

Before You Fly & Your First 3 Hours

Name check + payment check now, then a minute-by-minute plan for when you land.

Most foreigners only find these out **after** landing — payment fails at the hotel, train won't issue, or the Didi driver can't find them. Do A & B **before** you fly. Follow C **the moment you land**.

A Name Consistency Check

One mismatch between your passport name and a booking can block check-in, train tickets, or refunds.

☐ Flight ticket name = passport exactly

Letter-for-letter, including middle name and surname order.

Airlines reject boarding if it differs by one character.

☐ Hotel booking name = passport exactly

Especially Chinese-platform bookings (Ctrip / Qunar / Meituan).

Front desk can't find your reservation → no room.

☐ 12306 (train) name = passport exactly

Real-name system matches against your passport.

Mismatch = ticket won't issue, even if paid.

☐ Visa / arrival card name = passport exactly

Immigration delays over a typo are real.

B Payment & App Setup Check

Foreign cards often fail silently in China. Set this up **before** you need it.

☐ Alipay installed & real-name verified

Bind a foreign card OR top up **TourCard** (prepaid RMB wallet, ¥10k cap).

60%+ of street vendors & taxis are QR-only.

☐ VPN fully OFF when opening Alipay / WeChat Pay

Quit the app, not just disconnect.

IP mismatch silently kills payments (~40% of failures).

☐ Bank whitelisted "Alipay / Ant Group" by name

"I'm going to China" whitelists nothing; banks auto-block.

☐ WeChat Pay tested with a small payment

Many foreign cards bind but can't actually pay. Test early.

☐ Carry ¥200–400 cash as backup

When QR fails, cash is the only fallback.

☐ Know your card's foreign fee & daily cap

Some block overseas after ¥1k/day by default.

C Your First 3 Hours After Landing

Follow in order. Each block is a real window of time.

0–30 min

GET CONNECTED

- ☐ Airplane mode off → buy airport eSIM / data, or turn on roaming.
- ☐ Turn VPN **fully off** (quit the app — payments break otherwise).
- ☐ Open Amap (高德) or Baidu Maps; download offline map of your city.

30–60 min

GET PAID

- ☐ Open Alipay → confirm real-name verified (passport name shows).
- ☐ Bind foreign card OR top up TourCard with ¥200–400.
- ☐ Test: scan a ¥0.1 item or send to a friend. If it fails, you have time to fix.

60–90 min

GET MOVING

- ☐ Install Didi (Chinese Uber); link Alipay/WeChat Pay inside.
- ☐ Book ride to hotel. Show driver the **Chinese** address (saved offline) — English won't work.

90–120 min

CHECK IN

- ☐ At hotel: confirm booking name = passport **exactly** before they look you up.
- ☐ Pay with Alipay/WeChat; keep ¥ cash in hand as fallback.
- ☐ Save hotel card + Chinese address to your phone.

120–180 min

LOCK IT IN

- ☐ Add a China contact on WeChat (family / hotel / your on-call helper).
- ☐ Save emergency: **WeChat 13368344745** (China On-Call, GMT+8).
- ☐ Text your helper "Landed, at [hotel]" so someone knows you made it.

Stuck on any of these? That's what I do.

I make the calls and fix the setups you can't — in Chinese, before you even land.

WeChat: 13368344745

Full service: **china-backbone.pages.dev**

"A real person in China who makes the calls you can't." — China On-Call, GMT+8.