Navigating Mainland China fact sheet

The Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, through the initiative of our China Committee, has created *the Navigating Mainland China fact sheet* to help you plan your travel to and within Mainland China. This sheet will help you effortlessly navigate both the modern cities and the stunning countryside.

Travel to Mainland China

Convenient ways to travel from Hong Kong to Mainland China include:

- MTR East Rail line (departs from Admiralty station) to Lo Wu & Lok Ma Chau stations
- Bus (multiple operators from various locations in Hong Kong)
  1. Tickets can be bought **here**.
  2. Buses departing from Hong Kong Island only go to Shenzhen Bay Port, Huanggang Port, or Shenzhen Airport.
  3. Buses from Hong Kong go to Baoan, Futian, Guangming, Longgang, Luohu and Nanshan.
  4. Depending on where you depart from and your destination, the journey can take between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours
- High-speed rail (from West Kowloon Railway Station; read more about it **here**)
- Taxi to Heung Yuen Wai, Lo Wu, Huanggang Port, Man Kam and Shenzhen Bay Port
- Airplane (from HKG International Airport)

Check timetables and border crossing hours in advance.
All entry points can be seen below, be sure to check which entry points are compatible with your mode of transportation.

*We strongly recommend checking for the latest updates through official channels before planning your travel to and within Mainland China.

Mobile data

Sim card from Hong Kong

Another option is to purchase a physical SIM card in Hong Kong before your departure, available at vendors like 7-Eleven. This will still give you access to apps like WhatsApp in China.

E-sim

Getting an e-SIM is a convenient method for mobile data, easily purchased through an app on your phone. Airalo is a known vendor.

Local sim card

You can also get a local phone number. This could be the preferred option, as some web registrations in Mainland China may necessitate a Chinese phone number (starting with +86). At the Futian and Luohu border crossings in Shenzhen, numerous shops sell local SIM cards and provide assistance with real-name verification.

Virtual Private Network (VPN)

Some websites and apps are restricted in the Chinese network, including certain (Dutch) news outlets, information sources like Wikipedia, and social media. To bypass this blockade, use a virtual private network (VPN), with Astrill, VPN Express and NordVPN being well-known options. VPN needs to be installed before travelling to the Mainland.

Visa requirements

Dutch passport holders can now travel visa-free for tourism, business, and transit until at least 31 December 2026, with a maximum stay of 30 days. For other purposes or longer stays, a visa is required and can be obtained from the Chinese visa office in Wan Chai, Hong Kong. Click **here** for visa-exempt countries.

To ensure the quickest and smoothest passage through immigration, be sure to complete arrival card prior to heading to Shenzhen **here**.

Navigation

As Google is unavailable in China, Google Maps is not a convenient navigation app. English alternatives include Apple Maps (well-integrated with public transport and traffic conditions) and MAPS.ME (supports offline use) and AMap Global.

Note:

- *If a Hong Kong SIM card is installed in your phone, Google and Apple Maps will still be usable; if a Chinese SIM card is installed, a VPN will need to be installed and activated to use Google and Apple Maps.*
- *AMap Global is still sometimes considered 'basic' compared to the Chinese version; hence, you may also want to download the Chinese version.*

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Paying

While cash is occasionally accepted, it has become increasingly rare in Mainland China. The predominant method of payment for most transactions is the mobile apps **AliPay** or **WeChat Pay**.

Download the AliPay and/or WeChat app on your phone and go through the setup process, then link your bank account to your AliPay or WeChat account. For AliPay, refer to the guide by the Benelux Chamber of Commerce in China for assistance in setting up.

Note:

- We recommend using the AliPay app designed for Mainland China, as the AliPay HK app may not always work there.
- Ensure that your WeChat Pay is set up for transactions in Mainland China by going to "Me," selecting "Services," and choosing "Switch Wallet Region" in the top right corner, then setting it to China Mainland.
- Make sure to add your credit cards / link your bank account before going to the Mainland.

Entertainment

If you are visiting the Mainland China for the first time and you are unsure of what to do, then you can browse the following apps for the best restaurants, discounts and reviews. Make sure to download the app before heading to China. When on the Apple App Store, you need to change your location to China before being able to download the apps.

- **Dianping:** the equivalent of ‘Yelp’ and is useful for discovery or reviews
- **Meituan:** more of an all-round app to use for daily needs, ranging from food delivery to restaurant reservations to travel booking and ride-hailing.

Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Permanent Residents

Starting from 10 July 2024, permanent residents in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region who are non-Chinese citizens can now apply for this new permit. The Permit will be valid for 5 years and it will entitle you to a maximum stay of 90 days.

Make an appointment:

The following documents should be prepared before making an appointment at China Travel Service:

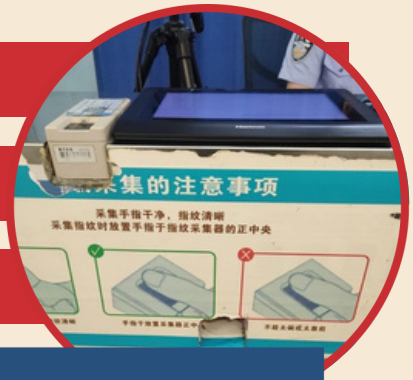
- Access to Information (click **here** to obtain it from Hong Kong Immigration)
- Photo (requires the same specifications as the Home Return Permit)
- Copy passport (front cover and particulars page)
- Copy Chinese Visa (if applicable)
- Copy Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card

Next steps:

1 **Go to Shenzen via the manual / special lane**

2 **Proceed through customs as usual**

3 **After customs find the e-channel registration**



Futian Border Crossing

After customs your are located at level 2

Find the elevator to go to level 3

Once at level 3, walk to the back to find the e-channel registration counter

Register your mainland travel permit and you are ready to go!

Lo Wu Border Crossing

After customs your are located at level 1/F

Go to the left to take the stairs to level 2/F

Follow the signs to the left, draw a number and wait for your turn (note: limited opening hours)

Register your mainland travel permit and you are ready to go!

Advice from China Travel Service: It is important to always use your permit after obtaining one, so do not use your passport or APAC card for traveling to China anymore!

Driver's Licence Conversion

As a Hong Kong permanent resident in possession of the Mainland Travel Permit and a Hong Kong driver's licence for private cars, you are now able to apply for a driving licence in the Mainland China, without completing any written tests and it is valid for up to 6 years.

The applicant must apply in person at any of the designated Vehicle Control Offices in Guangdong Province. Applicants also need to meet the requirements outlined by the Guangdong Public Security Department (GDPSD).

Make an appointment:

Book your appointment **here** or via WeChat and ensure you bring the following documents:

- Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card
- Hong Kong Driving Licence
- Home Return Permit / Mainland Travel Permit
- Medical examination report*
- Four recent passport-style photographs with a white background (1-inch size, 33 mm × 48 mm)*
- Application form*

**Medical, photo and application form can be completed on site*

Next steps:

- The Mainland China driving licence is usually issued within an hour.
- Download the "Traffic Control 12123 交管12123" mobile application, register an account, and apply for an electronic driving licence. The electronic licence has the same legal validity as the physical licence.