



**China Fantasy Travel**  
Zhangjiajie · private English-speaking China tours

THE FREE 2026 PLANNING KIT

# Your First Trip to China, Planned the Easy Way

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Visas, payments, getting around, the best time to come — plus a free sample Zhangjiajie itinerary. Written by the local team who actually live in the mountains we show you.

A free guide from  
**China Fantasy Travel** · Zhangjiajie, China

[chinafantasytravel.com](http://chinafantasytravel.com)

## START HERE

## A note from our team in Zhangjiajie

We are a locally-owned team of about 80 people who live and guide in Zhangjiajie — not a big-city agency outsourcing the work.

Planning a first trip to China can feel like a wall of questions: Do I need a visa? How do I pay without a Chinese bank account? Can I get around without speaking Mandarin? We answer those questions for travellers every day, so we put the essentials in one short, honest guide you can keep on your phone.

Everything here is current for **2026** and written in plain English. Where rules can change (visas especially), we tell you exactly where to confirm — or you can just ask us.

### HOW TO USE THIS KIT

Skim the section that worries you most first. Most first-timers start with the visa page, then payments. The last page shows how we turn all of this into a finished, private trip — with a personalised itinerary in your inbox within two hours.

### What is inside

- **Do you even need a visa?** — the 2026 visa-free and transit rules, in one table
- **Paying in a cashless China** — Alipay, WeChat Pay and your foreign card
- **Staying connected** — internet, maps, ride-hailing and translation
- **Getting around** — high-speed trains, flights and private cars
- **When to come** — best seasons and the dates to avoid
- **A free sample 5-day Zhangjiajie itinerary** — the real "Avatar" mountains
- **Pack-and-go checklist** — plus a few local manners that go a long way

## SECTION 1

## Do you even need a visa?

Good news: in 2026 most travellers can visit China with little or no visa paperwork. Find your situation below.

| Your situation                                                                        | What it means for 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>30-day visa-free entry</b><br>(passport holders of ~38 countries)                  | Most of Europe, plus Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea — and the UK and Canada were added in early 2026. Enter for up to 30 days for tourism. Just book your flights and come.                                                                    |
| <b>240-hour (10-day) visa-free transit</b><br>(55 countries, incl. the United States) | Enter and exit through one of 65 designated ports with an onward ticket to a third country/region, and stay up to 10 days. Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xi'an — the usual gateways to Zhangjiajie — are all covered. The common route for US visitors. |
| <b>Tourist (L) visa</b>                                                               | For longer stays or if you don't qualify above. Apply at a Chinese visa centre with your passport, form, photo and travel plan. We can provide a confirmed itinerary to support your application.                                                          |

### ALWAYS CONFIRM BEFORE YOU BOOK

Visa rules are expanding fast and the eligible-country lists do change. Check the latest official list with the National Immigration Administration at [en.nia.gov.cn](http://en.nia.gov.cn) — or send us your nationality and dates and we'll confirm your exact route.

### A quick word on Zhangjiajie

Zhangjiajie has its own airport (DYG) with direct flights from many Chinese hubs, and is on the high-speed rail network. Whichever entry route you use, reaching the "Avatar" mountains is straightforward — we handle the connections inside China for you.

## SECTION 2

## Paying in a cashless China

China is one of the most cashless places on earth — and paying as a foreign visitor is far easier than it used to be.

### Mobile payments: Alipay & WeChat Pay

Almost everyone pays by scanning a QR code — restaurants, taxis, even street stalls. Both **Alipay** and **WeChat Pay** now let international visitors link a foreign Visa or Mastercard, so you can pay like a local without a Chinese bank account. Install one (Alipay is the simplest for tourists) and link your card *before* you arrive.

### Cash still works

Carry some Chinese yuan (RMB) as a backup, especially in smaller towns and the rural areas around Zhangjiajie. You can withdraw RMB from ATMs showing UnionPay, Visa or Mastercard logos.

### Cards

International credit cards work at international-brand hotels and larger venues, but not everywhere — don't rely on them alone. **UnionPay** is the most widely accepted card network in China.

#### TIPPING

Tipping is not customary in China and is never expected in restaurants or taxis. On a private tour, a tip for your guide or driver is appreciated but entirely optional.

#### ON OUR PRIVATE TOURS

Your guide, driver, entrance tickets and pre-agreed inclusions are arranged and paid in advance — so day to day you only spend on personal extras and the odd souvenir.

## SECTIONS 3 &amp; 4

## Staying connected & getting around

Two things first-timers worry about most — the internet, and moving between cities. Both are simpler than they look.

### Getting online

- The easiest option is a **travel eSIM** for China bought before you fly — you land already connected, and many include access to the apps you use at home.
- International roaming from your home carrier also works and routes around local restrictions.
- Download offline maps and a translation app (with camera-photo translation for menus and signs) before arrival.

### Apps worth having

- **Maps:** Apple Maps works well for foreigners; Amap is the local standard.
- **Rides:** DiDi (China's ride-hailing) has an English mode and takes foreign cards.
- **Translation:** any major translation app with photo + voice modes.

### Trains, flights & private cars

China's **high-speed rail** is fast, punctual and comfortable — often the best way between cities. Foreign passports are accepted: your passport is your ticket at the gate. Domestic flights cover the longer hops. On our tours you travel city-to-city by train or flight and have a **private car and driver** on the ground — no shared coaches, no waiting on strangers.

#### YOU DON'T HAVE TO BOOK ANY OF THIS YOURSELF

Trains, flights, airport pickups and every transfer are arranged for you on a China Fantasy Travel trip. We sort the logistics; you enjoy the trip.

## SECTION 5

## When to come

China is huge, so "best time" depends on where you go. For Zhangjiajie and most classic routes, here is the honest local view.

| Season                                    | What it's like in Zhangjiajie                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Spring (Apr–May)</b><br>Our top pick   | Lush green peaks, sea-of-cloud mornings, comfortable hiking weather.<br>Arguably the most beautiful window.      |
| <b>Autumn (Sep–Oct)</b><br>Also excellent | Crisp, clear air and golden light — superb for photography. Our other favourite season.                          |
| <b>Summer (Jun–Aug)</b>                   | Green and dramatic with misty mornings; warmer and busier, occasional rain. Still rewarding with an early start. |
| <b>Winter (Nov–Mar)</b>                   | Quiet, crisp and atmospheric — snow on the pillars is magical. Fewer crowds; some higher trails may be limited.  |

### DATES TO AVOID (OR LET US MANAGE)

China's two big domestic holidays bring the heaviest crowds and highest prices: **National Day "Golden Week" (Oct 1–7)** and **Chinese New Year / Spring Festival** (late Jan or Feb, varies yearly). You can still travel then — we just plan around the peaks and book early.

Because we live here, we time your park days around the weather and the crowds — for example, getting you onto Golden Whip Stream or the cable car before the day-tripper buses arrive.

## A TASTE OF THE REAL THING

## Free sample: 5 days in Zhangjiajie

This is the trip we'd plan for our own friends — the "Avatar" sandstone peaks, Tianmen Mountain and the Glass Bridge, without a single wasted day. A starting point we tailor to you.

1

### Arrive & settle in

Private airport or station pickup, hotel check-in, and an easy first evening. Your guide walks you through the plan over a relaxed local dinner.

2

### Zhangjiajie National Forest Park

The towering pillars that inspired "Avatar." Bailong Elevator, the Avatar Hallelujah Mountain viewpoints, and a slow walk down Golden Whip Stream — timed to dodge the crowds.

3

### Tianmen Mountain & the Glass Bridge

The world's longest cable car to "Heaven's Gate," the cliff-edge glass walkway, and the famous 99-bend road. Big-view day.

4

### Your free drone aerial video

A professional operator films you among the "Avatar" peaks — a cinematic keepsake included free on our 5-day flagship. Prefer costumes? Add an optional Hanfu & Miao photoshoot among the pillars. You go home with framed-worthy memories, not just snapshots.

5

### At your pace & departure

A gentle final morning — a teahouse, a local market or a last viewpoint — then a private transfer to your train or flight.

#### WHAT A TRIP LIKE THIS COSTS

Our 5-day private Zhangjiajie tour — guide, private driver, all park tickets and a free drone aerial video — starts from around **US\$680 per person**, and the per-person price drops as your group grows. We never quote a bare total: your exact, itemised price comes in your personalised proposal.

## SECTION 7

## Pack-and-go checklist

The things first-timers are most glad they sorted — and a few local manners that go a long way.

### Before you fly

- Passport valid 6+ months, plus your visa or visa-free route confirmed
- Alipay (or WeChat Pay) installed and your card linked
- A China travel eSIM bought, or roaming switched on
- Offline maps + a translation app downloaded
- Any regular medication in original packaging, with a copy of the prescription

### For Zhangjiajie specifically

- Comfortable, broken-in walking shoes — there is real hiking
- Layers and a light rain jacket; mountain weather shifts quickly
- A power bank (long, photo-filled days)

### A few local manners

- A smile and a "ni hao" (hello) and "xie xie" (thank you) are always welcome
- Tipping isn't expected — a thank-you to your guide means more
- Ask before photographing people, especially in ethnic-minority villages

#### TRAVELLING WITH KIDS OR GRANDPARENTS?

We plan gentler pacing, lifts and cable cars over stairs, and kid-friendly stops as standard. Just tell us who is coming.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

## Let's turn this into your trip.

Tell us your dates, group size and what you'd love to see. We'll send a personalised, day-by-day itinerary with a clear price — in your inbox within **two hours**.

- ✓ **100% private & tailor-made** — never a group, never strangers thrown together
- ✓ **English-speaking local guides** who live where your trip begins
- ✓ **No shopping stops, no hidden commissions** — ever
- ✓ **Free drone aerial video** on the 5-day Zhangjiajie flagship
- ✓ **Flexible cancellation** — full refund 30+ days before departure

### Start your free itinerary

WhatsApp **+86 189 7441 2915**

Email **[info@chinafantasytravel.com](mailto:info@chinafantasytravel.com)**

Web **[chinafantasytravel.com](http://chinafantasytravel.com)** · Plan My Trip

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