

Teaching Nomad

# Banking in China



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Currency in China:  
Yuan Renminbi (CNY/Yuan/RMB ¥)



In general, people in China do not use checks. Most payments, including payrolls, are done through bank transfer. Therefore, you will need to open a bank account before you get paid. Fortunately, this will likely be one of the easiest things you do in China.

## Choosing a bank

3 major banks:



Generally, the top two have more branches. Check with your employer in China which bank they prefer you to bank with (if they have any preference at all). This is because it is cheaper and faster for companies to pay their employees if they use the same bank. Often, people have accounts with multiple banks just in case.

## Other good banks

### Specialized:

- China Minsheng Bank
- China Merchants Bank

### Foreign:

- HSBC (British)
- Standard Chartered (British)
- Citi (American)
- Hang Seng Bank (Hong Kong)
- DBS (Singaporean)

Although international banks are more geared toward expats, they may require large initial deposits and are not so numerous in terms of branches. **Agricultural Bank of China** is one of the larger banks in China, but it is more suited toward those working in more rural areas, due to the number of branches.

# Opening an account

Opening a bank account is very straightforward in China. You will need your passport, a contact telephone number, and a contact address. Branches in more central areas are more likely to have an English-speaking representative.

You will also need to bring anywhere between 15 to 25 RMB. This will cover the cost of your bank card and your initial opening balance. You will have numerous forms to sign, and you will get your card immediately. You will be asked to choose a 6-digit PIN. Note that your bank card will not have your name on it, just your card number.

After you finish the account opening process, which takes about 15 minutes, your card is ready for use.

## Cash

Cash is still a popular form of payment for goods and services in China. Be sure to carry cash around, especially if you're still in the process of getting your bank accounts set up. Cash can always be the payment option to fall back on in case other forms of payment aren't working.



Before heading over to China, you'll want to download WeChat and AliPay, as locals and foreigners alike use these apps for pretty much all of their day-to-day transactions. Plus, being able to use a form of mobile payment will alleviate the need to carry around cash.

To use these apps, you need to have a Chinese bank account set up. Most transactions use QR codes that you scan with your phone.

A few clicks now suffice to send/receive money to/from anybody with a Wechat/Alipay account. This comes in handy to split restaurant bills, pay for goods and services, pay bills online, give money to friends, purchase train tickets, order a taxi, etc.

## International credit cards

Many places (especially in rural China) will not accept international credit cards like Visa, Mastercard, and American Express. AMEX is accepted at an even lower rate than the other two. If you have an international credit card that is different than any of the three listed below, you can safely assume that it will not be accepted in China.



Get a UnionPay credit card if you'd like to pay for things using a domestic card.

# International Transfers

Many of you may be planning to save extra money while you are in China to send back home. In this case, you will probably want to wire the money to your account in your home country. This will certainly be easier if someone at your bank speaks English.

The wire process is really pretty simple and your bank will walk you through it, but first you will need to convert your RMB into your home currency. The bank will do this if you can prove that you already paid taxes on your money, therefore you will want to save your pay stubs!

Without your pay stubs the limit for a foreigner is \$500USD/day, so don't wait until the last day! The average fee for international transfers is \$25. You can also do an international transfer using internet banking. You will need your security device to do this.



There is another method for transferring money abroad, and that's through PayPal. They will charge a 3% fee. Make sure you have two separate PayPal.com (not PayPal.cn) accounts, one linked to your Chinese account and the other to your account at home.

Make a PayPal withdrawal from your Chinese account, and then transfer this sum over to your second PayPal account. Then, transfer the sum from your second PayPal account to your bank account at home.

Note that you will need to have internet banking enabled on your Chinese bank account to do this, and you must activate your account to handle online payments. [Learn more here.](#)



You can complete international transfers via WeChat and AliPay as well.

## Useful phrases

I would like to transfer money  
我想汇钱  
Wǒ xiǎng huì qián

I would like to make a deposit  
我想存款  
Wǒ xiǎng cúnkuǎn

I would like to open a bank account  
我想开一个银行帐户  
Wǒ xiǎng kāi yīgè yínháng zhànghù