Getting Around Shanghai: Guide to Public Transportation

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Each day, 10 million people ride it due to its convenience and low cost. With 16 lines over 705 kilometers (438 miles), chances are that whatever sites you want to see during your stay will be close to a metro station. Plus, all of its signs, maps, and announcements are in English as well as Chinese.

Buses are another cheap option, and ferries allow you to experience the Huangpu River. Taxis are plentiful, and the best option at night. Bike sharing can be found throughout the city, and while Uber is complicated to use without a Chinese bank account, there are alternatives, like Didi Chuxing.

For ease of access and setting up payment, we suggest downloading all of the recommended apps in this article before you leave for China.

## How to Ride the Shanghai Metro

Fare rates: Fares are based on distance traveled and transfers made, ranging from 3 to 9 yuan (about 45 cents to $1.30). Line 5 is slightly cheaper than the rest and begins at 2 yuan (30 cents). Children under 1.2 meters (3.9 feet) ride free when accompanied by an adult. You can check ticket prices by downloading the [Shanghai Metro](http://service.shmetro.com/en/dtapp/index.htm) app or the [Explore Shanghai app](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.exploremetro.sh&hl=en).

Types of passes: You can buy one of several types of tickets or get a stored-value public transportation smartcard called the jiaotong ka.

* Single-journey ticket: A one-way ticket.
* One-day travel pass (18 yuan): Can be used for 24 hours and provides unlimited rides on all the metro lines except for the Maglev line
* Three-day travel pass (45 yuan): Same as the one-day pass, only for three days
* Maglev & metro pass (55 yuan/85 yuan): There are two versions: single and round-trip. The price includes either a single or round-trip journey on the Maglev line, plus 24 hours of unlimited rides on the other metro lines.
* Jiaotong ka: You can purchase this card (20 yuan for the card, plus at least 10 yuan each time you want to refill it) and use it for the metro and Maglev lines, as well as for taxis, buses, long-distance buses, and ferries.
* Jiaotong app: This is the digital version of the jiaotong ka, but it can be difficult to use as a foreign tourist. [You can use this app](https://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/post/22901/foreigners-can-now-use-the-shanghai-metro-app-finally) if you pay through Alipay (a popular digital payment system in China), and if you can read Chinese, as there is not an English version. Also, Apple Pay will not work with it unless your account is set to the China region.

Where and how to buy: You can purchase single-journey tickets at the automated ticket machines or from the service counters in the metro stations. Buy 24-hour and multi-day passes at the metro service center counters. Jiaotong kas can be purchased at metro station service counters, convenience stores, and some banks. Download the jiaotong app [here](https://apps.apple.com/cn/app/metro%E5%A4%A7%E9%83%BD%E4%BC%9A/id1202750238).

Hours of operation: Hours vary by line, but they generally run from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day. The Maglev line runs from 6:45 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Rush Hour: Rush hour is from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. During rush hour, you will need to push when getting on or off the train.

Accessibility: All the stations have elevators, though some can be difficult to find. Shanghai’s buses and taxis are not wheelchair-friendly. The metro will be your [best option](https://spintheglobe.net/dir/2019/04/15/a-wheelchair-users-guide-to-visiting-accessible-shanghai-china/) if you have mobility concerns.

Delays and Lost Property: For schedule changes, download the official [Shanghai Metro](http://service.shmetro.com/en/dtapp/index.htm) app or call the 24-hour Shanghai Metro service hotline at 021-6437-0000. You can follow their [WeChat account](http://service.shmetro.com/en/about.htm), too. Report lost property at the station service counters or call the hotline.

Subway Etiquette: Personal space does not exist. Do not expect people waiting on the platform to wait for those getting off before they board. Board quickly and push if needed. Passengers playing loud music and loud video games sans headphones is common, as is talking loudly.

See maps, lines, routes, news, and more specifics at the official [Shanghai Metro site](http://service.shmetro.com/en/dtapp/index.htm).

## Taxis

Flag one down or download the app Didi Chuxing to book one. The app has an English version with a foreign card payment option, but you will need to download it before you arrive in China. Also, the app will not work during rush hour (7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) as per Shanghai law.

The meter starts at 14 yuan ($2.10) for the first 3 kilometers (2 miles). Additional kilometers are 2.5 yuan (about 30 cents). Between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., the rates increase. Pay in cash or use a jiaotong ka (indicate to the driver before the trip starts if you want this option).

Uber is not possible to use as a foreigner, unless you have a Chinese Union Pay bank card.

## Buses

The 1,400 buses of the city service include downtown lines, suburban lines, rush hour lines, sightseeing lines, intercity lines, and night lines. However, not all of them have English or pinyin signs, and some don’t even have numbers. Fares run from 1 to 2 yuan (15 to 30 cents). Most downtown stops are announced in English, as well as Mandarin and Shanghainese. You can pay with cash or with a jiaotong ka. Most start running at 5:30 or 6:30 a.m. and stop at 7:30 or 9:30 p.m. Night buses run from 11 p.m. until 5:30 a.m. the next day.

If you want to do a hop-on-hop-off [sightseeing bus tour](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/cityguides/shanghai/transportation/sightseeing-bus.htm), your two options are Spring Tour Bus Company and Shanghai Bus Tours. You can pay in cash aboard the bus for either a 24-hour (30 yuan) or 48-hour (50 yuan) unlimited ride ticket.

## Airport Trains and Shuttles

There are two airports in Shanghai: the Shanghai Pudong International Airport and the Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport.

From Pudong:

* Maglev train: To get to central Shanghai, the Maglev train is the fastest option (the ride takes seven-and-a-half minutes) and only has one stop: the Longyang Road station. From there you can take metro line 2 or line 7 further into the center. It costs 50 yuan ($7.25) one way or 80 yuan ($11.60) for a round-trip ticket. Trains leave every 15 to 30 minutes.
* Shuttle bus: The bus takes about 70 to 80 minutes, costs 8 to 30 yuan and runs from 7 a.m until 11 p.m. There’s also a night line from 11 p.m. that runs until 45 minutes after the last flight arrives. From the city to the airport, it operates from 6 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased from the conductor with cash.

From Hongqiao:

* Metro: Both metro lines 2 and 10 go from Hongqiao and have many stations in central Shanghai.
* Shuttle bus: The bus takes about an hour, costs 1 to 30 yuan, and runs from 6 a.m. until 11 p.m. There’s also a night shuttle from 11 p.m. that operates until 45 minutes after the last flight arrives. From the city to the airport, it operates from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m.

## Bikes

Like many major cites, bikes can be found all over the sidewalks of Shanghai, ready to be plucked and peddled to the destination of your choosing. To use the bike sharing system, you will need to have an international phone plan or purchase a Chinese SIM card. (You must have internet on your phone to rent a bike.)

[MoBike](https://mobike.com/global/) is the main bike-sharing companies in town. To use, download the app and register in your home country before you fly to China. This way you can use a foreign credit card to pay. You can download Alipay and put credit in your account too, as a backup option. Rides cost around 1 yuan for 15 minutes and then .5 yuan for every additional 15 minutes.

## Ferries

Ferries are a great way to cross the Huangpu River from Pudong to Puxi. Find docks at Nanpu Bridge, Yangpu Bridge, Xupu Bridge, and at other points. You can also take a ferry from the mainland to Chongming, Changqing, and Hengsha islands. Tickets range from 2 to 12 yuan.

## Car Rental

Renting a car in Shanghai as a foreigner is not easy. You will have to apply for a temporary license and go through a medical check. If you want to do this, more information can be found in [this guide to car rentals](https://idaoffice.org/posts/how-to-rent-a-car-in-china-with-us-driver-license/), and you can find a good deal on [Happy Car’s site.](https://www.happycar.com/rentalcar-shanghai)

## Tips for Getting Around the City

* Bikes are banned from some major roads. Look out for sidewalk cyclists.
* You can take your bike on the ferry.
* Automated ticket machines in the metro do not accept 1 yuan notes; carry coins.
* Don’t tip your taxi driver. At best they will be confused, at worst they will be offended.
* After the metro shuts down at 10:30 p.m., taxis will be the easiest form of transportation to take.