student Life | Academic habits, wellbeing, safety, adjustment, and routine |
| 6 | Useful Chinese, Festivals, Travel, Community, and FAQ | Survival Chinese, support channels, and quick answers |

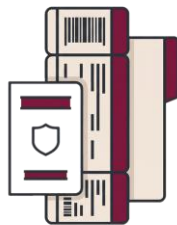
Quick Start: What matters most in your first week

If you only remember one page from this guide, remember this one. Your first week does not need to be perfect. It only needs to become stable. Focus on order, not speed.

| Priority | What to do | Why it matters |
|----------|---|---|
| 1 | Keep passport and key documents safe | You will need them repeatedly |
| 2 | Reach your accommodation safely | This gives you a stable base |
| 3 | Confirm registration time and place | University deadlines matter |
| 4 | Make sure your phone can get online | This supports maps, contact, and apps |
| 5 | Buy or borrow first-night essentials | Sleep and comfort affect everything |
| 6 | Learn one route to campus and one route to food | Daily life becomes easier very quickly |
| 7 | Get connected with the international student's office | You will be able to know every new update from the school |



PART 1 | BEFORE YOU LEAVE



Preparation, documents, flights, packing, and arrival readiness

Part 1. Before You Leave

Keep your documents simple and organized

Document System

Get yourself one folder: passport, admission papers, visa pages, insurance, first-night address, and emergency contacts should all be reachable in under one minute.

Before your trip, prepare one clean folder with all important documents. Keep printed copies and digital copies.

Printed copies still matter during international travel and registration. Your folder should usually include your passport, admission documents, visa paperwork, insurance record, first-night accommodation details, flight itinerary, and important phone numbers.

The more organized your documents are before departure, the calmer your arrival will be. A surprising amount of first-week stress comes from people trying to search through screenshots, email attachments, or half-downloaded files while tired.

Pre-departure document checklist

Quick Tip

Keep one paper set in your carry-on, one phone photo set, and one cloud folder you can open even without mobile data. Extra preparation always helps.



A good rule is to store documents in four layers: original paper copies in one slim folder, one printed backup set in checked luggage, one clear photo set on your phone, and one cloud folder that can be opened even if your phone is lost. Students who prepare documents this way usually solve airport, hotel, registration, and bank questions much faster.

If a school asks for a specific form, do not assume a screenshot is enough. Keep original letters, insurance receipts, accommodation details, emergency contacts, and at least one passport-sized photo ready. If your family may need to help you from abroad, leave them one digital copy

of the most important documents too. Also make sure that if certain files need to be translated, get them done. [For more information on translation, please check here.](#)

| Document group | Best place to keep it | Why it matters |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Passport and visa page | Carry-on folder | Needed for boarding, entry, check-in, and registration |
| Admission and JW / visa-related papers | Carry-on folder | Often checked again after arrival |
| Insurance receipt and policy page | Carry-on folder and phone copy | Useful during registration or medical questions |
| Accommodation address and phone number | Phone and printed copy | Helpful for late arrival, taxi use, and check-in |
| Emergency contacts | Phone, wallet note, and cloud backup | Still available if battery or signal fails |

Airport departure

Carry-on Priority

On airport day, keep your passport, boarding pass, phone, charger, and destination address together in one easy-to-reach pouch.

For an international departure, arriving too early to the airport is rarely a problem, but arriving late can turn a simple journey into a stressful one. As a practical rule, give yourself enough time for baggage drop, security screening, immigration, and walking between gates. Keep your passport, boarding pass, phone, power bank, and one copy of your destination address in the same easy-to-reach place.

Before security, check the basics: liquids are limited in carry-on baggage, sharp objects should not be packed where they will cause screening issues, and most airlines require power banks and spare lithium batteries to stay with you rather than inside checked baggage. If staff ask basic travel questions, answer simply and truthfully: you are a student, you are going to a university, and you have your admission documents ready.

Understand your visa early

Do not leave visa preparation until the final week. The most important first step is understanding which visa matches your program and what needs to happen after arrival.

For many students, entering China is not the end of the paperwork process. It is the beginning of registration, local reporting, and other formal steps.

The safest approach is simple. Start early. Check names, passport numbers, and dates carefully. Keep every document consistent. Do not assume a small mismatch will be ignored.

Confused by the visa application procedure? Check this [free video tutorial with hand-on-hand guidances](#).

Insurance

Insurance is required for all foreign students who study in China. To make it more convenient, we recommend you to get it done online before registration, complete it before departure and keep the payment record with your other documents. Here is the official insurance entry where you will have an 800 Yuan (around 120 USD) per year insurance plan covering medical care and accidents.

| Official Insurance Access | Details |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Official student insurance link | Official Insurance Access Introduction of the insurance |
| Student note | Save a screenshot or receipt after purchase |

Physical examination (yes, again)

International students studying in China for more than six months are required to complete a physical examination as part of the **student residence permit** process. This is typically not required at the application stage (that physical examination report you have submitted during application stage is for **visa application**, NOT residence permit, they are 2 different things).

The standard form

The official form used is the "Foreigner Physical Examination Form" (外国人体格检查表, wàiguórén tǐgé jiǎnchá biǎo). This form is issued by the Chinese government and must be used for the examination to be accepted. Using a different form, even one that looks similar, may result in the document being rejected.

Where to get the examination done

Many students complete the examination at a designated international travel health clinic in China after they arrive. Your university's international student office will direct you to the correct clinic and explain the process during orientation.

What the examination covers

The standard examination typically includes a general health check, chest X-ray, blood tests, and an ECG. The exact requirements may vary slightly depending on your program length and university.

Practical advices:

- Check with your university before departure whether they prefer you to complete the examination in your home country or after arrival. Some schools have a preferred clinic and will guide you through the process on campus.
- If you have a known medical condition, bring supporting documentation and any relevant prescriptions with you, as these may be reviewed during the examination.
- Keep the original examination form and results safe. You will need to submit them as part of your residence permit application.

Booking flights and your first hotel

Arrival

A workable first-night hotel and a clear route can save much more energy than a small fare difference.

When booking your trip, think about arrival energy, not only ticket price. A cheaper flight with multiple long transfers may make your first day much harder than it needs to be.

If possible, give yourself a more comfortable arrival. It is also wise to book your first nights before departure, especially when your dormitory is not fully settled yet.

Your first hotel or accommodation should be easy to reach, easy to identify, and easy to show to a taxi driver or ride-hailing driver. Save the address in both English and Chinese if possible. It is also worth checking whether a hotel accepts foreign guests, especially if you book a smaller or cheaper property.

| Flight and first-stay checklist | Why it helps |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Check baggage allowance before packing | Avoid airport stress and extra fees |
| Save hotel name, phone number, and address | Useful if you arrive tired or late |
| Keep arrival date shared with the university if needed | Helps with registration planning |
| Save airport-to-hotel route in advance | Just in case |
| Keep a little cash and one working payment method | Useful for the first hours |
| Prefer changeable tickets if visa timing is uncertain | Reduces last-minute stress |

Travel booking recommendation

If you want one place to compare flights, student fares, and first-night accommodation, keep one travel platform ready before departure. Student discounts, extra baggage allowance, and foreigner-friendly hotel filters can make a real difference.

| Travel booking option | Link | Suggested use |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Flight and hotel booking guide | Hotel booking guide | Learn how to book more safely and cheaply |
| Travel booking platform | Recommended booking platform | Find discounts for booking hotels, air tickets, high-speed railways and even temporary SIM cards |

Shipping luggage to China

Move Light First

If separate shipping is too complicated, choose the simpler route. Your goal is not moving every belonging in one trip.

Not every student needs a separate luggage-shipping service. If you are only coming for a short language course or one semester, a suitcase may be enough. But if you are moving



for a full degree, carrying heavy winter clothes, books, or sports gear, or landing in one city and then taking a train to another, shipping some belongings separately can make the move much easier.

A door-to-door luggage service is often about reducing stress. Arriving with one manageable suitcase can make your first day much calmer than trying to move several heavy cases across airports, stations, and campus gates.

Important customs reminder for shipped luggage

Customs Check

If luggage is shipped separately, keep every receipt, list, and stamped form. Small missing paperwork can create major delay after arrival.



If you ship personal belongings separately, read the customs instructions carefully. On arrival, some students may need to declare those items as unaccompanied baggage and keep the stamped form for customs clearance. If you ignore this step, your shipment may become slower, more expensive, or more complicated to release.

What not to ship

Do not put everything into shipping boxes. Some items should stay with you on the plane. Make sure you check the customs requirements from both your departure place and China before packing up.

If your checked baggage is delayed or missing

If your suitcase does not appear on the belt, report it before leaving the airport arrival area. Keep your baggage tags, boarding pass, and luggage photos ready. Ask for the case reference number, the contact method, and the expected delivery process. This is another reason to keep one change of clothes, medicine, chargers, and essential documents in your carry-on rather than in checked baggage.

| Item type | Best practice |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Passport and original documents | Keep with you in carry-on luggage |
| Prescription medicine | Carry personally with supporting note (in both languages) if needed |
| Lithium batteries and power banks | Carry personally rather than ship |
| Food and snacks | Avoid shipping in luggage boxes (can just buy them in China too) |

Luggage service recommendation

| Luggage support option | Link | Suggested use |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Luggage shipping guide | Reference link | Decide whether shipping is worth it |
| Shipping company | One of the largest and supports 175+ countries including China | Door-to-door student luggage option |

Standard packing checklist

Packing Principle

Pack for the first two weeks, not for your whole degree. Items that are bulky, easy to buy locally, or room-specific are often better bought after arrival. Another tip is that you can put a sticker on your luggage case for better identification.



Use the checklist below as a practical reference, not a rule. The goal is not to bring your whole life with you. The goal is to arrive with what you need for the first stage.

| Category | What to pack |
|-----------|--|
| Documents | Passport, visa paperwork, admission letter, insurance proof, accommodation details, flight booking, emergency contacts |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Money | Bank card, small amount of RMB or emergency cash, one backup payment method (1,000 RMB of cash is enough mostly) |
| Electronics | Phone, laptop, chargers, plug adapter, power bank, earphones |
| Clothing | Everyday clothes, one light jacket, one warmer layer if needed, comfortable shoes, sleepwear, underwear (check your destination's weather, our suggestion is that most places are in full summer, also you can just buy new clothes after settling down) |
| Health | Personal medicine carried with you, glasses or contact lens supplies if needed |
| First-night basics | Toothbrush, toothpaste, small toiletries, tissues, one change of clothes |
| Comfort items | Small towel, reusable water bottle, simple snacks for travel, one familiar personal item |
| Academic items | A few pens, a notebook, transcripts or certificates if needed, and one small folder for campus paperwork |
| Weather-specific items | Umbrella is needed for summer |
| Religious or personal comfort items | Small items that support prayer, routine, diet, or emotional comfort during the first month |
| Travel transit items | Neck pillow, slippers (very useful on the plane), empty water bottle for refill, luggage tag, and one printed address card |

Better bought after arrival

| Item | Why buying later may be better |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bedding | Dorm bed sizes vary |
| Laundry supplies | Easy to buy locally |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Hangers and storage bins | Easier after seeing the room |
| Rice cooker or kettle | Only buy if your dorm rules allow it |
| Large winter items | Depends on your city and actual climate |
| Large toiletries refill packs | Heavy to carry and easy to buy locally |
| Desk lamp | Room lighting quality varies and you should see the desk first |
| Fan or heater | Depends on dorm rules, season, and what is already provided |
| Kitchen tools or cookware | Many dorms restrict heating equipment or do not support cooking |
| Bulk cleaning supplies | Better bought after you know your room size and storage space |

Culture and etiquette before arrival

You do not need to become an expert in Chinese culture before your flight, but a little awareness helps. Communication may sometimes feel more indirect than what some students are used to. Shared meals are common. If you are not so certain, always ask someone politely with the help of translation tools.

Customs, immigration, and arrival questions

Tips

Short, calm, factual answers usually work best. Officials generally need clarity, not long explanations.

Most airport questions are simple and routine. Officials may ask why you are coming, where you will study, how long you will stay, or where you will sleep on your first night (sometimes they don't ask anything and just let you pass, which is also very common).

Keep your answers short, calm, and consistent with your documents. If you do not understand a question, it is fine to say so politely and show the relevant paper.

| Situation | Simple response or action | Why it helps |
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|



| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Immigration asks your purpose | Say that you are coming to study at your university and show the admission document | Short clear answers reduce confusion |
| Customs asks about goods | Declare honestly if you are carrying restricted or high-value items (you are not likely to, but just in case) | Small mistakes are harder to fix later |
| You are asked for your first address | Show the hotel or campus address on paper or phone | Useful when tired or nervous |
| You do not understand the question | Politely ask them to repeat or show your documents | Calm cooperation is usually enough |

If you are under 18: guardian requirements

Tips

If you turn 18 after the semester begins, confirm with your school whether the guardian requirement applies only at the time of application or until you officially turn 18. Some schools are flexible on this matter.

If you will be under 18 years old when you arrive in China to begin your studies, most universities require you to have a guardian who is physically based in China.

In most cases, the guardian is only needed for paperwork purposes. They do not need to live with you or take care of you day to day. Their role is to sign specific forms on your behalf as a legal adult contact within China. You remain responsible for your own daily life. However, if you do face any emergency condition, the guardian will also be contacted.

The guardian paperwork

Requirements vary by university, so always confirm the exact list with your school's international office. Common requirements include:

- A signed guardian declaration or consent letter
- Proof of the guardian's identity and address in China
- Proof of stable income (some schools require this)
- In some cases, notarization of the documents (apostille depends, mostly might not needed)

Some universities require the guardian to be located in the same province as the university, while others accept any China-based guardian. Do not assume the rules are the same across

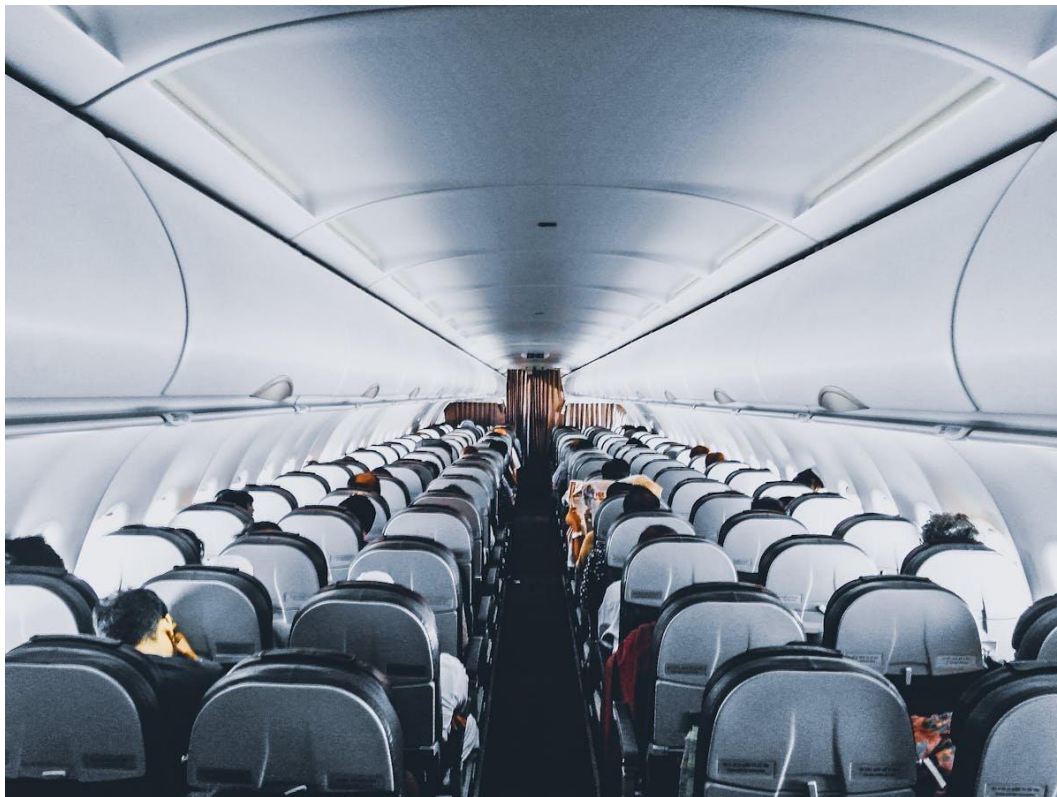
schools. If you are applying to more than one university, check each school's requirement separately, as they can differ significantly.

How to find a guardian

A trusted adult already living in China, such as a relative, family friend, or a contact introduced through your school is the most common option. Some universities have their own recommended guardian services or can connect you with approved contacts. Ask your school's international office first before turning to third-party agencies, as paid guardian packages can be expensive and vary widely in quality.

Timing

Start this process early. If notarization or an apostille is required, the process can take several weeks depending on your country.



PART 2 | YOUR FIRST DAYS IN CHINA



Arrival, registration, first priorities, and essential setup

Part 2. Your First Days in China

Your first 72 hours

Your first three days should stay simple. Arrive safely. Reach your accommodation. Keep your documents together. Confirm your university schedule. Make sure you can get online. That is enough for the first stage.

Many new students feel pressure to solve ten things immediately. That is not necessary. The first goal is stability, not speed.

| Time | Main focus | What can wait |
|-------------|--|-------------------------|
| Day 1 | Arrival, accommodation, rest | Most shopping |
| Days 2 to 3 | Registration, campus route, basic connectivity | Non-essential purchases |
| First week | Room setup, payment, food delivery, parcel routines | Bigger upgrades |
| First month | Budget, habits, long-term comfort, deeper adjustment | Optional services |

From landing to campus

Think of arrival as a sequence rather than one big problem. Land, pass immigration, collect baggage, clear customs, get online, reach your accommodation, inform one trusted person that you arrived, and sleep. Registration and shopping matter, but they work better after this basic sequence is stable. Sometimes your school will also help you settle down, ask them in advance!

| Step | What to do | Why it matters |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Airport arrival | Follow signs for immigration and baggage claim before checking messages | Moving in the right order prevents confusion |
| After baggage pickup | Check that you still have passport, phone, wallet, and documents before leaving the | Students often misplace items when tired |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| | airport | |
| Before transport | Confirm the destination address and save it in Chinese | Useful for taxi, ride-hailing, or asking staff |
| At accommodation | Take photos of the address, room number, and building entrance | Makes late-night returns easier |
| First communication | Send a short arrival message to family or school contact | Let others know you are safe |

If you arrive late at night

Late-night arrival is manageable if you simplify it. Choose the safest direct route to your first accommodation, even if it costs more than a daytime option. Keep your phone charged, avoid wandering between unfamiliar pickup points, and do not start non-urgent paperwork after midnight. The best late-night plan is usually to check in, secure your documents, wash, eat something light, and sleep.

Hotel or dorm

If you want to arrive earlier than required, then in some cases school dormitories may not be available even if you have got it ordered. In this case, confirm with your school and you may need to book a hotel for temporary transition. If this is the case, we recommend you to [book your hotel online](#).

Registration

Registration includes university registration, local accommodation or police-related registration, and residence-related procedures depending on your visa and living situation. If the order feels confusing, follow the sequence given by your university instead of guessing.

If you are not sure what to do next, ask the international student office early.

Police or accommodation registration

If you are staying in a hotel or many on-campus residences, the registration process is often handled automatically. If you are staying off campus, with friends, or in a private rental, you may need to complete local registration yourself.

This is not a small detail. Contact the admission office to confirm if you find it uncertain.

Residence-related follow-ups

Some students must complete follow-up procedures after arrival within a limited number of days. If your school tells you there is another application or document stage after arrival, take it seriously and prepare the original papers in advance.

What to do first after arrival

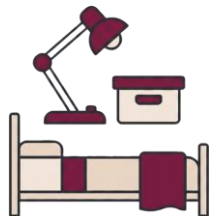
Once you are in your room or hotel, do four things first. Confirm where you need to report. Confirm how to get there. Confirm how you will stay online. Confirm where your passport and papers are. These four steps make everything else much easier.

What to do on your first evening

| Task | What good enough looks like |
|--------------------------|--|
| Check documents | Passport, phone, wallet, and key are all in one safe place |
| Prepare the next morning | Know the reporting time, location, and route |
| Basic supplies | Have water, one simple meal, toiletries, and sleep items ready |
| Connectivity | You can open maps and message at least one person |
| Rest | Do not spend the whole night setting up every app or shopping list |



PART 3 | YOUR ROOM AND DAILY SETUP



Dorms, housing, room basics, routines, and daily comfort

Part 3. Your Room and Daily Setup

See the room before buying anything

When you move into a dorm or apartment, do not order everything immediately. Look at the room first. Check the bed size, outlets, desk space, storage, bathroom setup, laundry situation, and dormitory rules. Some things that feel urgent before arrival turn out to be unnecessary once you see the actual room.

Dorm or private housing

If you have access to university dorms, they are often the easiest starting point for a first year because they are usually cheaper and place you close to student life. At the same time, not every student will get a dorm place, and not every dorm is equally comfortable. Some students will end up renting privately, which usually offers more space and privacy but also requires more paperwork and more money.

| Housing option | Main advantage | Main trade-off |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| University dorm | Lower cost, easier first-year setup, close to campus | Less privacy, more rules, variable room quality |
| Private apartment | More space and freedom | Higher cost, deposits, contracts, more setup work (warning: it is not that easy to rent a house as a foreigner. Choose larger platforms/APPs like Wellcee , Lianjia or seek help from your school). For specific costs, check our <i>Cost-of-Living</i> sections. |
| Short-term hotel or serviced stay | Good for transition period | Not ideal for long-term living |

Dormitory separation and allocation

Many students assume that living in a university dormitory means they will share spaces with local Chinese students. In reality, most Chinese universities' international students live in separate dormitory buildings.

International vs. Domestic Dorms

International student dormitories often have different facilities, pricing structures, and management rules compared to domestic dormitories. While domestic students typically live in four-to-six-person rooms, international dorms are more commonly single or double rooms. Because the facilities differ, the fees for international dorms are usually higher.

Roommate Choice

At most universities, you cannot choose your roommate for your first year. The university will allocate rooms randomly or based on your program. If you have a strong preference or a medical reason for a specific room type, contact the accommodation office early, but be prepared to accept the standard allocation.

Dormitory Scarcity

A guaranteed dorm is becoming less common, especially in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Some universities explicitly state that they cannot guarantee on-campus accommodation for all international students. If your university has a first-come, first-served booking system, you must log in and secure your room quick. If you miss the window, you will need to rent a private apartment off-campus, which requires a significantly higher budget for deposits and agency fees.

Secure your dorm place early

Do not assume a dorm room is automatically guaranteed. Some universities, especially in larger cities, may have limited dorm capacity. If your school opens a room booking window, watch it carefully and apply early. Missing a booking deadline can push students into off-campus rental arrangements much earlier than expected.

By the way, most universities might not allow you to choose your roommate, so pay attention to your school's requirement!

What dorm life may actually be like

Many dorms are practical rather than comfortable. You may have a loft bed, shared facilities, communal laundry, building access rules, and separate systems for water or electricity. Some dorms are newer and easier to adapt to. Others may not.

The best approach is to expect a functional room and improve it step by step.

Access control and dorm curfews

Some dormitories have strict access systems. This may mean card entry, a guard at the door, limited visitor access, or late-night rules. In some schools, returning very late may mean your name is recorded. In others, the rules are more relaxed. Check your school's own dorm policy early rather than relying on assumptions.

Utilities and room systems

University dorms are not hotels. In some schools, electricity topped up through an app. Hot water may be charged separately. Laundry is often shared rather than inside the room. Room internet may require a separate campus package or student login. Campus network quality also varies by school and building. Some universities offer smooth and fast access for study and daily use, while others are stricter about device limits, packages, or network timing.

You may need certain tools to have full access to the internet. Due to compliance requirements, this guide do not cover this part. We also suggest you not to share any methods/tools with people who you are not familiar with to avoid any troubles.

Room inspection in the first hour

Before buying upgrades, inspect the room like a checklist rather than a first impression. Check the mattress size, the number of outlets, whether the shower drains well, whether the toilet has

the supplies you need, how the door locks, where deliveries are left, and how laundry and drinking water actually work in your building.

| Check point | Why to check it early |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Bed and mattress size | Prevents buying the wrong bedding |
| Power outlets and extension needs | Helps you decide whether one adapter is enough |
| Bathroom and shower setup | Useful before buying slippers, hooks, or storage |
| Window, light, and noise level | Affects sleep and study comfort quickly |
| Wi-Fi or campus network access | Needed for classes, maps, and account setup |
| Laundry and water system | To avoid any extra issues |

Roommate etiquette and shared-space basics

In most schools, you will be allocated with a random roommate instead of being able to choose one. Many student problems start as small shared-space habits rather than serious conflicts. In a dorm, it helps to keep your side organized, use earphones at night, dry clothes without blocking shared space, clean up quickly after eating, and ask before changing room routines that affect everyone. Respect matters more than perfect friendship.

If you share a room, communicate early about lights, sleep, guests, food smells, and alarm times. Short polite conversations in the first week can prevent bigger tension later. If there is a problem, describe the issue calmly and seek help from your school.

What to buy first

Start with the items that affect your first night and first week. These usually include bedding, one pillow, power access, basic toiletries, laundry supplies, and a few small room essentials. Buy larger items later, after you understand the space.

| First-week room items | Chinese name | Where to buy |
|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Adapter | 转接头 | <i>It is better to buy online on Taobao or Jingdong. Make sure that it supports your own plugs</i> |
| Power strip | 排插 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Bedding set | 床上用品（三件套 or 四件套） | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Pillow | 枕头 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Laundry bag | 洗衣袋 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Detergent and hangers | 洗护用品、衣架 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Bed curtain or privacy setup | 床帘 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Water bottle or thermos | 热水壶 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Mattress | 床垫 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Slippers | 拖鞋 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Small desk lamp | 小台灯 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Storage hooks or clips | 挂钩 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Charging line | 充电线 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Cup | 杯子 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |
| Toilet paper | 卫生纸 | <i>Local supermarkets/deliveries</i> |

Water, electricity, and laundry

Do not assume every dorm works the same way. Drinking water may come from a dispenser, filtered machine, or delivered bottle. Laundry may be in a shared room rather than inside your own room. Dryers may be limited. Hot water may be managed separately. Electricity may require top-ups or may be monitored more closely than some students expect.

These are normal parts of student life. Once you understand the system in your building, daily life becomes much easier.

Canteens and daily meals

Most universities have one or more student canteens, and larger campuses may have several. These canteens are usually the easiest and cheapest place to eat regularly, especially in the first month when you are still adjusting. A canteen meal is often simpler, faster, and more affordable than ordering delivery every day.

Larger universities often also have halal food windows or halal canteens. If this matters to you, ask your school early where these are located. It is common for students to learn very quickly which building or floor has the food that suits them best.

| Meal type | Typical student expectation |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Breakfast in canteen | Usually inexpensive and quick |
| Standard lunch or dinner in canteen | Usually affordable for daily use |
| Off-campus restaurant meal | Usually more expensive than canteen food |
| Delivery meal | Convenient, but can cost more than regular canteen eating (also be careful on food safety/allergies) |

Receiving deliveries at your building

Some dorms allow deliveries only to the gate or lobby. Some use parcel shelves or pickup rooms. Some buildings do not allow riders upstairs. Learn the delivery rule for your campus early. This will save time and prevent missed calls. Also remember that almost all delivery members do not speak English, so you might need to learn Chinese or use built-in text chat to communicate with them.

Dormitory Appliances

You and your roommates might also need some appliances for daily needs and these appliances are a bit difficult to buy in nearby supermarkets. One alternative is to buy them online and here is a list of the recommended ones.

| Appliances | Link |
|---|--|
| Washing machine | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Cloth dryer | Jingdong1 Jingdong2 Taobao |
| Rice cooker (PLEASE ask your school/classmates if the dormitory allows it) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Induction stove (PLEASE ask your school/classmates if the dormitory allows it) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| De-humidifier (for moist places, do not confuse with humidifier) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Humidifier (for drier north China climate) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Projector (for movie nights in your dormitory) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Small fridge (check size before buying) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Robot vacuum cleaner (suits larger dorms) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |
| Noise-cancelling earphones (if you have a roommate who snores) | Jingdong |
| E-bike (convenient for daily commute, can also buy second-handed ones if there's any) | Jingdong Jingdong2 |



PART 4 | PHONE, PAYMENT, APPS, DELIVERY, FOOD, AND TRANSPORT



The systems that make daily student life work

Part 4. Phone, Payment, Apps, Delivery, Food, and Transport

Phone first, then everything else

Setup Order

Start with reliable internet connection. Once you are connected, you can then work on, payment, maps, ride-hailing, food delivery, messaging, and campus coordination.



A working phone makes daily life much easier. You will need internet access for maps, messages, registration updates, and app setup. Later, a local number helps with app verification, deliveries, university notices, ride-hailing, and everyday communication.

First, make sure you can get online when you land. Then get a local number after you have enough time and the right documents to complete the process properly.

eSIM first, local number second

If your phone supports eSIM, it can be a useful bridge for the first few days. That gives you enough data to contact family, open maps, reach your hotel, and receive directions before your permanent China number is ready (it also enables you to bypass internet restrictions without extra software). After that, a local +86 number becomes required for app verification, school notifications, delivery calls, and daily student life.

Many universities have telecom booths on or near campus during orientation weeks. Students usually register with their passport and sometimes an admission notice or student ID. In practice, this is often easier and cheaper than buying a tourist SIM at the airport. If your phone does not support ESIM, you can also try the [temporary SIM card here](#) (you need to collect it at the airport counter, so make sure you don't arrive by the middle of the night)

| Connectivity option | Link | Suggested use |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Phone number and eSIM guide | All-in-one guide here | Understand the best setup order |

| | | |
|---------------|--|------------------------|
| eSIM provider | Recommended eSIM provider here (with 10% discounts) | For the first few days |
|---------------|--|------------------------|

Payment in China

Daily life in China runs on RMB (人民币 Renminbi), also called CNY or yuan. In practice, most daily payments happen digitally, but it is still wise to arrive with a small amount of cash for backup. In your first days, cash can help with small purchases, transport situations, or moments when your app setup is still incomplete.

Many students become anxious because they think they need to set up their payment on day one. You do not. What you need at the start is one reliable way to pay, a little backup cash, and the patience to finish the rest step by step.

In addition, you can just bind your local bank account to Wechat Pay/Alipay for the first few days (it will result in extra service fee though).

| Payment point | What students should know |
|---------------------------|---|
| Main daily currency | RMB / CNY / yuan |
| Best arrival backup | A small amount of cash |
| Common daily method later | Mobile payment through local apps |
| Bank account | Usually helpful, but not always needed on day one |
| School support | Many universities will guide students on how to open a local bank account |

Local bank account setup

Not every student needs to open a local bank account immediately, but they must still have one. Bring your passport and student documents when you go, and expect the process to take time.

Some branches are more familiar with international students than others. If possible, go with a friend or choose a branch near your university.

Many universities already know that students need help with this and will usually provide some level of guidance. Follow your school's process if it exists, because it often saves time.



Sending money to China

Students usually use a few different methods when moving money into China. The best choice depends on whether you need speed, simplicity, lower cost, or a direct path into a Chinese bank account or wallet.

| Method | Best for | Notes |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Wise (recommended) | Practical international transfers | Recommended option for many students (faster and cheaper than bank wires) |
| International bank transfer | Larger formal transfers | Slower and more bank-dependent |
| Family transfer to Chinese account | Tuition or living support | Works best after local account setup |
| Wallet-linked transfer routes | Smaller everyday support | Depends on account and wallet setup |

Core apps

Practical Reminder

Only set up the essential apps first. It is better to have a few fully working accounts than many half-finished ones.



App registration: start with the essentials

You do not need to register every app immediately. A practical order is this: first a messaging app, then a payment app, then one shopping app, then one map app, then one ride-hailing app. Entertainment apps can come later.

Apps list

| App | Official website | Main use | Registration note |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| WeChat | https://www.wechat.com/ | Messaging, groups, daily life | Core app for student life |
| Alipay | https://www.alipay.com/ | Payment and daily services | Very useful early on |
| Taobao | https://www.taobao.com/ | Shopping | Good for room and daily items |
| JD | https://www.jd.com/ | Shopping | Often good for faster delivery |
| Pinduoduo (Temu) | https://www.pinduoduo.com/ | Shopping | For budget shopping options. Make sure that you only buy from trusted seller |
| Xianyu | https://www.goofish.com/ | Shopping | For buying second-hand goods/services. Most sellers do not speak English, so a translation tool will help. |
| DiDi | https://www.didi.com/ | Ride-hailing | Useful for late arrivals and luggage |
| Gaode Maps / Amap | https://www.amap.com/ | Navigation | Helpful for city movement |
| QQ | https://im.qq.com/ | Messaging, account ecosystem | Sometimes still useful for campus or platform login |
| Meituan | https://www.meituan.com/ | Deliveries | For ordering foods and find local restaurants |
| RedNote | https://www.xiaohongshu.com/ | Social media | It has a lot of information for your daily life. |

Verification for WeChat and QQ

WeChat and QQ require an extra QR-code verification step during registration for foreign mobile phone numbers or account recovery. In practice, students often ask a friend already in China or the university for help. If you do not know anyone who can assist, there are also paid service communities that sometimes help with verification support.

| Verification support option | Link | Note |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Optional support | Click here for link | Paid help may be required |

After registration

Once you have a working account, join any official WeChat/QQ groups your university sends you. Save the group links and QR codes carefully. If you receive a university group invite, join it immediately, as some invite links expire.

Entertainment and Chinese-learning apps

Not every useful app in China is purely practical. Some local entertainment apps are also useful for listening practice, reading comments, getting used to daily expressions, and building comfort with Chinese content. If you are trying to improve your Chinese naturally, entertainment apps can help more than formal study apps alone.

| App | Official website | Best use |
|---------------------|---|--|
| NetEase Cloud Music | https://music.163.com/ | Music, lyrics exposure, casual listening |
| QQ Music | https://y.qq.com/ | Same as above |
| iQIYI | https://www.iqiyi.com/ | Dramas, films, variety shows |
| bilibili | https://www.bilibili.com/ | Video content, learning content, youth culture |

These apps are useful not only for entertainment but also for passive language learning. Music apps help with repeated listening and lyrics. Video platforms help you get used to accents, everyday phrasing, subtitles, and internet culture. You can also find games that are popular in China once you are settled down (don't indulge!)

Do not confuse domestic and international versions

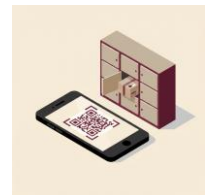
Some major apps have separate domestic and international versions. This can confuse new students. The name may look familiar, but the login system, available features, and account compatibility may be different.

| App family | Common difference |
|------------------------|--|
| Douyin / TikTok | Domestic and international versions are separate |
| Feishu / Lark | China-focused and international enterprise versions differ |
| Tencent Meeting / VOOV | Different target users but similar functionalities |

If a school, employer, or service in China tells you to use a specific app, check carefully which version they mean before downloading.

How to receive parcels in China

Check only three things first: pickup location, pickup code or 取件码, and collection deadline. Showing the message calmly is often enough, even if your Chinese is limited. Most places may just use self-claim machines and if so, input the pickup code and remember to close the door once you take the items out.



How to pick up a parcel

When you arrive at the pickup point, look for the locker number, shelf, or counter that matches your parcel message.

If staff ask for your code, show them the code. If you are using a locker, follow the screen instructions and enter the code when asked.

If you cannot find your parcel, do not panic. Show the message, the code, and your name or phone number. Most of the time, staff can help quickly.

If the parcel message is only in Chinese, take a screenshot and do not rush. A translation app is usually enough to identify the pickup point, pickup deadline, and code. If the location is still unclear, show the message to a dorm guard, classmate, or parcel room staff member rather than guessing and walking around campus with the wrong code.

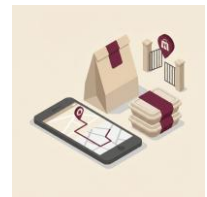
By the way, as mentioned before, the delivery person is very unlikely to speak English.

| Parcel situation | What you usually need |
|------------------------|--|
| Pickup station counter | Pickup code and phone message |
| Smart locker | Pickup code or QR code |
| Campus parcel room | Name, phone number, or message |
| Missed delivery call | Return the call or check the app message |

How to order food delivery

Delivery Setup

For your first orders, save one reliable address format, one campus gate or pickup point, and one simple sentence you can send if the rider calls. This reduces stress much more than trying to explain everything live.



Food delivery is one of the easiest ways to settle into daily life, especially during the first month. Keep your first order simple. Choose a clear address. Check whether riders can enter your campus. Watch your phone in case the courier calls.

In many universities, delivery riders may stop at the campus gate or a designated shelf rather than entering the dorm building. Read the delivery message carefully and do not assume it will come directly to your room.

Tips for your first food delivery order

How to Make the First Order

Avoid rush hour, if possible. Also order from a place with many recent reviews (and a real photo showing that the place is real, and stay near your phone until the order is delivered or the rider message is clear.

Order at a normal meal time, not too late. Choose a restaurant with a clear rating and many recent orders. Save the exact address carefully. If your campus has a fixed drop-off point, write that clearly in the note section.

If the delivery rider calls you, stay calm and use the simplest possible information: your gate number, your building name, or the campus pickup shelf. If speaking feels difficult, send a short text, use a translation app, or share the exact location pin from your map app. Simple location language works better than long explanations.

Food and local cuisine

Chinese food is far broader than many new students expect. You do not need to understand all of it immediately. Start with simple, familiar meals, then explore gradually. Campus canteens are often the easiest place to begin because they are convenient, affordable, and part of daily student life.

If your stomach is adjusting, take it slowly. Choose cooked food, simple dishes, and regular meal times. There is no need to be adventurous during your first tired week. If your school is in a major city like Shanghai, then chance is that you can also find your hometown cuisine at ease.

Food safety basics

Tap water is generally not treated as drinking water. Use boiled, filtered, or bottled water instead. For food safety itself, it is generally considered alright, but still remember to buy foods only from school canteens or licensed vendors/restaurants. If you want to try out street vendors, make sure that you choose the popular ones.

Transport

In the first week, keep transport simple. Learn the routes you actually need: your dorm, your academic building, one food area, one store, and the nearest metro or bus stop. Once these routes feel familiar, the city becomes much easier.

A good rule is to master local travel first and long-distance travel second. Once you know how to move between your dorm, campus gate, city centre, and station, daily life becomes much less tiring.

Metro

In many large Chinese cities, the metro is the easiest and most reliable way to get around. It is usually faster and easier to predict than road traffic, especially during rush hour.

When using the metro, check the station name carefully before entering, especially if your city has multiple lines with similar transfer names. Follow the line color, direction, and final destination shown in the app or on the station signs. If you are unsure, stop and check before you go through the gate rather than getting lost after a transfer.

Another beginner tip is to check the exit number before you leave the station. Large stations can have many exits, and taking the wrong one can add twenty minutes of walking. Before you get off the train, look at your maps app for the recommended exit, especially when going to a campus gate, hospital, office building, or railway station entrance.

| Metro tip | Why it helps |
|---|---|
| Save your destination in Amap or another maps app first | It reduces transfer mistakes |
| Check the last train time at night | Service is not 24 hours |
| Keep your phone charged | You may need the QR code, app, or map route |
| Travel light during rush hour if possible | Crowded trains are normal in big cities |

Buses

Buses are useful once you know your local area a little better. They are often cheaper than taxis and can be convenient for short routes that do not connect well by metro. At the beginning, buses may feel harder because stops can look similar and the route may change direction quickly, so it is smart to use a maps app and board only after checking the bus number carefully.

If you are nervous about using buses, start during the daytime on a short route. Watch where other passengers tap in, where they get off, and how the stop names appear in the app. After a few trips, buses become much easier to understand.

Taxi and ride-hailing

Taxis and ride-hailing are especially useful when you are carrying luggage, arriving late, moving in bad weather, or going somewhere unfamiliar for the first time. If you use a taxi, it helps to keep your destination on your phone in Chinese. If you use ride-hailing, confirm the pickup point carefully because large stations, malls, and campuses may have specific pickup zones.

When you are tired, lost, or carrying too much, paying a little more for a direct ride is often worth it. The goal is not always to find the cheapest route. Sometimes the best route is the one that gets you there calmly. In most cases, a taxi ride within a city will not exceed 200 RMB even in major cities. Therefore, if you notice something wrong, make sure to seek help in order to confirm if you are scammed or not.

Taxi and ride-hailing safety basics

| Situation | Best practice |
|--------------------------|---|
| Before getting in | Confirm the license plate or driver details match the app |
| When showing destination | Keep the address ready in Chinese on your phone |
| If you feel unsure | Share your live route or screenshot with a friend |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Late-night travel | Use a well-lit pickup point and avoid isolated waiting areas |
| Payment confusion | Check the app or meter before leaving the car |

High-speed rail and longer-distance travel

Many students eventually travel between cities by high-speed rail. This is one of the most practical ways to move around China once your phone, ID documents, and payment systems are more stable. High-speed rail is common, efficient, and worth learning early because it can make weekend trips, visa-related city visits, and holiday travel much easier.

The main idea is simple. Book with your real passport details, arrive at the station early, and follow the signs step by step. Major stations are large and busy, so extra time helps.

| High-speed rail step | What students should do |
|----------------------|---|
| Before booking | Check your passport details carefully |
| Booking | Use a reliable app or platform and save the ticket details |
| Before departure | Arrive early for security and platform checks |
| At the station | Follow signs for ticketing, security, waiting hall, and gate |
| On arrival | Check the station exit and local transport options before leaving |

Practical train advice for students

Do not plan your first train trip too tightly. Large stations can take time to navigate. Bring your passport, keep your phone charged (most high-speed trains have USB portal for charging phones, but still bring portable chargers if you feel unsure), and check the departure station carefully because some cities have more than one major railway station.

If you travel during public holidays or major student travel periods, book early or just avoid them if possible. Spring Festival, late summer arrivals, and National Day periods can become VERY busy.

Transport habits that make student life easier

Map Routine

Save your dorm, academic building, campus gate, nearest hospital, and one trusted pickup point in your map app when you just arrive.

Save your home location, campus gate, dorm area, student office, and nearest hospital in your map app. Learn one metro route, one backup bus route, and one safe ride-hailing pickup point near your dorm. These small habits make the city feel much more manageable.

You do not need to know the entire transport system in your first week. You only need a few reliable routes that work.

How to ask for directions without stress

Directions

The safest habit is to show the address or map pin on your phone first, then ask one short question. In busy places, these pictures work better than words.



When you need directions, the easiest method is usually to show the address or map pin on your phone and ask one small question at a time. Instead of giving a long explanation, ask where the metro entrance is, which exit to take, or whether you are walking in the correct direction. Short questions are easier for both sides.

| Situation | Best move |
|---|---|
| You are near a station but cannot find the entrance | Show the station name and ask where the entrance is |
| You are inside a station and confused about exits | Show the destination and ask which exit number you need |
| You miss your stop or take the wrong bus | Get off safely, recheck the map, and restart from your current location |
| You are speaking to a taxi or security staff member | Show the Chinese address rather than pronouncing it from memory |



PART 5 | STUDY, HEALTH, SAFETY, AND STUDENT LIFE



How to keep up with coursework, maintaining wellbeing and safety

Part 5. Study, Health, Safety, and Student Life

Study habits matter early

The first semester usually feels easier when your routine stays simple. Attend class.

Check deadlines early. Ask questions early. Keep your study space usable. Do not wait until you feel completely lost before asking for help. Most schools have helpful teaching assistants or professors. You can also check [our curriculum lists](#) for each university to have a glimpse at what you may need to learn in the next 4 years.

Ask early, not late

If a class is confusing, speak to the teacher, the teaching office, or the international student office while there is still time to solve the problem (or talk in our community, it also helps). Small issues are easier to fix early than during exam season.

Health and wellbeing

It is normal to feel tired, overstimulated, or unsettled in the first weeks. A new country, different food, shared accommodation, and paperwork can all affect your energy. Give yourself time to adjust.

At the same time, do not ignore real problems. If stress, sleep, or health issues are affecting daily life or study, ask for help early. Using support is a practical decision, not a sign of weakness.

You may have also heard about food/water/air quality issues about China online. In most cases, these are exaggerated. However, please pay attention in following aspects:

Food: If you eat at the school cafeteria, it is generally safe. If you cook by yourself, make sure that you follow general hygienic rules. Buy ingredients from trusted sources only and make sure that they are not expired.

Water: DON'T drink tap water. Either drink bottled water or boil the water beforehand.

Air quality: It can be bad during winter, make sure that you prepare some masks just in case. You will know it via weather forecasts. If the air quality is bad, stay away from outdoor activities.

When to seek medical help

Medical Support

If symptoms feel unusual, urgent, or hard to explain, it is usually better to ask for help early. Save the nearest campus clinic, one hospital name, and one person you can message quickly when you feel unwell.

If you have a fever that does not improve, severe stomach pain, trouble breathing, a serious allergic reaction, or any symptom that feels urgent or unusual, seek medical help early rather than waiting alone in your room. Bring your passport, phone, payment method, and insurance information if available. If language is difficult, ask a friend, dorm staff member, or international office to help you reach the right clinic or hospital.

In addition, if you have known allergies/allergen, you may have to be careful. Bring medicines if possible or avoid certain foods that will exacerbate your allergies.

Safety in daily life

Most student life is safe, but common-sense habits still matter. Keep your passport and valuables secure.

Be careful on roads, especially around bikes, scooters, and unfamiliar traffic patterns. Use official taxis or well-known ride-hailing services. If a situation feels wrong, leave it early rather than waiting. Sometimes (especially in smaller cities), you may find curious local people asking you questions or wanting to take a picture with you. Most of them are friendly, but always pay attention to anything strange.

Road and transport awareness

Look carefully before crossing. Watch out for bikes and electric scooters, not only cars. If you are tired or distracted, slow down and cross with extra care. Don't play with your phone while walking.

Scam avoidance and practical caution

In most cases, the most common problems students face are small avoidable issues. These include overpaying for something, taking an unofficial taxi, misunderstanding a payment, or ordering the wrong product online. Read carefully, confirm addresses, and avoid rushing. If you find anything uncertain, consult your school before making any moves.

Food, weather, and environment

China is large, and local conditions vary widely. Some places are hot and humid, some are dry, some are rainy, and some may experience strong seasonal changes. If you choose September intake, then it is very likely that you will face a hot summer with occasional storms. Check your city rather than relying on general advice. Dress for the local climate. Use weather apps. Pay attention during heavy rain, storms, or sudden temperature changes.

Culture and etiquette in daily life

You do not need to get every cultural detail right immediately. What helps most is a respectful tone, patience in shared spaces, and a willingness to adapt. Be polite in queues, careful with shared dorm spaces, and open to different routines around food, communication, and time.

Managing your first-month budget

Budget Tips

A stable first month usually comes from having a sensible budget. Keep a small buffer for transport, household basics, and unexpected costs so you do not feel pressure every week.

The first month often costs more than students expect because it includes bedding, transport, deposit payments, paperwork, small room supplies, and other miscellaneous purchases.

Separate spending into three groups: must-have items for your first week, useful upgrades for your first month, and optional comforts that can wait. Students who pause before buying everything at once usually waste less money and adapt more easily.

Mental wellbeing, adjustment and religion

Adjustment Reminder

Feeling unsettled in the first weeks is common. Protect sleep, eat regularly, keep one routine contact at home, and ask for support before small emotional strain turns into isolation.

Feeling emotional, tired, or unusually quiet in the first weeks is common. Adjustment does not always look dramatic.

Sometimes it looks like poor sleep, low appetite, or losing patience more quickly than usual. Give yourself a stable routine before judging your new life too quickly. Eat regularly, go outside in daylight, keep one contact with home, and ask for help before isolation becomes a habit.

For people with religion beliefs, you can find major religion sites easily in major cities including temples, churches and mosques. China has almost 25% people practicing a religion, so it is alright if you have one. Meanwhile, please respect other people's beliefs and if someone offends yours, seek help from school or other official institutions.

Student life

Daily Life

A strong start does not need to look perfect. If your classes, meals, laundry, phone, and basic matters are functioning, your daily system is already working better than you may feel.

You do not need to feel perfectly settled in your first month. A good start is already enough if you can attend class, eat well enough, do laundry, receive parcels, keep your phone working, and ask for help when needed. That is already progress.

By the way, try reaching out to people who share the same hobbies with you or speak the same/similar languages, this may also help you get your first group of friends here. Also try to seek for students association in China from your own country, such as PPIT for Indonesian students in China.

Legal and Compliance Reminders

What Not to Do

Stay away from drugs (not to be mistaken with medicines) in ANY CASES as it is 100% illegal in China. Don't ever think about taking the risk. For anything uncertain, ask your school's international office!

1. The use of any drugs is strictly prohibited, regardless of their legal status in your home country.
2. Regarding digital safety, avoid accessing NSFW, private or other sensitive material on school or public.
3. If you stay off-campus at a private residence, you must legally register your stay to avoid fines. This applies any time you sleep somewhere other than your registered university dormitory, including a friend's apartment, a short-term rental, or a hotel. If you are staying on campus, your school handles this automatically. If you leave campus to stay elsewhere, even for one or two nights, you are technically required to register with the local police station (派出所, pàichūsuǒ) within 24 hours. Hotels and hostels handle this registration for you when you check in. If you are staying at a private address, the host is responsible for registering your stay, but you should confirm that this has been done. Failure to register is not a visa-revocable offence, but it can result in a fine.
4. Student visas prohibit employment; any internship must be officially documented through the school, as unauthorized work is a visa-revocable offense. You cannot take paid part-time work of any kind without prior approval, even if the work is informal or short-term. If you want to do an internship, notify your school's international office in advance and make sure the internship is formally registered. You must apply to the Exit and Entry Administration for an internship annotation on your residence permit. Doing paid work without the correct documentation is treated seriously and can result in visa cancellation and deportation. If you are unsure of anything, ask your school to double check.
5. Avoid taking photographs of anything military-related, non-public government buildings, or official vehicles on duty.
6. If you plan to drive, note that international driving permits are not recognized, though you may apply for a temporary Chinese license. If you hold a valid driving license from your home country and wish to drive in China, you can apply for a temporary Chinese driving permit at a local vehicle administration office (车管所, chēguǎnsuǒ). The temporary permit is typically valid for up to three months (or up to one year if your stay is longer) and requires your passport, residence permit, and original home-country license translated into Chinese. Most students find that public transport, ride-hailing, and bicycles are sufficient for daily life and do not need to drive.

7. Finally, when shipping or purchasing items for people overseas, ensure you report them and pay the necessary taxes if the volume exceeds normal personal use.
8. If you find anything suspicious, be alarmed and ask for help from nearby persons.



PART 6 | USEFUL CHINESE, FESTIVALS, TRAVEL, COMMUNITY, AND FAQ



Survival Chinese, support channels, travel, and quick answers

Part 6. Useful Chinese, Festivals, Travel, Community, and FAQ

Common Chinese phrases for daily life

You do not need perfect Chinese to handle daily situations. A few short phrases are often enough. Speak slowly, show your phone if needed, and keep the sentence simple.

| Situation | Chinese | Pinyin | Meaning |
|---|-------------|---|---|
| Excuse me / sorry | 不好意思 | bù hǎo yì si | Excuse me / sorry |
| Thank you | 谢谢 | xiè xie | Thank you |
| I am a student | 我是学生 | wǒ shì xué sheng | I am a student |
| I do not understand | 我不太明白 | wǒ bú tài míng bai | I do not really understand |
| Please speak slowly | 请说慢一点 | qǐng shuō màn yì diǎn | Please speak more slowly |
| Where is this place | 这个地方在哪里 | zhè ge dì fang zài nǎ li | Where is this place |
| I want to go here | 我想去这里 | wǒ xiǎng qù zhè lǐ | I want to go here |
| Can you help me | 你可以帮我吗 | nǐ kě yǐ bāng wǒ ma | Can you help me |
| Where is the international student office | 国际学生办公室在哪里 | guó jì xué sheng bàn gōng shì zài nǎ lǐ | Where is the international student office |
| Which exit should I take | 我应该走哪个出口 | wǒ yīng gāi zǒu nǎ ge chū kǒu | Which exit should I take |
| Can you show me on the map | 你可以在地图上指给我吗 | nǐ kě yǐ zài dì tú shàng zhǐ gěi wǒ ma | Can you show me on the map |
| Can I pay here by phone | 这里可以手机支付吗 | zhè lǐ kě yǐ shǒu jī zhī fù ma | Can I pay here by phone |
| Can you speak English | 你会说英文吗 | nǐ huì shuō yīng wén | Useful to begin a |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|---|-----------------|
| | | ma | conversation |
| I will use translation to take to you next | 我接下来用翻译跟你对话 | wǒ jiē xià lái yòng fān yì gēn nǐ duì huà | Clear confusion |

Chinese for asking directions

| Situation | Chinese | Pinyin | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Where is the metro station | 地铁站在哪里 | dì tiě zhàn zài nǎ lǐ | Where is the metro station |
| Which way should I go | 我应该往哪边走 | wǒ yīng gāi wǎng nǎ biān zǒu | Which way should I go |
| How far is it from here | 离这里远吗 | lí zhè lǐ yuǎn ma | Is it far from here |
| Which gate is this | 这是哪个门 | zhè shì nǎ ge mén | Which gate is this |
| I am looking for this address | 我在找这个地址 | wǒ zài zhǎo zhè ge dì zhǐ | I am looking for this address |

Chinese for parcel pickup

| Situation | Chinese | Pinyin | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I am here to pick up a parcel | 我来取快递 | wǒ lái qǔ kuài dì | I am here to pick up a parcel |
| This is my pickup code | 这是我的取件码 | zhè shì wǒ de qǔ jiàn mǎ | This is my pickup code |
| Where can I collect it | 在哪里取 | zài nǎ lǐ qǔ | Where do I pick it up |
| I cannot find my parcel | 我找不到我的快递 | wǒ zhǎo bú dào wǒ de kuài dì | I cannot find my parcel |
| Can you check it for me | 你可以帮我查一下吗 | nǐ kě yǐ bāng wǒ chá yí xià ma | Can you check it for me |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| My phone number ends in | 我的手机号尾号是 | wǒ de shǒu jī hào wěi hào shì | My phone number ends in |
| Please check again | 请再帮我查一下 | qǐng zài bāng wǒ chá yí xià | Please check again |

Chinese for food delivery

| Situation | Chinese | Pinyin | Meaning |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I ordered food delivery | 我点了外卖 | wǒ diǎn le wài mài | I ordered delivery |
| I am coming now | 我现在下来 | wǒ xiàn zài xià lái | I am coming down now |
| Please wait a moment | 请等一下 | qǐng děng yí xià | Please wait a moment |
| Please leave it at the gate | 请放在门口 | qǐng fàng zài mén kǒu | Please leave it at the gate |
| Please leave it at the pickup point | 请放在取餐点 | qǐng fàng zài qǔ cān diǎn | Please leave it at the pickup point |
| Which gate are you at | 你在哪个门 | nǐ zài nǎ ge mén | Which gate are you at |
| Please call me when you arrive | 到了请给我打电话 | dào le qǐng gěi wǒ dǎ diàn huà | Please call me when you arrive |
| I cannot come out right now | 我现在不方便出来 | wǒ xiàn zài bù fāng biàn chū lái | I cannot come out right now |

Chinese for asking for help

| Situation | Chinese | Pinyin | Meaning |
|------------------------|---------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| I need help | 我需要帮助 | wǒ xū yào bāng zhù | I need help |
| I am not feeling well | 我不太舒服 | wǒ bù tài shū fu | I do not feel well |
| Please call the police | 请帮我报警 | qǐng bāng wǒ bào jǐng | Please call the police |
| Please call an | 请帮我叫救护车 | qǐng bāng wǒ jiào jiù chē | Please call an |

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|---|-------------|--|---|
| ambulance | | hù chē | ambulance |
| I lost my passport | 我的护照丢了 | wǒ de hù zhào diū le | I lost my passport |
| Can you help me find this address | 你可以帮我找这个地址吗 | nǐ kě yǐ bāng wǒ zhǎo zhè ge dì zhǐ ma | Can you help me find this address |
| I need the international student office | 我需要去国际学生办公室 | wǒ xū yào qù guó jì xué sheng bàn gōng shì | I need the international student office |

Learning Chinese gradually

Strategy

Do not try to memorize everything at once. Keep a small working set of phrases that solves real daily tasks, then expand from there. ALWAYS use Chinese in real life to better comprehend it.

You do not need to become fluent immediately. Start with useful words, campus phrases, and daily situations.

Learn what helps you buy food, ask directions, talk to staff, and solve small problems. Language learning becomes much easier when it is connected to daily life rather than treated as a separate task.

How to communicate when language is limited

When conversation becomes difficult, reduce the task. Show the written address, show the pickup message, show the route on the map, or type one short sentence into a translation app. Many daily problems are solved faster by shared visual information like gestures. This is especially useful at stations, hospitals, dorm gates, and delivery points.

Festivals and holidays

Travel periods can become crowded, campuses may empty out, and many services follow holiday schedules. It helps to know the major festivals early.

| Festival | Usual time | What students should know |
|----------|------------|---------------------------|
|----------|------------|---------------------------|

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Spring Festival / Chinese New Year | Jan or Feb | The biggest holiday period, major travel rush |
| Lantern Festival | After Spring Festival | Cultural celebrations and family atmosphere |
| Qingming Festival | Spring | Short public holiday in many places |
| Labor Day | Early May | Another busy travel period |
| Dragon Boat Festival | Early summer | Traditional holiday, zongzi is common |
| Mid-Autumn Festival | Sep or Oct | Mooncakes, family gatherings, cultural events |
| National Day / Golden Week | Early Oct | Heavy travel, busy transport and tourism |

Domestic travel between study periods

Travel Timing

Short, nearby trips usually work better than ambitious long-distance plans in your first semester. Travel becomes much easier once your phone, payments, and routine are stable.

China is large, and many students want to travel once they feel more settled. That is a good goal, but it becomes easier after your study routine, phone setup, and payment setup are stable. Start with nearby places first. Learn how to move around your own city before planning bigger trips.

Emergency contacts in China

Emergency Rule

Save the key numbers in advance and practice how to show your address quickly. In urgent situations, location is often the first useful piece of information.

Save these numbers in your phone as soon as you arrive. If there is immediate danger, call first, then contact your university. These numbers mostly support English.

| Service | Number | When to use it |
|---|--------|---|
| Police | 110 | Crime, danger, urgent police help |
| Fire | 119 | Fire or smoke emergency |
| Ambulance | 120 | Medical emergency |
| Traffic accident | 122 | Road traffic emergency |
| Police SMS alarm | 12110 | Text-based police contact where useful |
| Your country's China embassy/consulate phone number | N/A | When coming across difficult scenarios and need help from your own country. Sometimes for major nations, they also have consulates in your place, make sure you keep their contacts just in case. |

Personal emergency checklist

Save your university international office number, dorm office number, one teacher or coordinator contact, and one trusted friend in your phone.

Keep a passport copy and your home emergency contact easy to find. If you need help in an emergency, say your location first and speak in short sentences.



PART 7 | COST OF LIVING



How much does it really cost?

Part 7. Cost of Living and Tuition

Location is the Key

Your living expenses in China will depend mostly on two factors: your city tier and your housing choice. While everyday items like public transport and canteen food are highly affordable nationwide, rent and lifestyle choices can change your monthly budget greatly.

Estimated cost by city tier

(Excluding tuition, which typically ranges from 20,000 to 40,000 RMB annually for self-funded students, assuming that you live in the school dormitory)

| City tier | Cities (example) | Estimated budget |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Tier 1 | Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen | 2,500 – 5,000 RMB |
| Tier 2 | Nanjing, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Wuhan | 2,000 – 3,500 RMB |
| Tier 3 | Hefei, Dalian, Smaller regional hubs | 1,800 – 3,000 RMB |

Core expenses

Do not let small costs add up invisibly. Here is what an average month looks like if you maintain a balanced student lifestyle:

| Expense Category | Typical Monthly Cost (RMB) | Practical Advice |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Accommodation (Dorm) | 250 – 1,200 RMB | On-campus dorms are cheaper and mostly with good quality. The main downside is that you cannot choose your roommate mostly. Secure your spot as soon as the booking window opens. Check with your university which room type you are assigned before you arrive. |
| Accommodation (Off-Campus) | 1,500 – 4,000 RMB | Varies widely by city. Usually requires 6 months of deposit upfront for foreigners, also need to register to the police station. If your budget is tight, rent together with other classmates with shared public spaces. |
| Food & Groceries | 500 – 1,500 RMB | Most students spend between 600 and 1,000 RMB per month. Eating at the canteen keeps costs lower. Students who cook for themselves regularly can get this down to 400 to 600 RMB. |
| Transport (Metro/Bus) | 100 – 300 RMB | Public transport is exceptionally cheap; a single metro ride is usually 3–8 RMB. Students who stay on campus most of the time spend close to nothing. Many rely on campus bikes or HelloRide shared cycles at 1 to 2 RMB per ride. Those who commute regularly or travel on weekends typically spend 100 to 200 RMB per month. |
| Utilities (water, electricity, internet, mobile data) | 50 – 350 RMB | Local 5G data is affordable, usually running 60–120 RMB for a massive data package. Make sure that you ask if there's a student discount. Electricity is the main variable as running air conditioning heavily in summer can push this toward 250 RMB. |
| Shopping (daily goods, clothing, online orders) | 100 – 1,000 RMB | Most students report 150 to 300 RMB per month for everyday purchases but it really |

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| | | fluctuates. This includes toiletries, household items, and occasional clothing. Online shopping is one of the most commonly cited budget drains. |
| Entertainment and leisure | 50 – 500 RMB | The majority of students keep this below 200 RMB per month. A small number spend more, particularly those who travel regularly or go out frequently. Notice that this does not apply to people with higher budgets. |

A student living in a standard dorm, eating mostly at the canteen, and keeping a modest lifestyle can manage on 1,400 to 1,800 RMB per month in a city like Shenzhen (if having and implement a tight budget and don't consider dorm cost). A more comfortable but still reasonable budget sits around 2,000 to 2,500 RMB per month, which allows for regular meals outside the canteen, weekend outings, and occasional shopping.

Scholarships and upfront tuition

Many students assume that if they receive a scholarship, they will not need to pay tuition before arriving. In practice, the timing often works differently.

How the timing typically works

At many universities, scholarship results are announced after the application deadline, sometimes as late as June or July for the September intake. Even if you are awarded, some schools still require you to pay full tuition fees first. The scholarship amount is then reimbursed to your Chinese bank account during the first semester after you have enrolled and registered.

This means you may need to have enough funds available to cover the first year's tuition before you leave your home country, even if you are expecting a scholarship to cover part or all of it. PLEASE check your school's requirement as it may vary.

What to do then

- Confirm with your university when the scholarship result will be announced and when tuition payment is due.

- Ask specifically whether scholarship recipients must pay full tuition first and receive reimbursement later.
- If full payment is required first, make sure your family has access to the necessary funds before the payment deadline. Missing a payment deadline can affect your enrolment status.
- Keep all payment receipts. You will likely need them when claiming your scholarship reimbursement after arrival.

Application and confirmation fees

Separate from tuition, most universities charge a non-refundable application fee at the time of submission, typically ranging from 400 to 600 RMB. Some universities also require a seat confirmation deposit after you receive an offer. These fees are generally not covered by scholarships and are paid regardless of the outcome.

Important: If you are unsure whether you need to pay tuition before your scholarship result is confirmed, email the admissions office directly and ask for written clarification. Do not rely on assumptions or secondhand information.

What are the food options (If eating out)

TL; DR

School cafeterias are around 20-50% cheaper than meals outside, so if you run on a tight budget, stick to your cafeteria. If you crave your hometown’s cuisines, chances are that their prices are even higher.

Many students plan to live exclusively on 20 to 30 RMB per day by eating only at the university canteen. Yes, a full, delicious canteen meal is incredibly cheap (usually between 8 and 15 RMB), but eating the same food every day can quickly become dull, so we made a basic list on different food options that you may have (REFERENCE ONLY):

| Food Type | Typical Cost Per Person | Practical Advice |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Burger/pizza/generic “western cuisines” | 40 – 200 RMB | Sometimes people in China will categorize all European and North American foods into “Western Cuisines” or 西餐 (yes, sometimes they even add Macdonalds into the list). If you want certain ones like Belgium/Georgian/Greek, then it is very hard to |

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| | | find unless in megacities like Beijing/Shanghai/Guangzhou. Price varies greatly, from affordable ones to fine dining ones (can be more expensive) |
| South Asian Cuisines | 60 – 130 RMB | Rarer than “western cuisines” mentioned above. You are more likely to encounter them in megacities. Price is higher due to their scarcity. |
| Middle East / North Africa / Turkish /Central Asian Cuisines | 60 – 130 RMB | Similar to South Asian ones, but if you are in certain cities with a large population of people from these places (such as Yiwu or Guangzhou), then it might be far more affordable and authentic. You may also see many of them in provinces like Xinjiang or in cities like Xi’An too. |
| Other African Cuisines | 70 – 130 RMB | Most of them are located in business cities, again such as Guangzhou or Yiwu. |
| South East Asia Cuisines | 50 – 100 RMB | There are a lot of Thailand restaurants in almost all major cities. As for Vietnam, Indonesia and other countries, the options are not so much but you can still find one if you live in Tier 1 or Tier 2 places. |
| Japanese/Korean Cuisines | 40 – 100RMB | There are a lot of them. You will be able to find one no matter where you are. |
| Central/South American Cuisines | 70 – 150 RMB | You can find many Mexican foods or Brazilian barbeques in major cities, but for other cuisines a bit harder to find. |

First-month budgets

For the first month, prepare some extra money. Beyond your rent and tuition, you shall also buy some essentials—like proper blankets, pillows, laundry bins, and toiletries—and these can be a big expenditure if added up.

Prepare an extra 2,000 to 3,000 RMB for your first month. You will need this for bedding, residence permit medical checks (approx. 650 RMB), mandatory health insurance (800 RMB/year), and security deposits.

Renting outside costs

If you choose to rent off-campus, this will be your largest monthly expense. The rental market in China typically operates on a 2 to 6-months deposit payment structure. You will need to have a significant amount of cash ready. You may also need to pay around 1-2 months of agent fees if you rent through an agent. Make sure that you sign a contract with the rental company or the landlord, so that you can get your money back when the contract expires.

| Expense Item | Tier 1 City | Tier 2 City | Notes |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Shared Apartment (1 Room) | 1,800 – 4,000 RMB/month | 1,500 – 2,800 RMB/month | Varies heavily based on location. |
| Private Studio/1BR | 6,000 – 10,000+ RMB/month | 3,000 – 5,000 RMB/month | Ideal for privacy, but significantly increases budget. |
| Utilities (Water, Electricity, Gas) | 150 – 400 RMB/month | 150 – 400 RMB/month | Summer air conditioning and winter heating will increase your electricity costs. |
| Home Internet (Wi-Fi) | 60 – 120 RMB/month | 40 – 100 RMB/month | Often bundled with your local phone plan or paid annually. |

Medical costs

China has a multi-tiered healthcare system. As an international student, you need to buy the standard [800 RMB/year insurance plan](#), and to make the full use of it, here is an estimated cost list for different clinics/hospitals (most expenses can be reimbursed but please consult the insurance company beforehand).

| Medical Facility | Estimated Cost | What to Expect |
|------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Campus Clinic | 10 – 50 RMB | Extremely cheap registration |



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| | | fee. Best for cold medicine or minor first aid. |
| Public Hospital (Standard) | 100 – 400 RMB | Includes registration (10–50 RMB) and basic meds. Long queues; bring a translation app. |
| Public Hospital (VIP/International) | 500 – 1,500 RMB | Higher registration fee (200–500 RMB), but doctors usually speak English. Shorter wait times. |
| Private International Clinic | 1,200 – 3,000+ RMB | Good service and fully English-speaking, but very expensive. Don't go there if your budget is limited, unless in emergency. |

Remember to:

Save Your Fapiao: Always keep your official receipts (发票 Fapiao) and medical records for insurance reimbursement.

Bring Familiar Meds: Bring a small supply of your preferred over-the-counter medicines for headaches, allergies, or stomach issues from home, as local equivalents may have different active ingredients.

Entertainment & leisure costs

Student life is not just about studying. Managing your entertainment budget is key to maintaining a good work-life balance without running out of money by the end of the month.

| Entertainment Type | Estimated Cost (RMB) | Practical Note |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Digital Subscriptions (Music/Video) | 15 – 30 RMB/month | Apps like NetEase Cloud Music, QQ Music, iQIYI, or Bilibili are incredibly cheap compared to Western equivalents. |
| Cinema Ticket | 40 – 80 RMB | Cheaper if booked through mini-programs on WeChat or Alipay rather than at the counter. |

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|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| KTV (Karaoke) Outing | 50 – 150 RMB/person | Often cheaper in the afternoons or when split among a large group. |
| Gaming/Internet Cafes | 10 – 25 RMB/hour | High-end esports cafes are very popular and affordable for PC gaming. |
| Museums & Parks | 0 – 50 RMB | Most public parks and state museums are free, though you usually need to book entry via WeChat mini-programs in advance using your passport. |

Hidden costs students often forget

- Internet services come up repeatedly in student responses, typically around 50 to 100 RMB per month combined.
- Printing costs for coursework and documents add to 20 to 50 RMB per month depending on your program.
- Basic medicine and room maintenance items like paracetamol, a screwdriver, or a power strip add another 25 to 50 RMB most months.
- Study materials and textbooks vary widely but can reach 100 to 200 RMB per month in the first semester.
- Students who smoke should factor in 200 to 300 RMB per month for cigarettes, which several respondents listed as their single largest expense (just don't smoke, or drink, if you need to save money).

Stay Connected

Keep This Guide Useful

The handbook works best with saved contacts, bookmarked links, and one support channel you can actually reach when something changes unexpectedly.

A handbook is helpful, but students often need ongoing guidance after the first reading. A small support ecosystem makes the guide more useful. If you want updates, video guides, community discussion, or student-facing content, keep the following channels saved.

| Channel | Best use |
|---------------------------|--|
| Website | Main information hub |
| Discord | Ask questions and connect with students (this is the largest overseas students in China community) |
| YouTube | Watch guide videos and practical explainers |
| Instagram | Student updates and lighter daily content |
| Facebook | Updates and broader community visibility |

FAQ

| Question | Short answer |
|--|---|
| Do I need to finish every app before I arrive? | No. Get online first, then add the essentials step by step. |
| Should I bring cash? | Yes, bring a small amount as backup even if you plan to pay mostly by phone later. |
| Can I use foreign currency directly in daily life? | Daily payments in China are generally made in RMB. |
| Do I need a Chinese bank account immediately? | Not ASAP, but you will need one very soon. |
| Will the school help with bank account setup? | Many universities usually provide some guidance. |
| What if WeChat or QQ asks for verification? | Ask a friend in China or your school first. Paid support may exist if needed. |
| Is food delivery normal on campus? | Yes, but many campuses have their own pickup rules. |
| Do large universities usually have halal food? | Many larger campuses do offer halal windows or halal canteens, but ask your school directly. |
| Is a dorm room always guaranteed? | Not always. Some schools have limited supply, so watch dorm booking notices carefully. |
| Do I need to speak Chinese immediately? | No. A few useful phrases and a translation app are enough at the beginning. |
| Is it normal to feel overwhelmed in the first weeks? | Yes. New systems, new language, and new routines take time. |
| What should I do if I am lost or confused? | Slow down, confirm your location, and contact your school or a trusted person. |
| What should I keep in my carry-on bag | Passport, documents, medicine, chargers, valuables, one change of clothes, and anything you cannot afford to lose on day one. |
| What if my luggage is delayed | Report it before leaving the airport, keep the case number, and make sure your essential |

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| | items are already in your carry-on. |
| What if I arrive very late at night | Go directly to your first accommodation, avoid non-essential errands, and finish setup the next morning. |
| Do I need to know how to answer customs questions | Only at a simple level. Keep your answers short, truthful, and consistent with your documents. |
| How do I ask for directions if my Chinese is weak | Show the address on your phone, ask one short question, and let the map do most of the work. |
| Should I buy everything for my room immediately | No. Inspect the room first, buy the first-night basics, and upgrade step by step. |
| What should I do if I feel homesick or overwhelmed | Keep a simple routine, contact one trusted person, and ask your school or community for help early. |

Final note

You do not need to understand everything about China in your first week. You only need a few things to work well enough: your documents, your room, your phone, your payment method, your food, your route to class, and your support contacts. Once these are in place, the rest of student life becomes much easier. Also remember the following tips:

1. Ask questions when feeling uncertain. Best is to ask someone who is actually responsible for your question. If they do not reply, seek help from communities or classmates.
2. Prepare for unexpected things caused by cultural differences. You will come across some interesting side quests so keep lighthearted about it with no stress.
3. Be curious about this new part of life journey. China is a world of itself and you will experience a lot of things beyond your wildest imagination. So embrace this beautiful place and begin a new part of your life!

Wish you a pleasant study in China adventure!

Regards,

Konrad

CrosslineEdu