

Travel Information for Beijing

[more information](#)

Electricity

Electricity is **220V/50Hz**. Beijing plugs vary, and you'll see up to four different sorts around town. The standard for Chinese plugs and sockets is set out in GB 2099.1–2008 and GB 1002–2008. Chinese plugs and sockets are similar to those in Australia. A standard socket on a wall in China has two pins on the upper part and earthed three pins on the lower part.



Emergency numbers

Ambulance: 120

Fire: 119

Police 110

Money

Chinese currency is called *rénmínbì* (RMB). Its basic unit is the *yuán* (¥).

Most ATMs accept foreign cards. Most large banks change money. Credit and debit cards are now used more widely than before, especially in hotels, shopping malls and upmarket restaurants, but cash remains king in Běijīng, so carry money with you at all times.

ATMs

Most ATMs (取款机; *qǔkuǎnjī*) in Běijīng accept foreign credit cards and bank cards connected to Plus, Cirrus, Visa, MasterCard and Amex; a small withdrawal charge will be levied by your bank. The following banks have extensive ATM networks.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng)

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China (ICBC; 工商银行; Gōngshāng Yínháng)

China Construction Bank (中国建设银行; Zhōngguó Jiànshè Yínháng)

Agricultural Bank of China (ABC; 中国农业银行; Zhōngguó Nóngyè Yínháng)

ATM screens almost always offer the choice of English or Chinese operation. There are ATMs in the arrivals hall at Běijīng Capital International Airport, and in many large department stores and hotels.

Changing Money

Foreign currency can be changed at large branches of banks, such as the Bank of China, CITIC Industrial Bank, ICBC and the China Construction Bank; and at the airport, hotel money-changing counters and at several department stores, as long as you have your passport. You can normally change foreign currency into rénminbì at foreign-exchange outlets and banks at large international airports outside China, but rates may be poor. Hotels usually give the official rate, but some will add a small commission. Some upmarket hotels will change money for their own guests only.

Keep at least a few exchange receipts if you want to change any remaining rénminbì back into another currency at the end of your trip.

Counterfeit Bills

Counterfeit notes are a problem across China, Běijīng included. Very few shopkeepers will accept a ¥50 or ¥100 note without first running it under an ultraviolet light or through a machine. If you receive a note that doesn't seem right, hand it straight back.

Credit Cards

Credit is not big in China. In Běijīng, credit cards are relatively straightforward to use, but don't expect to be able to use them everywhere, and always carry enough cash. Where they are accepted, credit cards often deliver a slightly better exchange rate than in banks. Money can also be withdrawn at most ATMs on credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard and Amex. Credit cards can't be used to buy train tickets, but Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng) offices readily accept international Visa cards for buying air tickets.

Public Transportation

Bus

Běijīng's buses (公共汽车; *gōnggòng qìchē*) have always been numerous and cheap (from ¥2), but they're now easier to use for non-Chinese speakers, with swipe cards, announcements in English and bus-stop signs written in pinyin as well as Chinese characters.

If you use a travel card, you get 50% discount on all journeys.

Car and Motorcycle

China does not recognise the International Driving Permit, but it is relatively straightforward to obtain a temporary driving licence that allows you to drive in Běijīng and the surrounding area. The Vehicle Administration Office at Terminal 3 at Běijīng Capital International Airport issues temporary licences, and you can also rent cars at Terminal 3 and other locations around town from Hertz.

A separate licence is needed to drive a motorbike and it is generally not possible to rent motorbikes in Běijīng as the capital, like many Chinese cities, has restrictions on where motorbikes can be driven. No licence is required to drive a scooter, or electric bike, but they are not normally available for hire. Given the relatively low cost of hiring a car with a driver, or a taxi for the day, few visitors self-drive.

Subway

The [Běijīng subway system](#) is modern, safe, cheap and easy to use. It does get crowded, though. Fares are ¥3 to ¥8, depending on how far you are travelling. Get hold of a travel card (refundable deposit ¥20) if you don't want to queue for tickets each time you travel. The travel card also gets you a 50% discount on all bus journeys within the municipality of Běijīng.

To recognise a subway station (地铁站; *dì tiě zhàn*), look for the subway symbol, which is a blue English capital 'D' with a circle around it.

The Metroman smartphone app reveals the Běijīng subway map, with stations listed in both English and Chinese.

Taxi

Taxis (出租车; *chūzūchē*) are everywhere, although finding one can be a problem during rush hour, rainstorms and between 8pm and 10pm. Flag fall is ¥13, and lasts for 3km. After that it's ¥2.3 per kilometre. Rates increase slightly after 11pm.

It's rare for drivers to speak any English, so it's important to have the name and address of where you want to go written down in Chinese characters. Remember to keep your hotel's business card on you.