



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: CHINA



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Driving defensively and using seat belts are essential.
- Traffic in or near larger cities is often very congested.
- Drivers tend to drive irresponsibly. Traffic mix typically includes many pedestrians and cyclists.
- State Department recommends hiring a local driver.
- Poor road conditions, lack of road safety features, inadequate emergency response, increasing numbers of inexperienced drivers and an 18 percent annual vehicle growth rate contribute to rising road crash rate.
- Most traffic injuries involve pedestrians or cyclists.
- Traveling with a group is recommended for extensive cross-country tours, due to language barriers, frequent delays, and logistical difficulties.
- Travel restrictions are subject to change with little or no notice. Consult U.S. Embassy or Consulate in destination



areas to see which cities and routes are open to foreigners.

- With only 4% of the world's vehicles, China has 15 percent of the total global road fatalities. Injuries in road crashes are the second leading cause of death for people 15 to 44 years old in China. More than 600 lives are lost daily in road crashes.
- China has one of the highest road fatality rates in the world. Rate is increasing rapidly.
- There are 26 fatalities per 10,000 motor vehicles compared to 2.0 in the US



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Most drivers have had a driving license for less than five years.
- Due to the high number of newer drivers, driving etiquette is not well-developed. Driver inexperience often results in confusing/unpredictable traffic conditions. Right-of-way and other driver courtesies are often lacking.
- Indirect and direct costs arising from road crashes accounts for 1.5 percent of China's GDP.
- Road crashes increased 24 percent and road fatalities increased 2.7 percent in January to August 2004 compared to those months in 2003.
- Most drivers found at fault in road crashes have been driving less than 3 years.

Drivers' failure to obey traffic laws is a factor in about 86 percent of road fatalities and 77 percent of road injuries. Other major factors include speeding, illegal passing, driving under the influence of alcohol, irresponsible driving, negligence, failure to adjust to unexpected traffic situations, failure to yield to pedestrians, driving in the wrong lane, illegal passing and driving under the influence of alcohol.

- Some drivers ignore red lights and pedestrian crossings and/or use their horn instead of their brakes.
- Drivers of motorized vehicles, especially truck drivers, were found to be at fault in 94 percent of 2004 road crashes.
- Bus and truck drivers sometimes force smaller vehicles to yield right of way.



- Increasing numbers of drivers flee the scene if they are at fault in a road crash.
- Drivers in larger cities generally comply with traffic laws, while drivers in inland cities and on rural roads are less likely to obey traffic laws.
- Fatigue is a factor in almost 40 percent of road crashes in the Zhejiang Province.
- Altitude sickness may affect driving ability at high elevations.
- In August 2004, truck drivers were at fault in 87 major road crashes in which 340 fatalities occurred; these crashes accounted for 40 percent of all road fatalities that month.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- Most main roads are paved; secondary roads vary from smooth paved surfaces to rough dirt roads.
- All towns, townships and counties currently have some level of road access. Road quality has improved in the past several years. Most secondary roads are low quality; provisions for safety are often lacking or inadequate.
- Many maps do not distinguish between paved and unpaved roads.
- Lane markings are generally inadequate. Visibility may be poor. Bad weather and fog sometimes contribute to road crashes on expressways.
- Heavy congestion is common.
- Many road crashes arise from traditional two-wheeled transportation sharing the road with a rapidly growing number of four-wheeled motorized vehicles.
- Traffic is particularly difficult near cities and at highway junctions.
- Heavily loaded freight rickshaws slow traffic and contribute to road crashes.
- Open, unmarked manholes are a road hazard, especially for cyclists.
- Two-thirds of China is mountainous or semi-desert.
- Road conditions in mountainous regions of southwestern China tend to be poor; road crashes are frequent.
- China has many high quality major expressways linking its major cities, including the Shanghai-Ningbo, Beijing-Tianjin-Tanggu, Chengdu-Chongqing, Jinan-Qingdao, Guangzhou-Shenzhen, Yichang-Huangshi, Beijing-

Shijiazhuang, Shijiazhuang-Taiyuan, Taiyuan-Jiuguan and Shenyang-Dalian expressways.

- The expressway linking Qin Zhou with Fangcheng port in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, is an important section of the Chongqing-Zhanjiang highway.
- The National Trunk Highway (N0. 320) links Qujing City (on the border of Guizhou and Yunnan provinces) with a highway in Myanmar.
- A National Expressway Network with two main horizontal and vertical branches is under construction. Beijing-Shanghai and Beijing-Shenyang Expressways are completed. Entire network to be ready for 2008 Olympic Games.

SOME NATIONAL TRUNK HIGHWAYS IN CHINA

ROUTE NUMBER	CITIES CONNECTED
NORTH-SOUTH ROUTES	
GZ10	Tonjiang-Sanya
GZ20	Beijing-Fuzhou
GZ30	Beijing-Zhuhai
GZ40	Erlianhaote-Hekou
GZ50	Chongqing-Zhanjiang
EAST-WEST ROUTES	
GZ15	Suifenhe-Manzhouli
GZ25	Dandong-Lhasa
GZ35	Qingdao-Yinchuan
GZ45	Lianyang-Huoerguosi
GZ55	Shanghai-Chengdu
GZ65	Shanghai-Ruili
GZ75	Hengyang-Kunming

Bold type indicates primary routes.

Source: China Ministry of Communications

- **The Kham region** (a general term; refers to eastern Tibet, southern Qinghai, western Sichuan and northern Yunnan provinces):
 - More than 90 percent of the main roads are paved
 - 4WD recommended for most secondary routes.



- **The Xinjiang-Mongolia region and the Tibetan Highlands** consist of high mountains, plateaus, and arid basins. Travel resources are limited; distances between population centers are great

- Western China

- Roads generally in poor condition; few are paved.
- Many regional roads are being upgraded. New rural roads being built.
- Construction of national highways and expressways is in progress. Should be completed in Myanmar, Qinghai and Guizhou provinces by 2010.

HUNAN PROVINCE:

- 88 percent of roads are medium- to low-grade, paved and gravel roads. Only 12 percent are high standard.
- Congestion and traffic jams are common, particularly on main roads.

YUNNAN PROVINCE

- Mountainous region; only 10 percent is relatively flat. Roads require frequent repair and rebuilding due to landslides and erosion.
- Most main roads are paved
- Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, a mountainous region in the southeastern Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau.
 - Road transportation formerly very difficult. Now has an excellent road network; most townships have road access. Secondary roads may be unpaved particularly in more remote areas; some not navigable during rainy season.
 - Expressways link Guilin, and Liuzhou, Qinzhou and Fangcheng.
 - Major cities in the region are Nanning, Qinzhou, Beihai, Fangchenggang.

SHAN'XI PROVINCE

- Road system is extensive to Taiyuan, Datong, Changzhi, Linfen, and Houma.

NINGXIA PROVINCE

- Has only 120 km of expressway, all in its northern region.
- New 182 km four-lane toll expressway being constructed between Tongzin to Yanchuanzi in the southern region.

- About 400 km of local access roads slated for upgrading.

ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

- Road crash rates are increasing rapidly, largely due to sharp rises in vehicle ownership. Numbers of vehicles on the roads far exceeds present road capacity. Has about 19 road fatalities daily.
- Many new car owners are new, less experienced drivers; are less likely to understand and follow traffic laws.
- Traffic police staffing is inadequate.
- Second Bridge on the Yangtze River in Nanjing:
 - Has reduced traffic congestion on Nanjing's first bridge over the Yangtze River.
 - Provides a connection with national roads No. 104, 205, 312 and 328, all of which pass through Nanjing.
 - Provides a link between the Shanghai-Nanjing, Nanjing-Hangzhou, Nanjing- Bengbu Expressways and Nanjing's ring road.
 - Bridge surface is well maintained. Snow and ice removal is efficient.

TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION (TAR)

- While the quality of roads is improving, many are still in poor condition. Traffic capacity of many roads is low.
- Major trunk roads have been upgraded.
- Roads are difficult to maintain due to extreme climatic conditions and unstable geological formations. Natural disasters often damage roads and bridges.
- 20 percent of Tibet's highways and 30 percent of its cities, including Lhasa, Xigaze, Linzhi, and Zedang, may be affected by mountain hazards annually, including the following:
 - Debris flows: Occur along secondary roads and national highways (Sichuan-Tibet, Qinghai-Tibet, Xinjiang-Tibet and Sino-Nepalese Highway).
 - Landslides: Block or destroy roads and bridges. Most occur in southern and southeastern Tibet. Have occurred on the Tanu-Dongjiu section of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway and sections near Karu, Resa, Zhangzangbo and Zhangmu along the Chinese-Nepalese Highway.
 - Collapses: Falling rocks and boulders or rock and debris avalanches occur; may be triggered by earthquakes. May block or destroy roads; can block rivers, causing flooding.



- Snow avalanches: Common from October to April especially along river valleys and gullies on the southern slopes of the Himalaya, Tanglha, and Nyainqentanghla mountains. Are a serious problem on the Chinese-Nepalese Highway from Nyalam to Zhangmu.
- Snow drifts: Occur in many areas, especially in the Tibet Plateau. Are difficult to predict. May cause closures of the Sichuan-Tibet, Sino-Nepalese, Yunnan-Tibet, Qinghai-Tibet and Xinjiang-Tibet highways.
- Mountain flash floods: Caused by heavy rains, ice and snow melts, glacial lake outbursts, collapses of dams formed by debris flows or landslides

KUNMING-BANGKOK HIGHWAY

ROAD	USEFUL INFORMATION
KUNMING-BANGKOK HIGHWAY	Links China, Laos, and Thailand. Runs from Kunming, to Bangkok, Thailand; passes through Laos. Total length is 1,887 km. Is an important part of the Trans-Asia Highway network.
SECTION FROM KUNMING TO MOHAN ON LAOS BORDER	Most has been newly built or upgraded.
SECTION FROM YUXI AND YUANJIANG SECTION	Construction complete. Is in a mountainous region; has 12 tunnels and almost 200 bridges. Is the steepest section of the Kuming-Bangkok Highway.
SECTION FROM YUANJIANG-MOHEI EXPRESSWAY SECTION	Goes through a mountainous region; 30 percent of its length is tunnels or bridges.
SECTION FROM XIAOMENGYANG TO MOHAN PORT SECTION	211 km long; to be completed by 2006.
LAOS SECTION	Under construction.
THAILAND SECTION	Under construction.

URBAN TRAVEL

- Condition and maintenance of roads is good.
- Severe congestion is common in larger cities.
- High numbers of cyclists contribute to urban congestion.
- Manholes may lack covers and may be unmarked.
- Fog and air pollution frequently reduce visibility, especially major cities.
- Bus drivers wait until the bus is filled before departing for suburban stops, then speed to stay on schedule. This contributes to high road crash rates and frequent traffic jams.
- Some cities, such as Dalian, Qingdao and Shenzhen, have improved traffic management and quality of infrastructure.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
BEIJING	Congestion is extremely severe even though Beijing has 5 ring roads. Junctions are difficult to navigate.	The southeastern portion of the city is flat, while the northern and western portions are mountainous. Hosting the 2008 Olympic Games is spurring efforts to reduce traffic congestion.



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
<p>BEIJING (CONTINUED)</p>	<p>Inadequate traffic management and increasing numbers of taxis and personally owned vehicles contribute to congestion.</p> <p>Road crash rates in Beijing are rising.</p> <p>Driving while under the influence of alcohol, ignoring traffic signs, overloading, recklessness and speeding are serious problems.</p> <p>Drivers of vehicles with diplomatic, police, or military plates commonly speed and disregard traffic laws and are seldom penalized for driving infractions.</p> <p>Older section of the city has many narrow, winding streets (<i>hutongs</i>). Use caution if driving; many children and older citizens travel these streets.</p> <p>Public transportation system, dispatching system and schedule information are inefficient.</p> <p>Buses are overcrowded, especially during rush hour.</p>	<p>The southeastern portion of the city is flat, while the northern and western portions are mountainous.</p> <p>Hosting the 2008 Olympic Games is spurring efforts to reduce traffic congestion.</p> <p>Buses are the chief means of transport.</p> <p>Minibuses are available mainly on routes between train stations and tourists sites. They can be hailed. Passengers can disembark anywhere along the route. They are slower than buses because of the frequent stops. Minibuses are slightly more expensive than buses.</p> <p>Taxi dispatching system has been recently upgraded.</p> <p>Taxis are readily available. Fares are low. Taxis can be hailed or picked up at hotels. Use metered taxis; be sure meter is turned on before departing.</p> <p>Taxi drivers seldom speak English; bring a map or have your destination written down in Chinese characters.</p> <p>Most hotels in Beijing have English-speaking dispatchers for taxi stands.</p> <p>Taxis provide transportation from Beijing's two railway stations to hotels in the city.</p> <p>Travel is faster and less crowded on metro. Metro system being lengthed for the Olympics.</p> <p>Cycling is popular. Larger roads have designated bike lanes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Multiple gears bikes are recommended for trips in the surrounding area. o Imported bikes are often stolen; use a good locking system. <p>Beijing's Capital Airport, 17 miles northeast of city center. Traffic is very congested. Airport taxis and buses, as well as hotel shuttles and limousines, provide transportation.</p>
<p>DALI, IN YUNNAN PROVINCE</p>		<p>Road network well-developed.</p> <p>Connected to Chuxiong and Lijiang by expressways.</p> <p>Is regional distribution center in western Yunnan Province; located at juncture of Yunnan-Myanmar and Yunnan-Tibet Highways.</p> <p>Taxi service is well-regulated by the government. Fares are set.</p> <p>Long-distance buses use a security registration system.</p> <p>Public buses provide service within the city and to surrounding areas. Some special tourist buses have routes to tourist attractions.</p> <p>Dali Airport (in Xiaguan Town, 15 kilometers from city center) is a domestic airport.</p>



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
DALIAN	Due to Dalian’s mountainous setting, many roads are steep.	Traffic moves at 35-50 km/h (21.75-31.07 mph) on main roads. Road conditions and availability of public transportation has improved greatly.
HONG KONG	Almost always congested	Traffic moves on the left. At the scene of a road crash, drivers must undergo alcohol testing. ASIRT has a separate report for Hong Kong.
LHASA, TIBET		Most public transport is by minibus. Taxis are available; fares are fixed. Pedicabs also provide transport. Rental bikes available at most hostels.
KUNMING		Has four major long-distance bus stations: Many tourists use the South station near the Nanyao train station. There are routes to most regional destinations; service is good. Two classes of buses, Regular and Gaokuai (Highway Express). Fares are higher, travel is faster on Express buses. Public buses provide transport within Kunming from 6am to 10 pm. Stand near door to get off. Stops may be announced in English. Taxis fares increase after 10pm. Rental bikes are available. Kunming Wujiaba International Airport, 5 km south of city center. Taxis and buses provide transport. Buses generally operate 6am to 10 pm.
SHANGHAI	Traffic is very congested. City uses a lottery system to grant new license plates to help minimize new car purchases. Driving conditions are often hectic due to traffic congestion and unclear, ever-changing traffic regulations. Roads are in very poor condition. Many one-way streets add to the difficulty of driving in the city. Narrow streets tend to be crowded with pedestrians, bicycles, motorcycles and an abundance of taxis. Parking is difficult to find. Traffic conditions, road and building construction sites, and congested walkways make pedestrian travel challenging.	As part of government efforts to lower pedestrian fatalities, primary school children wear bright yellow caps when walking to school. Buses, taxis, and shuttles provide transportation between the Bund and the Hongqiao airport. Buses are crowded and break down frequently. Buses and taxis provide transportation to the city center and the Hongqiao airport. Taxis are relatively inexpensive. While bus fares are lower than taxi fares, buses tend to be crowded and inconvenient. Metro is fast, inexpensive and safe. Is extremely crowded during rush hour. Routes are limited. An extremely high-speed, magnetic levitation train connects Pudong International Airport with Shanghai. Is inconvenient, as there is no station in city center.



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
<p>SHANGHAI (CONTINUED)</p>	<p>Pedestrians often jay walk rather than using zebra crossings, underground passageways or overhead bridges.</p> <p>Many of Shanghai’s regulations discourage cycling in favor of mass transit options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cycling is banned on 54 major roads. ○ Parking for bikes may be difficult to find. ○ Numbers of workers commuting on bikes decreased 25 percent in the past decade. <p>Some streets may flood during heavy rains.</p>	<p>Beijing-Shanghai and Beijing-Hangzhou train lines provide access to many parts of China.</p>

RURAL TRAVEL

- Condition and maintenance of roads is fair.
- Road crashes are frequent, especially on winding roads.
- Unsuitable vehicles, poor maintenance and overloading make road crashes common in mountainous areas.
- Two-wheeled tractors are the most common means of motorized transport in rural areas. Tractors often lack headlights. Difficult to see at night.
- Be alert for livestock freely wandering onto the road.
- Drivers may encounter herds of yak when rounding bends on mountain roads on overland routes from Yunnan or Sichuan Province to Tibet.
- In Yunnan Province, there are road connections to most villages.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- Traveling at night is very dangerous.
- Many drivers do not use headlights except to flash them on and off to warn others to get out of the way.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- Do not expect drivers to stop for red lights.
- Many road crashes involve cyclists or pedestrians.
- Pedestrian bridges and underpasses may be lacking.
- Pedestrians may be fined for crossing against crosswalk signals.
- Cars and buses traveling in the wrong lanes often hit pedestrians and cyclists on sidewalks.

SEASONAL TRAVEL

- Traffic volume and road crash rates are highest during summer and major public holidays, particularly the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year, China’s most important family holiday. Occurs on varying dates—mid-January to late February).
- Traffic congestion and road crash rates increase during Golden Week national holiday in October, though not as greatly as during Spring Festival.
- Road crashes tend to be highest in August. Serious road crashes tend to increase in January.
- In Beijing speeding, drunk driving and fatigue are factors in most holiday road crashes.
- Compared to 2003 statistics, road fatalities increased 111 percent and road injuries increased 121 percent during the 2004 Spring Festival. Leading factors in these road crashes included:
 - Driver negligence, especially speeding and overloading vehicles.
 - Using farm equipment to transport passengers.
 - Overloading long-distance buses.
 - Drivers’ lack of safety awareness.
- Typhoons are possible during summer rainy season in coastal areas of Hainan, Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang Provinces. Check weather conditions before departing.
- Frequent typhoons occur in southeast China during July and August.
- Typhoons or severe winter weather may cause airport closures in some areas of the country.



- Southern China may experience monsoons during summer.
- Central China and eastern China have very rainy summers.
- Xishuangbanna has heavy rains June through August. September through February, thick fog is common until late evening.
- Roads through Karacorom and Khunjerab Passes can be hazardous during summer months due to landslides.
- Sand storms are increasing in frequency and intensity in central and eastern sections of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These storms often extend to other regions, severely affecting road conditions and air quality in northern China's cities, including Beijing.
- Road hazards caused by sand storms include sand dunes, deposited at the edge of the road, and dust devils or clouds of dust blowing across the road, limiting visibility.
- Winters are generally extremely cold with little precipitation.
- Seasonal travel in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)
 - Average temperature in winter (October through May or June) is below zero.
 - Extreme temperature changes often occur between daytime and night, regardless of season; may affect driving conditions.
 - Heavy snow frequently blocks eastern Tibet's roads.
 - Landslides are common.
 - Southern Tibet: Heavy rains June-September may make roads impassible. High winds common November-May.
- Rainy season in the Kham region (eastern Tibet, southern Qinghai, western Sichuan and northern Yunnan provinces).
 - Rainfall is highest late June -August; main roads, generally open.
 - Many trails become muddy or swampy. Travel is not recommended.
 - Flood waters are often high near rivers and streams.
 - Fog, avalanches and landslides are common in mountainous areas.
- Overland routes from Yunnan or Sichuan Province to Tibet are most easily navigated April through mid-June and mid-September through October or early November. Road conditions are very poor in rainy

season (latter part of June-August) and winter (heavy snows in December-March).

- In the Yunnan Province monsoons may occur July through September. Unpaved roads to villages are often impassable, even by tractors.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

- Inadequate traffic police staffing restricts enforcement.
- Enforcement of speed limits and laws against driving while under the influence of alcohol is inadequate.
- Improved enforcement of law against overcrowding buses is reducing high fatality bus crash rates.
- Traffic police have strengthened surveillance efforts in an effort to stem rising numbers of serious road crashes.
- Fines for overloading vehicles are high. Drivers may lose license for overloading.
- Enforcement is intensified during major holidays.
- Some regions have command centers that supervise and coordinate police patrols.
- Police may impose temporary travel restricts on some areas.
- Beijing's improved enforcement of traffic laws has resulted in the following:
 - Increased driver compliance with road regulations.
 - Decreased numbers of drivers driving without a license.
 - Decreased road crashes and road fatalities in Beijing.
 - Decreased numbers of tickets issued for passing illegally, speeding, and overloading.
- In Shanghai, penalties for traffic offenses have increased.
- Traffic police in Zingtai in Hebei Province have increased enforcement efforts.



ROAD REGULATIONS

- Driving is on the right.
- Only foreigners with resident permits can apply for PRC driver licenses. U.S. State Department recommends hiring a local driver due to liability issues.
- Seat belts are not required. Using them is highly recommended.
- Child safety seats are not required and are not widely available.
- Cars lacking rear fog lights cannot use expressways.
- Drivers must slow down when driving through crosswalks.
- Motorists involved in a road crash with a pedestrian or cyclist are considered at fault and are responsible for all related expenses.
- U.S. State Department indicates that "...foreigners often complain that they are automatically considered at fault in road crashes, simply because they are foreign."
- Foreigners generally are forbidden to travel by bus from Datong.
- Standardized traffic laws and traffic control methods for expressways are lacking.
- Third party insurance is required.
- If involved in a road crash, call Traffic Police. Do not leave the scene, move vehicle or disturb the crash scene until ordered by police. When completing investigation, police tell drivers when to go to the police station to get a copy of the police report. Report is in Chinese. Driver is required to sign it, verifying road crash details.
 - If not fluent in Chinese or if the report is partially or totally inaccurate, **do not immediately sign it.**
 - Write a disclaimer on the report stating you cannot read and understand the report and are therefore unable to attest to its accuracy.
 - State that you are signing the report only because doing so is required. Then sign the report.
 - Add your version of the crash in English and state that your signature only attests to the accuracy of the English version.
- Road crashes often draw a crowd. Remain calm. The crowd may demand payment for damages from the party they consider at fault. Crowd may seem threatening, however, assaults on foreigners at road crashes are rare. If you are uneasy, walk to a shop, restaurant, Traffic Police booth, or other nearby location to wait for police arrival. Crowd may block the road if you try to leave.



ROAD WATCH

SOME DANGEROUS ROADS IN CHINA

ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ROUTE 109 TO DATONG IN NORTH SHAN'XI PROVINCE	Narrow, mountainous road; very light traffic. Traffic may be heavy at the Hebei and Shan'xi border. Trucks dominate the road. Use extra caution if cycling.	
FROM DATONG TO WUTAI SHAN	Steep, winding, dangerous trip through mountains. Fog is sometimes a problem at night.	
WUTAI SHAN TO JING LE	Poor road conditions and heavy traffic make night travel inadvisable.	



ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY NR319 IN HUNAN PROVINCE	Pavement is in poor condition. Congestion is common on 65 percent of the road. Non-motorized traffic is a problem. Traffic levels growing 7.3 percent annually.	Serves Chongqing and other major cities in western Hunan Province.
KUNMING-DALI	Secondary roads in surrounding region vary from good to poor.	Main road is a modern expressway.
NATIONAL HIGHWAY NR319 IN HUNAN PROVINCE	Pavement is in poor condition. Congestion is common on 65 percent of the road. Non-motorized traffic is a problem. Traffic levels growing 7.3 percent annually.	Serves Chongqing and other major cities in western Hunan Province.
HUANGYANG PASS IN HUNAN PROVINCE	Road may ice over in cold weather	
ERLANGSHAN PASS	The older route through the pass is extremely dangerous; landslides are frequent.	
CHENGDU-SONGPAN-HUANGLONG-JIUZHAIGOU ROAD	Narrow, winding, mountainous road; lacks guard rails. Drivers generally sound horn when going around a bend to warn oncoming vehicles of their presence. Landslides are frequent. Stones or large rocks are often on the road surface. Falling rocks sometimes strike passing vehicles, especially from Maozian to Jiuzhaigou. Some fatalities have occurred.	
GUANGDONG PROVINCE	Traffic jams are common.	A highway runs through the mountainous region of northeastern Guangdong Province.
HEICHANG ROAD	Poor road conditions, especially in winter. 4WD vehicles recommended.	
KANGDING TO MOXI TO LUDING	In poor condition. Cliffside sections are so narrow that the road seems to disappear beneath buses. Buses are extremely crowded.	
LHASA-ZHANGMU	Paved; winding road. 4WD recommended.	
GRASSLAND ROAD IN THE INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION	A sand track. May change its course to skirt sand dunes. Becomes very muddy and difficult to negotiate during or after rains.	



ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
<p>ANCIENT SILK ROAD</p>	<p>A difficult, dangerous route.</p> <p>Passes through some rugged, desolate areas. Extreme temperatures are possible. Delays may occur due to local conditions.</p> <p>There are frequent bus breakdowns in the desert. Sandstorms are common. Passengers are advised to bring liquids and sand protection.</p>	<p>Some portions are still in use.</p> <p>Ancient route began in Xi'an; went through Gansu Province along the Hexi Corridor to Dunhuang.</p> <p>The Ancient Silk Road divided into 3 branches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Southern route to Afghanistan and Russian Central Asia o Central route to Mari, Russia o Northern route to the Black Sea. <p>Routes ran between mountain ranges and along edges of deserts.</p>
<p>A BACK ROAD BETWEEN BAOSHAN AND RUILI</p>	<p>Road surface is extremely poor.</p> <p>Extremely rough by bus. Bus breakdowns are common.</p> <p>Frequent landslides and floods.</p> <p>Steep, rugged mountain ascents and descents. Much rougher than the Burma Road.</p> <p>Crosses the Tengchong region, a tectonically unstable area.</p>	
<p>GUANGNAN TO JIAHE IN NORTHEASTERN GUANGXI PROVINCE</p>	<p>Mountainous region; roads in more remote areas are generally unpaved. May be very slippery or muddy during heavy rains. Gradients are often very steep. Bridges are sometimes lacking.</p>	
<p>SICHUAN-TIBET HIGHWAY</p>	<p>One of the world's roughest, highest and most dangerous roads. Only trucks travel this route consistently. Police do not want trucks to pick up foreigners.</p> <p>Emergency medical response time is very slow.</p> <p>Landslides, rock avalanches, and mudslides are common, especially in Linzhi to Basu section. Heavy rains increase risk.</p>	<p>Main land route between Chengdu and Tibet.</p> <p>Splits into a northern (Rt. 317) and southern (Rt. 318) route after Chengdu. These routes merge again in Bamda, Tibet.</p> <p>Chinese government sometimes closes it beyond Hailuoguo National Glacier Forest.</p>
<p>NORTHERN SICHUAN</p>	<p>Roads are particularly dangerous in summer when heavy rains cause landslides.</p>	



ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ROAD FROM MOXI TOWNSHIP TO HAILUOGUO NATIONAL GLACIER FOREST	Winding mountainous road; paved surface.	Bus transportation is available.
ROAD BETWEEN XINJIANG AND TIBET	One of the roughest roads in the area; several tourists have died on this road when thrown from a truck after hitting a pothole.	
MINOR ROADS IN TIBET	Are often in poor condition. 4WD vehicles recommended.	
ROAD TO JIUZHAIGOU PARK IN NORTHERN SICHUAN PROVINCE	Gravel surface. Two-hour drive to park.	

MAIN HIGHWAYS IN TIBET

HIGHWAY	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
YUNNAN-TIBET HIGHWAY	In poor condition; less used by tourist. Most navigable August to October.	Lowest in elevation; most traveled main highway in Tibet.
SICHUAN-TIBET HIGHWAY—NORTH ROAD	One world's most dangerous highways. Frequent landslides and mud/rock flows. Very long; reaches high elevations. High winds are common, causing dangerous driving conditions. Most navigable in May and from middle August to October.	Being upgraded. Links Chengdu in Sichuan Province to Lhasa. Crosses the Henduan, Nyainqentanglha and Kangdese mountains.
SICHUAN-TIBET HIGHWAY—SOUTH ROAD	Most navigable in May and from middle August to October.	Shorter than north road. Elevations are lower. Is more commonly traveled. Being upgraded.
QINGHAI-TIBET HIGHWAY	Paved; best road into Tibet. Major truck transport route. About 85 percent of all goods flowing in or out of Tibet travel this route. Subject to landslides and cave-ins. Heavy snow, a problem in winter. Permafrost is a problem in some sections.	Crosses the Kunlun and Tangula mountains, Gobi Desert and extensive grasslands. Shortest, safest way to reach TAR. Only main highway in Tibet with bus service. Links Golmud in Qinghai Province to Lhasa. Yangbajain-Lhasa section was upgraded. Presently open to foreigners. Check current status with US Embassy.
XINJIANG-TIBET HIGHWAY	Has winding sections in mountainous areas.	Starts in Yecheng in Xinjiang Province.
CHINESE-NEPALESE HIGHWAY	Often closed in winter due to heavy snow. Travel is difficult even when open.	Main road from Lhasa and Shigate to Kathmandu. Presently open to foreigners; check current status with US Embassy.



SOME GOOD ROADS IN CHINA

ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
SICHUAN CHENGLE EXPRESSWAY	In good condition.	Dual two-lane toll expressway; connects with the Chengya Expressway. Passes through main tourist area in central Sichuan Province. Links Le Shan City and Chengdu City.
CHENGYA EXPRESSWAY	In good condition.	Links Chengdu, Shuangliu, Xinjin, Qionglai, Mingshan and Ya'an.
DALI TO XIAGUAN IN YUNNAN PROVINCE	Two lane; traffic may be heavy near Dali.	There are cycle paths on both sides of the road.
ROUTE FROM CHENGDU TO HAILUOGUO NATIONAL GLACIER FOREST	Road surface is in good condition, except from Kangding to Luding.	Travel via Wolong Natural Reserve, Xiaojin, Danba and Luding counties. Route crosses Siguniang and Moerduo Mountain in Danba County.
SICHUAN-TIBET HIGHWAY—SOUTH ROAD	Most navigable in May and from middle August to October.	Shorter than north road. Elevations are lower. Is more commonly traveled. Being upgraded.
QINGHAI-TIBET HIGHWAY	Paved; best road into Tibet. Major truck transport route. About 85 percent of all goods flowing in or out of Tibet travel this route. Subject to landslides and cave-ins. Heavy snow, a problem in winter. Permafrost is a problem in some sections.	Crosses the Kunlun and Tangula mountains, Gobi Desert and extensive grasslands. Shortest, safest way to reach TAR. Only main highway in Tibet with bus service. Links Golmud in Qinghai Province to Lhasa. Yangbajain-Lhasa section was upgraded. Presently open to foreigners. Check current status with US Embassy.
DALI TO XIAGUAN IN YUNNAN PROVINCE	Two lane; traffic may be heavy near Dali.	There are cycle paths on both sides of the road
KUNMING-DALI EXPRESSWAY	Modern expressway	Is being extended to Baoshan.
DALI-YUXI MOTORWAY	New road	Reduces journey to about 1 hour.
DALI TO LIJIANG	New road. Has reduced travel time by bus from 5 hours to 2-3 hours.	
NEW BURMA ROAD (KUNMING-WANDING ROAD)	Goes through very mountainous region. Crosses high ridges; plunges down to valleys. New sections are being built parallel to some of existing road. New sections bypass larger towns; are straighter and less steep.	A six-lane toll expressway for a short distance outside of Kunming; then drops to wide two-lane road. Is part of the ancient Silk Road's southern route. Links Kunming to Wanding on Burma border. In Burma, links with roads to Rangoon, Bhamo and Lashio. In Bhamo, links with Ledo Road to India.



SOME GOOD ROADS IN CHINA (CONTINUED)

ROAD	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
NEW BURMA ROAD (KUNMING-WANDING ROAD) CONTINUED	<p>Horse-drawn carts and herds of goats share the road with trucks, tankers and cars.</p> <p>After Dali, road crosses two mountain ranges.</p> <p>Police checkpoints are common before Baoshan.</p>	



ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

BUSES

- The safety of public transportation is good.
- Buses often are in poor condition, break down frequently and are generally extremely crowded.
- Bus road crashes are common, particularly on winding mountain roads.
- Bus overloading is a problem, especially during major holidays.
- Overland buses are key transport providers where train service is not available.
- Night buses are the primary transportation service in rural China. Regulation is lax. Road crash rates are high.
- Bus drivers often drive irresponsibly. Government bus drivers generally drive more responsibly than privately owned buses' drivers.
- Driver fatigue is common due to many hours of driving on difficult, mountainous roads. Often only two bus drivers share the driving on 35-hour run between Golmud and Lhasa.
- Bus tickets sometimes can be purchased at travel agencies in or near hotels. This is very helpful if one is not fluent in Chinese. Purchase tickets well ahead.
- Public buses (*gong gong qi che*) are inexpensive. Routes are difficult to understand. (Hotel staff may provide assistance.)
- Avoid intra-city bus travel, especially during rush hour.
- Intra-city bus travel often is slow and confusing, especially if travelers do not speak or read Chinese.

- Long-distance buses often have basic bunk beds instead of seats. They are cheap and widely used.
- When traveling by bus in northern Sichuan or Gansu provinces, it may be necessary to purchase insurance from People's Insurance Company of China.
- Trolleys also provide intra-city transportation. Larger cities may have a limited subway system.
- Minibuses mainly serve routes from train stations to tourist sites. They can be hailed; will drop off passengers anywhere along the route. Fares are slightly higher than bus fares. They tend to be slower due to frequent stops.
- Tibet has regular bus service between major towns. Frequency of service is limited. Schedules change often.

TAXIS AND PEDICABS

- Most major cities have taxis. Language barrier is sometimes a problem.
- Taxis can be hailed or picked up at hotels or taxi stands. Be sure meter is turned on before departing.
- Most taxis are metered; fares are set. Receipt is given if requested.
- Carry small bills for taxi fares. Some drivers use counterfeit bills to make change. Get a receipt.
- Taxis are the most expensive means of transport but often are the most convenient. Extra fees charged for time lost in traffic jams.
- Using pedicabs is not recommended in heavy motorized traffic due to serious safety concerns.



- Pedicabs (tricycle taxis or rickshaws) can be expensive. Negotiate fare before boarding. They are in operation late at night and can travel on narrow streets in older areas of the city where taxis and buses are unable to travel.

TRAINS

- Trains are poorly constructed, but travel is safer than by road.
- The train network is extensive and reliable.

RENTAL CARS

- Foreign residents can rent vehicles in Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, or Sanya on Hainan Island. An international driver's permit (IDP), proof of residency and credit card are required.
- Taxis or jeeps can be rented with a driver. This generally is traveler's only option in Tibet.

MOTORCYCLES & BICYCLES

- Increasing traffic levels multiply road risks for cyclists.
- Cyclists often cut, swerve, or head directly toward others cyclists.
- Use caution on major inter-city highways and expressways. Road conditions may be bad. Traffic often is congested. Road crash risk tends to be high.
- Roundabouts are difficult to negotiate. Use caution.
- Cyclists may be fined for crossing against crosswalk signals.
- Bike parking areas generally are located near major intersections, parks, tourist sites, and major stores. Bikes can be parked in attended lots for a small fee.
- Some larger cities have banned bicycles from key roads to reduce congestion. In these cities bike parking may be difficult to find.
- Many larger city streets have bike lanes.
- Lack of bike lanes at many busy urban intersections increases traffic congestion.
- Cycle repair shops are plentiful. Obtaining quality parts is often difficult except in provincial capitals.
- Standard touring bikes are adequate in larger cities. Mountain or hybrid bikes with 18 to 21 gears are recommended for inter-city travel, especially in more remote regions.

- When renting a bike, make sure the brakes work, tires are properly inflated, and the bike is safe. Using a safety helmet meeting US standards and a bike lock is recommended.
- Some areas of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region are closed to cyclists and hikers. Bus travel is available to tourists. Bus drivers often do not charge for transporting bikes on the roofs of buses.
- Drivers of electric-powered bikes tend to have fewer road crashes than drivers of traditional motorized vehicles.
- Motorcyclists are not required to wear a helmet when riding. Using a helmet is essential for safety reasons. If helmets are not available, a different form of transportation is recommended.
- Motorcycles account for 55 percent of all vehicles in Shanghai. They are forbidden on some roads inside Shanghai's Inner Ring Road, three sections in its Pudong New Area and some areas bordering neighboring provinces.

CRIME & SECURITY

- China has a low crime rate, but crime has been increasing in the major cities in recent years. Pick pocketing is the most common form of crime against foreign visitors.
- Sexual harassment and crime on trains and overnight buses is increasing.
- Muggings are rare. Hold ups and roadside assaults have occurred in remote provinces in western and central China, especially on highways near Mt. Everest and Nepal border.
- In Beijing, thieves on motorcycles sometimes attack pedestrians or other cyclists.
- Photocopy passport bio-data pages and Chinese visas. Keep copies in a separate location.
- Chinese security personnel may place foreign government officials, journalists, and business people having access to advanced proprietary technology, under surveillance. These visitors may be searched without consent; search may be conducted secretly.
- Avoid taking pictures of military- or security-related objects or people.
- Terrorism is rare. Occasional bombings and incidents of unrest have occurred throughout China. Bombings are often due to criminal activity. There have been no acts of terrorism or public violence against foreigners.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- Roadside assistance is not available in rural areas; availability is fair in or near large cities.
- Emergency numbers on the mainland are as follows:
 - Police, phone is 110
 - Fire, phone is 119
 - Ambulance, phone is 120
 - In Hong Kong, phone is 999 for any emergency.
- Modern tourist facilities are not widely available, except in major cities.
- Purchasing a carbon monoxide detector prior to arrival is recommended if renting an apartment with gas appliances. Natural gas may not be scented to warn of leaks or high concentrations. Gas heaters may not be adequately vented.
- Unleaded gas is available throughout China.
- Number of vehicle repair facilities is limited.
- Due to prevalence of counterfeiting, exchanging dollars for RMB anywhere except at banks, hotels or official exchange offices is illegal. Visitors accused of doing so may be delayed for weeks or months while allegations against them are investigated.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

- Yunnan and Xinjiang Provinces are prone to earthquakes.
- Information on disaster preparedness is available from FEMA; website is www.fema.gov

MEDICAL CARE

- Medical facilities in rural areas tend to be inadequate. Medical personnel often lack good training and often are reluctant to assume the responsibility of treating American citizens.
- Hospital facilities may be very primitive in remote areas.
- Medical technology generally is not up to date. Hospital conditions often are not up to Western standards.
- In the event of a road crash or serious illness, take a taxi to the hospital rather than wait for an ambulance. Ambulances lack sophisticated medical equipment. Emergency medical personnel often have little or no medical training.

- Hospitals may accept credit cards. However, many doctors and hospitals require immediate cash payment for medical services.
- Many doctors and nurses do not speak English.
- Doctors and hospitals sometimes refuse to provide American patients with complete copies of medical records and tend to discourage seeking second opinions.
- Better medical care is available in larger cities. Some hospitals have VIP wards (*gaogan bingfans*), intended for high-ranking government officials. Many of these hospitals also treat foreigners. These hospitals have reasonably up-to-date equipment. Physicians are adequately trained.
- Medical care is most advanced in Shanghai.
- Care is good but expensive at the few expatriate clinics. Clinics are up to international standards, but may lack adequate supplies of medicines.
- Beijing United Family Hospital provides in-patient and 24-hour emergency care; has advanced medical equipment.
- U.S. Consulate in Chengdu provides information on medical facilities in Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan provinces, TAR, and the Chongqing Municipality. Website: www.usembassy-china.org.cn/chengdu/cons/medical.html.
- U.S. State Department indicates that the following private emergency medical assistance firms have representative offices in Beijing:
 - SOS International, Ltd. (Formerly known as Asia Emergency Assistance) accepts major credit cards and has correspondent arrangements with hospitals in several Chinese cities. Website: www.intsos.com
 - Address in Beijing is Building C, BITIC Leasing Center, No. 1 North Road, Xing Fu San Cun Chaoyang District Beijing 100600
 - Beijing SOS International Clinic phone: (86-10) 6462-9112, fax: (86-10) 6462-9111
 - From anywhere in Mainland China, call SOS International Alarm Center at (86-10) 6462-9100.
 - From U.S.: 1-800-468-5232
From Seattle, Washington: 24-hr numbers are: (206) 621-9911, fax: (206) 340-6000
 - From Hong Kong: (852) 2428-9900



- MEDEX Assistance Corporation, Regus Office 19, Beijing Lufthansa Center, No. 50 Liangmaqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100016
 - Emergency phone in China (24 hour): (86-10) 6465-1264, fax for the Beijing office: (86-10) 6465-1240
 - U.S. phone: (1-800) 537-2029
Baltimore office: (410) 453-6300 (24 hours)
Emergencies (members only): (1-800) 527-0218 or 1-410-453-6330
 - Email: medexasst@aol.com (Baltimore, Maryland).
Website: www.medexasst.com.

(Disclaimer: ASIRT provides this information as a service to U.S. citizens, but neither ASIRT nor the State Department can specifically recommend any medical assistance firm or guarantee the quality of services of any private corporation.)

- US medical insurance is not always valid in other countries. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical expenses rendered outside the US.

EMBASSY INFORMATION

- The Embassy of the PRC, 2300 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. Phone: (1-202) 328-2500, 2501 or 2502, website: www.china-embassy.org; email of visa section: chnvisa@bellatlantic.net.
- There are Chinese Consulate Generals in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.
- Permits are required to visit Tibet and many remote areas not open to foreigners.
- The U.S. Embassy in China, 2 Xiu Shui Dong Jie, Beijing 100600. Phone: (86-10) 6532-3431, 6532-3831, after hours phone: (86-10) 6532-1910, fax: (86-10) 6532-4153, website: www.usembassy-china.org.cn; email: AmCitBeijing@state.gov. Consular district includes Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Hebei, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi.

U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu. Number 4, Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nanlu, Chengdu 610041. Phone: (86-28) 558-3992 and (86-28) 555-3119, fax is (86-28) 8558-3520, after hours phone: (86-0) 13708001422; email: ACSchengdu@state.gov. Consular district includes the Guizhou, Sichuan Xizang (Tibet), and Yunnan provinces/regions or in Chongqing.

- U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou, Number 1 South Shamian Street, Shamian Island 200S1, Guangzhou 510133. Phone: (86-20) 8121-8418, after hours phone: (86-20) 139-0229-3169, fax: (86-20) (86-20) 8121-8428, email: GuangzhouACS@state.gov. Consular district includes the Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, and Fujian provinces/regions.
- U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai, Westgate Mall, 8th Floor, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200031. Phone: (86-21) 3217-4650, ext. 2102, 2013, or 2134, after hours phone: (86-21) 6433-3936, fax: (86-21) 6217-2071, email: shanghai_acs@yahoo.com. Consular district includes the Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces/regions.
- U.S. Consulate General in Shenyang, No. 52, 14th Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003. Phone is 86-(24) 2322-1198, 2322-0368, after hours phone is (86-0) 13704019790, fax is (86-24) 2322-2374; email is ShenyangACS@state.gov. Consular district includes the Liaoning, Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces/regions.
- U.S. citizens living in or visiting China are encouraged to register at the US Embassy or at one of the US Consulates General in China. Can registration by Internet.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT)
11769 Gainsborough Road, Potomac MD 20854, USA
Telephone: (301) 983-5252
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E-mail: asirt@asirt.org.

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2005

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This report is intended to represent general road conditions, driving environment, quality of public transportation, medical care and emergency response. It may not be totally accurate in a specific location or circumstance.