



China

**Information**

**Language:** Mandarin

**Capital:** Beijing

**Population:** 1,321,851,888

**Currency:** Yuan (¥)

*(Good)* [Rate!]

Current rating: 3.5/5 (15 votes)

**Your rating:**

**Hitchability:** Excellent Good Average Bad Almost impossible

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**More Info:**

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**China** is the most populated country in the world and tourism is booming with its rapidly expanding economy, but hitchhiking is only practiced sporadically. If you follow the advice in this page you will most likely have a wonderful time hitchhiking in China. Although it's not really common, more and more people understand the concept of hitchhiking (if you use the word da-bian-che).

Because of it's size, among other factors, it's hard so talk about China with general info. hitchhiking in the west of the country, as in Tibet, is different than in the east. hitchhiking in rural areas is different than on highways. the difficulty also varies. Generally speaking it's possible to categorize it like this: the more developed the road is, the less chance people will ask you for money, the faster you will get and more likely you should stop drivers by sign or by talking with them while they are stationary. the more rural the roads are the more hand waving you will have to do and more explaining beforehand that you do not pay for the trip. also, on rural roads it's easier to find camping spots.

Safety is an issue as traffic regulation is practiced half-heartedly. Expect people to honk rather than brake, to drive while holding a phone, drive on the hard shoulder, overtake in unsafe places, and more. Buckle up if you can. Some travelers report that the driving in China is way safer than in Russia and neighboring countries. Chinese usually don't exceed the speed limit much (130km/hr on expressways).

## How-to



## China

User [haggismn](#) in Manzhouli, having successfully used a sign to get there

The famous *Thumb* gesture used in most countries to indicate you want a lift is not fully understood in China, and although it will still work, will probably won't be very effective. For Chinese this gesture is more readily understood as meaning "good" or "OK" so drivers will probably not think of stopping. The most common signal to ask a vehicle to stop is to outstretch your arm and gently wave the hand up and down, but this isn't the most recommended way to hitchhike.

As in many countries, on major roads try to hitchhike from a service station, toll area or some other place where traffic has to stop or slow. Standing on the hard shoulder or the motorway works fine as well though. To get to the toll area/service station use a map, GPS or Google map to show you where the road begins. there is also a Chinese website that shows the actual toll stations. On arrival to the road, use the outstretched arm and hand wave described above.

The first alternative is to use the "sign system", preferably in Chinese not Pinyin (the Romanist script) showing where you want to go. Both hand and sign approaches is used locally in some areas (eg Guangzhou). When you are standing by the roadside, having a sign indicating where you are going can be very useful. If you don't speak Chinese, a sign can also help avoid misunderstandings as many people will not know what hitchhiking is and won't understand what you are doing. a sign is the most common way to hitchhike on the highways of China, but because the concept of Hitchhiking is not well known in China, it means that only people going to this actual place will stop you for a ride, and never people who go on the road to this place. Some might suggest you write a destination that is closer than to where you are actually going - perhaps a sign with a city 500 km away is better than one that is 1000 km away. This is complex though. If you have a sign for the closer city, a driver who is going to the further city may pick you up and leave you at the closer one, not understanding your futile attempts to inform them that you want the further city. That's why another good way to hitchhike on Chinese high-ways is to talk with drivers.

The "talking" system generally means getting to a place where the drivers are stationary (gas stations, toll stations etc.) and ask them where are they going or hand them with a small letter indicating what are you doing. most people will politely tell the truth about their destination and if this is in your direction, show in simple sentences and hand gestures that you want to join the ride. saying "thank you" in advance can also be of help.

The hitchhiker's appearance is important: dressing fairly smartly and having a clean appearance will help you greatly. Students in China tend to dress more conservatively and males usually have short hair. It is a good idea not to wear sunglasses as they are not as commonly worn and might make you look sinister.

It is important to note that on highways most drivers will not expect to be paid for a ride, even though they probably do not understand the concept of hitchhiking. However, you will find that some drivers, particularly on side roads, will ask for payment before you get in. This is no problem as you can make your decision whether or not to get in. However, some drivers may ask for payment once you have reached your destination. If in doubt, try to signal that you do not want to pay before you get in the vehicle. Generally speaking, you will find in China that most people who pick you up are extremely generous, occasionally overly so. On highways many drivers will let you off their car only if they are sure you know where you are going and is in good situation.

At any case you need to bring a map with you, either download from the net buy one at the first opportunity. The Gao su gong lu network is very complex, and you may get lost very quickly, or end up stuck in a city for a day. You should have a map in Chinese, so that other people can understand where you are going. You may be able to pick up some Chinese characters and understand the names. However if you are struggling, consider getting a Pinyin for yourself as well, if you can find one (they are not very common). Maps can easily be found in service stations, supermarkets and book stores, city maps cost around 10Y while road atlas costs around 30Y (2012) - if you find a Pinyin one expect it to cost much more - only foreigners would buy them.

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It is always a good practice in China to have someone write a polite letter in Chinese about who are you and where you want to go. A short "destination note" is important for showing immediately to the driver. After entering a car it is also highly recommended to include some more letters of information about you, especially if heading for a long drive. you can explain practical things about your doings, what hitchhiking is, and go on telling about yourself and you travels, you thoughts and hobbies and other fun stuff. this opens up the driver to you and if your letter has pinyin as well it can also help the driver with his English (many Chinese want to learn English but are shy to practice).

The first character of a vehicle's number plate is in Chinese and indicates the home province and then there is a roman letter indicating the city in the province (A is always the capital). If you are in Anhui and see a ? (chuan, standing for Sichuan) with an A and some numbers, that's from Chengdu. If one is heading in the direction of home you can use it as a criteria to select a car to stop.

If you want to sleep while on the road, you will have no problem pitching a tent. People will usually not bother you. However do make sure your belongings are not on show and therefor do not pitch a tent directly on the road (which is also a bit dangerous). You will find there is plenty of traffic at night also. You can try to pick a slow and comfortable truck, you might only make 400 km in 8 hours but if that's at night and avoids an accommodation cost, who cares? The lack of malice (at an individual level at least!) of the Chinese makes most of China easy to hitchhike day and night without fear. There is little fear of being attacked or robbed though of course such activities exist everywhere, and as always girls should take extra care.

## Public Transport

You will most likely need public transport to get to the express ways. Fortunately in every city there are express ways running close to the city centre, and often toll areas also, which are excellent for hitching from. If you are lost, try to find a younger Chinese person, and ask them which bus number goes to somewhere near the *gao su gong lu*. Make sure not to point at the road itself, they will inform you that you cannot take a bus there. Then you can take a bus and walk to the road.

Referring back to the occasionally overly generous Chinese folk, you may encounter an awkward situation in which your driver will take you to a train station and inflict upon you a train ticket to where you are going. This is very counter productive in almost all situations. You will waste many hours waiting for the train. You will then arrive at a city you may not have wanted to visit, perhaps at night when there are no buses, sleep deprived, hungry and lost. Above all this if it's not a fast train, it is likely much slower than by car, so you will be many hundreds of kilometers behind where you would have been on the road. So, if your driver leaves the motorway, you have to insist, sometimes very strongly to leave the car. Some people might not want to let you out because they are totally sure that you will get lost there, but if you really insist they will not force you to stay in the car.

Another option to avoid this situation, have your polite Chinese letter state very clearly that you do not want to go to the train/bus station or the airport, and that you only want to hitch hike in the country, perhaps as a cultural investigation, to save money for tourists sites, to learn Chinese or as a challenge.

## Regions

There are probably big differences between the different regions in China.

*please add more info if you've hitched in many parts of China*

To find out where a car is from, look on the character on the license plate. A following "A" indicates the provincial capital.

## China

### Municipalities:

- Beijing ? j?ng
- Shanghai ? hù
- Chongqing ? yú
- Tianjin ? j?n

### Special administrative zones:

-  Hong Kong Special Adm. Region of China
-  Macao Special Adm. Region of China

### Autonomous regions:

- Guangxi Autonomous Region of the Zhuang people, ? guì
- Inner Mongolia: Autonomous Region of the Mongo people, ? m?ng
- Ningxia Autonomous Region of the Hui people, ? níng
- Tibet Autonomous Region of Xizang, ? zàng
- Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the Uyghur people, ? x?n

### Provinces:

- Anhui ? w?n
- Fujian ? m?n
- Gansu ? g?n
- Guangdong ? yuè, sometimes plus ? for Hong Kong or ? for Macau
- Guizhou ? guì
- Hainan ? qióng
- Hebei ? jì
- Heilongjiang ? h?i
- Henan ? yù
- Hubei ? è
- Hunan ? xi?ng
- Jilin ? jí
- Jiangsu ? s?
- Jiangxi ? gàn
- Liaoning ? liáo
- Qinghai ? q?ng
- Shaanxi ? sh?n
- Shandong ? l?
- Shanxi ? jìn
- Sichuan ? chu?n
- Yunnan ? yún
- Zhejiang ? zhè

### Regions

## Inner Mongolia

On the Gausugonglu of Inner Mongolia (the roads closer to Beijing up to the border with Mongolia), the upper instructions apply.

I hitchhiked around several villages in the western Gobi, using Erenhot as a base. Truck drivers do not expect tips - at least, they did not when I offered money to them. However, private drivers will often request inordinate amounts of money for short distances, so it's best to ask "Doh Shao Chian?", which means "how much?" before getting in.

Chinese is the majority language, especially in the cities. As a Mongolian speaker who only knew a few words of Chinese, people were surprised at me, but pretty accommodating - outside of cities, there is usually at least one person in the room who speaks Mongolian.

You should know that, if you leave the cities, the police WILL detain you here at least once, and you should make according time allowances. In such a case, do not panic - they will actually be very helpful and friendly when they realize you're not a criminal. They will take you to the station, ask you questions, and when satisfied, release you. Have your visa ready, and expect to be asked "What are you doing here?". The whole process takes between one and three hours. Be prepared for this situation, as it happened to me three times in as many days. Consequently, anyone considering hitchhiking here MUST be able to speak enough Mongolian or Chinese to get through this situation.

## Cities



Hitching out of Luoping,

- Beijing
- Tianjin
- Chengdu, Chongqing
- Guangzhou
- Guiyang
- Hong Kong
- Kunming
- Qingdao
- Shanghai
- Xi'an
- Kashgar

- Turpan

## Expressways

The expressways are often new and fast (100-130 km/h), where as the second level roads may be really bad and a fatal error, where there are a lot less cars and other rules for hitchhiking. Stick to highways if you want to travel fast. Most of the entrance to the highways from the cities in China, have a toll. Using the "talking system", go there and talk straight to the drivers, pointing at the letter or map. be earnest. Say something like: "Nihao! Qing wen, ni qu nali? Wo qu zheli, ni ne? Ni qu zheli ma?" (Hello! Excuse me, where are you going? I go here, and you? Do you go here?), etc. Keep saying "Oh hao hao, xiexie a!" (Oh good good, thanks, ah!) Like mentioned above, Chinese people will typically tell you the truth about where are they going, and once they do so, if you ask them to go with them and they have free space, they will hardly say "no", either because they are just too naive or because they don't want to loose face.

At the tolls, if you talk to the booth workers and the guards and tell them where are you going and what is your purpose, they will often offer you to ask the drivers for you as they keep passing with their cars through the booths to pay the fee, but sometimes they will not know who to ask and will try to ask only specific cars, and so it is recommended to also continue relaying on yourself. Sometimes some guard may look like they frown at you or even come to you and ask you some questions. most of the time smiling and showing them the cards or letters with the information on you will satisfy them to let you continue ask drivers for a lift.

When no tolls around, go to the rest areas where you can talk to people easily, or look for a jiayou zhan, a gas station. Without a big sign, I never got picked up there with the passing cars (of most don't stop); with the sign, it took from a few minutes to seconds.

## Language

English in rural or even urban areas are rarely used. Get yourself 1. a phrasebook, easier to acquire when you're outside of China, were not easy to find in bookstores in China, and 2. a pocket dictionary, which generally available in China for 10 RMB in 2007. Here are some helpful phrases:

### Basic Vocab

??? *da bian-che*: Hitchhike. That's probably what you want to write on a big card board, although it's a rare word in Chinese and many people do not know what it means.

?? *gong-lu*: literally public roads, which means either highway or national road

???? *gao su gong lu*: means expressway (expway)

?? *guo-dao* : national road

?? *Xie xie* : Thank you

?? *zhe-li*: Here

??/?? *Na-li* : There / Where?

"Fuwuqu": service area

pay toll

## Conversations

???..."wo yao qu ...." ( I/want/go to) means "I need/want to go to . . ."

????? "ni qu nali?" (you/ go to / where) means "Where are you going?"

????? "zai zheli ting jiu xing" (at/here/stop/okay) means "please stop here"

Chinese, like many Asian languages, is a tonal language which means a change in a pitch will drive to different meanings. Without basic training, most westerners will find it hard to pronounce Chinese well at an decipherable level. But if you print the Chinese characters out and show them to the driver, things will work pretty smooth.

## Police



Police will usually not care about you and will more likely try to be helpful than make trouble. However, this can also mean taking you away from the motorway to a bus or train station. Sometimes (closer to official areas like Beijing and Shanghai) the police will insist you will go away to some other place, but if you insist they will most of the time let you stand with your sign/continue to ask drivers around. It also happens when a police officer will treat you like a privileged person, will take photos with you and will stop cars for you or even get you on the bus for free. nobody will say anything but this is an awkward experience when everybody around you pay lot's of money for the drive and you sit there after the police officer stopped the bus for you. Usually when dealing with the police in China, it is best to just smile and be naive but firm with your goal, and be independent about it. you are doing fine, not disturbing and in love with China.

## Personal experiences

- *In the South the police was unaware, or friendly but very confused, to Guaka and amylin. Most of the time the police didn't do anything while walking along the highway or trying to hitch. Once, at the highway entry of Kaili in Guizhou, they started talking, found someone who spoke English, and brought the hitchhikers to a bus station, where the police paid for a bus ticket! Another time the highway police was very confused again, and it took 2 1/2 hours to find a translator and be left alone at a highway entrance again.*
- *Fijau hitchhiked through Xinjiang, Gansu, Shaanxi, Henan without being bothered by police. In Xinjiang police even helped him to get a ride. Problems started to occur in Zhejiang (Eastern China, near Shanghai). Several times police didn't let him onto the expressway through the toll gate and took him off the expressway while passing by.*
- *perah somehow always gets helped by police. Especially when it's getting dark or at night it's sometimes very useful to rely on them. Not only next to pay tolls but also on service areas (there are almost always some police officers). Sometimes they will give you something to eat, take pictures with you, the usual stuff. In Jiangxi or Anhui they caught her a ride, took pictures of her and the driver's passports, which*

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*was for safety reasons and actually OK, but also of other visas she had in her passport. Probably only out of curiosity and to test their apparently new camera.*

## Maps



amylin in the province of **China**.

Sometimes the indication used for roads aren't very accurate, so you might be thinking you'll be on a nice highway for a while, when it suddenly becomes a 1 lane road going through villages. This is also goes while hitching, on a highway, sometimes a sign might be indicated for a big city, but if you pursuit this, you can find yourself on a dirt road in no time.

Very good is the **Tourist Atlas of China**. It is in English and Chinese, a small book with all the provinces. But it's hard to find though, Worldhitch got it in Beijing at one of the biggest bookstores. The province maps in Chinese are pretty good, if you have the tourist atlas, you also have the bigger cities in English as a reference point, and hitch on the small roads with the province map.

Note: Be aware of Chinese maps - sometimes they are developed for the (often quickly changing) future! They show highways which are not yet existing, or they having wrong distances between cities. Its always good to have two or three maps (the province maps as well) and then search for the truth in the middle.

## Border Crossing

### To Kyrgyzstan

- Irkeshtam Pass
- Torugart Pass

### To Mongolia

- Erenhot / Erlianhaote

## Links

- Some very useful info in CS group thread.
- More info in CS hitchhikers group
- Jojo Z's experiences with hitchhiking in China (Jojo is a Chinese girl)

## China

- [Hitching in China](#), a Russian Website with tons of information. Some of them available in English.
- [Website with photocopies of maps of all provinces and some cities as well.](#)
- [CS thread: Advanced Manual with Scientifically Proven Methods and Routines to Hitchhike in China by CS Member IwannaGoToTahiti](#)



### Provinces of **China**

**Provinces:** [Anhui](#) | [Fujian](#) | [Gansu](#) | [Guangdong](#) | [Guizhou](#) | [Hainan](#) | [Hebei](#) | [Henan](#) | [Heilongjiang](#) | [Hubei](#) | [Hunan](#) | [Jiangsu](#) | [Jiangxi](#) | [Jilin](#) | [Liaoning](#) | [Qinghai](#) | [Shaanxi](#) | [Shandong](#) | [Shanxi](#) | [Sichuan](#) | [Yunnan](#) | [Zhejiang](#)

**Autonomous Regions:** [Guangxi](#) | [Inner Mongolia](#) | [Ningxia](#) | [Tibet](#) | [Xinjiang](#)

**Municipalities:** [Beijing](#) | [Chongqing](#) | [Shanghai](#) | [Tianjin](#)

**Special Administrative Regions:** [Hong Kong](#) | [Macao](#)