



First Time in China

Chongqing Travel Guide

A local's guide to your first days in the city

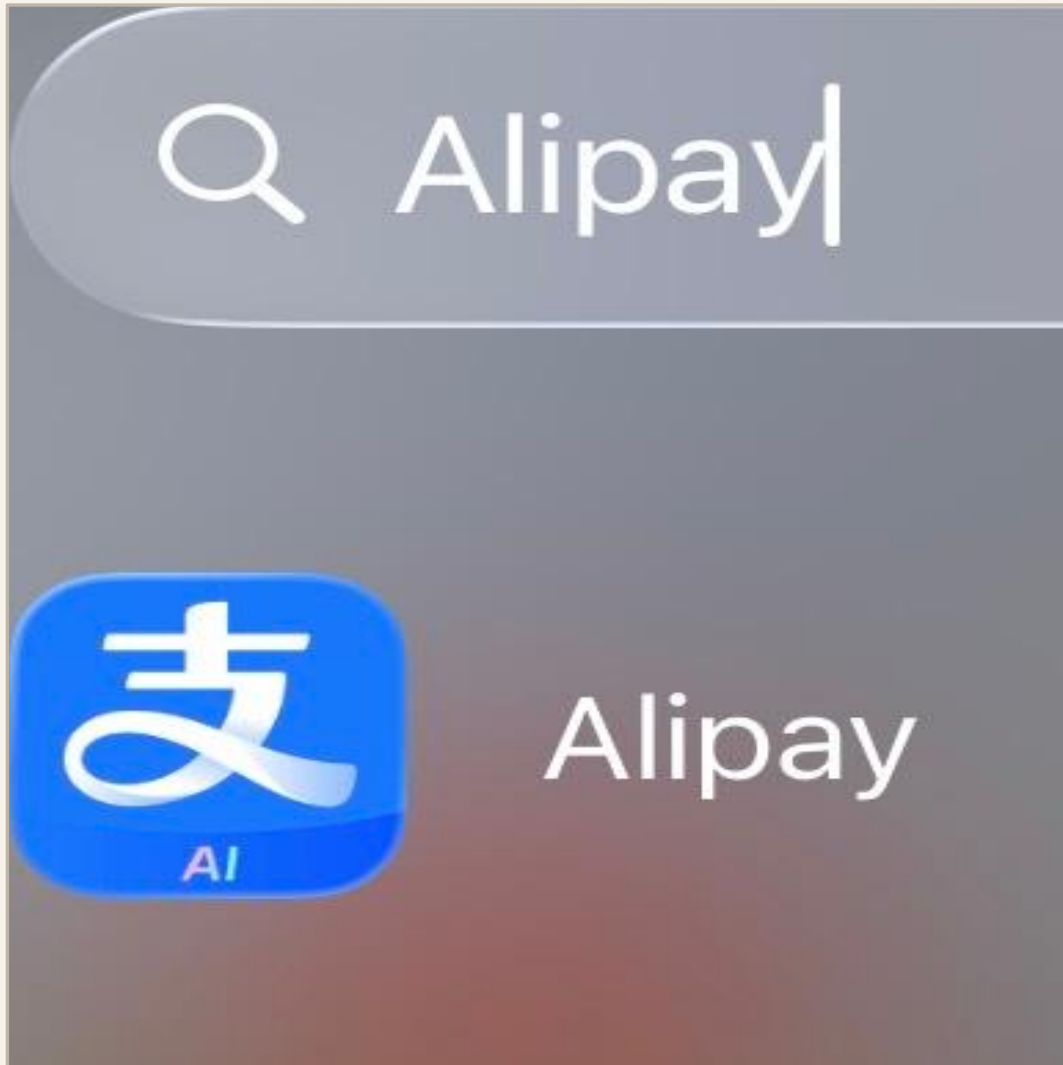
Created by Elias, a licensed local tour guide

02 Quick Start: What First-Time Visitors Need

- **SIM & data:** get an eSIM or airport SIM so you have working data as soon as you land.
- **Payments:** set up Alipay and WeChat Pay before you travel.
- **Passport:** keep it on hand for hotel check-in and train travel.
- **Apps:** install a translation app and a local map app (Amap works better than Google Maps here).
- **Cash:** carry a small backup amount, even though you won't use it often.



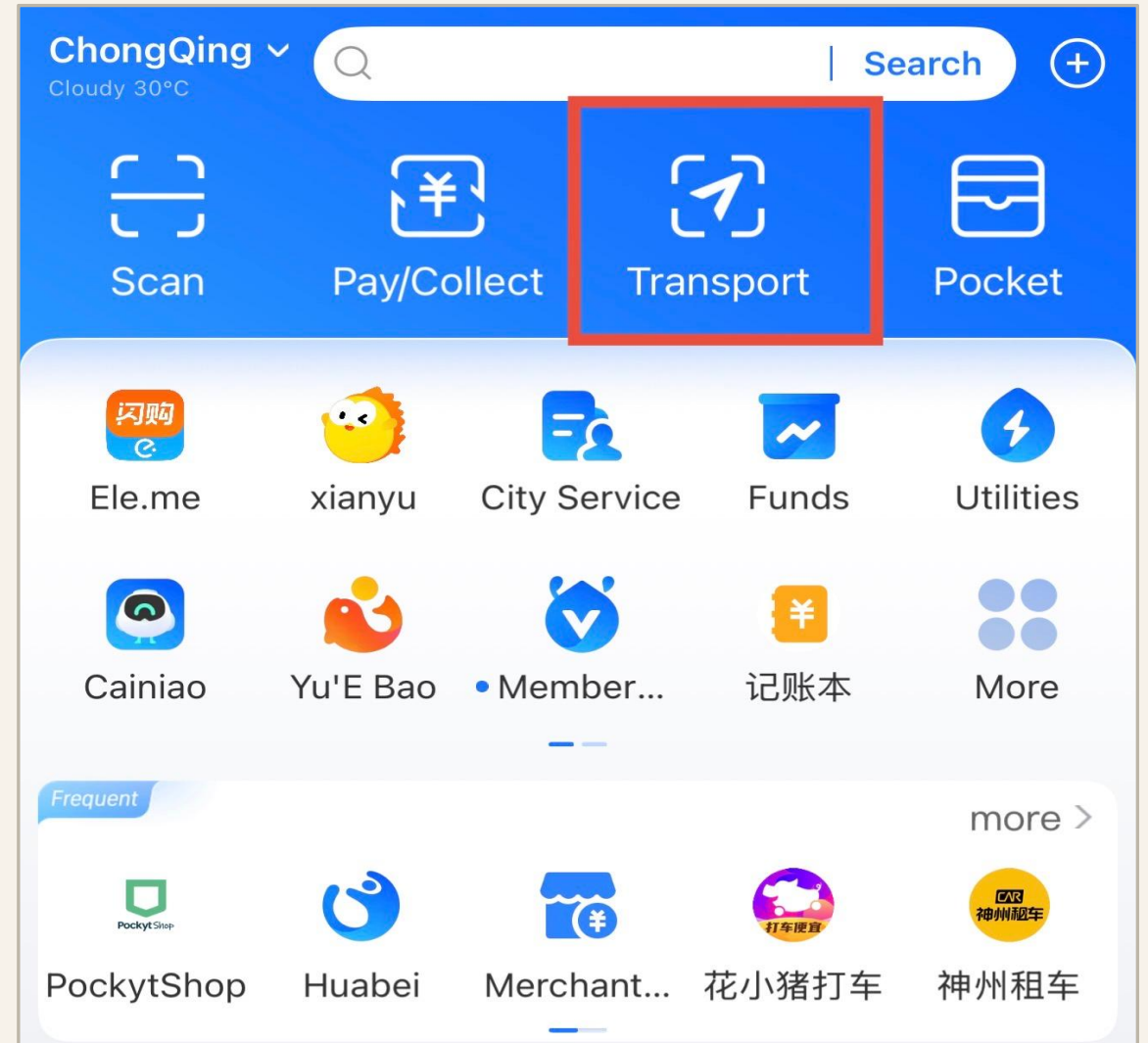
03 Payments in China



- Daily life here runs on mobile payment, from noodle stalls to taxis.
- Most visitors don't need to carry or exchange much cash.
- **Set up early:** link an international Visa/Mastercard to Alipay or WeChat Pay before you arrive.
- **Keep a backup:** some small shops and ticket machines don't accept foreign cards, so carry a little cash just in case.

04 Riding the Metro with Alipay

- **Step 1:** open Alipay's Transport section (not the regular payment code).
- **Step 2:** set your city and activate your ride code.
- **Step 3:** scan the QR code at the gate to enter, and again to exit.
- **Why it's easier:** ticket machines don't always accept foreign cards, so the ride code is the smoothest way to get around.



05 Best Hotel Area: Jiefangbei



- Jiefangbei (People's Liberation Monument) is the strongest first-time base in the city.
- **Central and walkable:** easy metro access, and an easy walk to Hongya Cave, Chaotianmen, and river viewpoints.
- **Close to everything:** food streets, nightlife, and a common pickup point for day tours.
- **Alternatives:** Nanbin Road for river views, Guanyinqiao for nightlife, or Shapingba for convenience.

06 Getting to Jiefangbei



From	Best option	Typical time	When to choose Didi	Note
Jiangbei Airport	Didi/pickup outside peak; metro if traffic is bad	~30-60 min by car (traffic-dependent)	Easiest with luggage	Airport pickup helps with apps, payment, maps, check-in
Chongqing North	Didi outside peak; metro if traffic heavy	~20-45 min (traffic/hotel-dependent)	Luggage or multiple travelers	Confirm North vs. South Square and exit
Chongqing West	Didi outside peak; metro to avoid traffic	~35-60 min	Metro transfers can be tiring	Didi is usually the easier option
Shapingba	Didi outside peak or Metro Line 1	~25-40 min	Comfort/convenience	One of the easier rail-station arrivals
Chongqing East	Didi/pickup for first-timers; metro if convenient	~35-60 min	First-time visitors	Confirm station status/route near travel date

For most first-time visitors with luggage, Didi is the simplest choice outside rush hours. During weekday peaks, the metro is usually more predictable.

07 Getting Around: DiDi vs Taxi

In Chongqing, DiDi or ride-hailing is usually the easiest way to move around the city. Street taxis can also work, but it's better to know when to use them and what to avoid.

DiDi / Ride-hailing

Best for most city trips.

- Price and route are shown in the app
- Less need for Chinese conversation
- Easier for hotels, restaurants, viewpoints

Use your hotel name, a landmark, or a clear map pin as the pickup point.

Street Taxi

Useful, but choose carefully.

- Use official taxis only
- Ask for the meter if possible
- At airports/stations, use the official taxi queue

If the price feels unclear, use DiDi or ask your hotel/local guide for help.

Driver asks for the last 4 digits

Drivers often confirm the passenger by asking for the last 4 digits of your phone number. This is normal.

手机尾号是多少?

"What are the last 4 digits of your phone number?"

我的手机号后四位是: _____

"My phone number ends in: _____"

Quick tips

- Check the license plate before getting in
- Wait at a clear pickup point, not in the middle of a busy road
- Screenshot your hotel address in Chinese

08 Weather and Best Months



Season	Typical feel	Rainfall	Packing note
Winter (Dec-Feb)	Mild, damp, often foggy	Lowest of the year	Layers, light rain shell
Spring (Mar-May)	Comfortable, warming	Increasing	Light layers, umbrella
Summer (Jun-Aug)	Hot and humid	Wettest - June peaks	Breathable fabric, sun protection
Autumn (Sep-Nov)	Comfortable, cooling	Tapering off	Light layers

Best months to visit: generally spring and autumn, avoiding summer humidity and winter fog.

09 Food in Chongqing

- **Hotpot:** the city's signature dish - bold, spicy, and numbing.
- **Also try:** xiaomian (small noodles), grilled fish, jianghu-style home cooking, and street snacks.
- **Spice tip:** ask for mild spice if you're not used to Sichuan-level heat.
- **Halal-friendly:** halal hotpot and halal-friendly restaurants are available near Jiaochangkou.

Not sure where to eat tonight?

Want to avoid tourist-trap restaurants?

See my updated Chongqing food picks:

eliaschongqing.com



10 Itinerary Ideas

2 days: central city. **3 days:** add Wulong or Dazu. **4-5 days:** a slower pace with both side trips.



Wulong Karst National Geology Park (UNESCO)



Dazu Rock Carvings (UNESCO)

Need help choosing the best route? See my latest Chongqing route ideas: eliaschongqing.com

11 Final Practical Notes

Station names can confuse

Chongqing North, West, East, and Shapingba are four different stations - double-check which one you need.

It's a 3D mountain city

Expect stairs, elevators, and bridges. Build in extra time, especially with luggage.

Tipping is not a must

In China, tipping is not expected in most restaurants, taxis, or hotels. For guides, drivers, or free walking tours, it is appreciated after good service.

Keep your passport handy

You'll need it for hotel check-in and for buying or boarding trains.

Want to Explore Chongqing with a Local?

Join a social free walking tour, book a private route, or start smoothly with airport pickup and local arrival help.

Free Walking Tour

- Solo travelers, couples, first-timers
- Social, relaxed group atmosphere

Style: city stories, hidden viewpoints, local food tips

Pricing: tip-based tour

Best for a fun, easy first taste of the city.

Private Tour

- Families, food lovers, photographers
- Flexible route, limited-time travelers

Style: flexible start time, hotel pickup, your pace

Options: half-day, full-day, food-focused, night-view

Best for a deeper, personalized experience.

Airport Pickup

- First friendly local face in Chongqing
- Help with apps, maps, payment, transport

Style: airport meet-up, local setup, hotel transfer

Good for: first-time travelers, late arrivals, smooth check-in

Best for avoiding airport stress and starting smoothly.

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