ChinaSourcing

FREE BUYER RESOURCE · 03

China Sourcing Trip Preparation Checklist

Everything to arrange before a sourcing trip — documents, money, transport, schedule, budget and the trip home.

A printable preparation pack for an international buyer travelling to China. Work through it in order: first the decisions that are expensive to change, then the paperwork, then the day-to-day logistics. Print it and write on it.

VERSION	INFORMATION CHECKED	PRICE
1.1	19 November 2026	Free — no email required

Free to download and share. General preparation information — not immigration, customs, tax or legal advice.

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What is in this document

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HOW TO USE IT

Tick items as you complete them. Anything marked "confirm" depends on your nationality, your airline or an operator's schedule, and must be checked at the official source rather than taken from any guide — including this one.

01

Six decisions to make before you book

Each of these is cheap to change now and expensive to change later.

1. **Cities and order**
   Which cities, in which order, and how many nights in each. Travel between them eats more time than first-time visitors expect.

2. **Whether a trade fair is in the plan**
   If yes, your dates are fixed by the organiser and your hotel should be booked earlier than you think.

3. **Your entry route**
   Which airport or land border, and whether you need a visa or qualify for visa-free entry. This depends on your passport and changes often.

4. **Accommodation area, not just hotel**
   Choose the area by what you will do each morning — a market district, a fair complex, or a transport hub.

5. **A realistic budget ceiling**
   Include samples, couriers and the cost of changing a flight. Use the planner in section 09.

6. **Who handles logistics at home**
   Your forwarder, your broker, or nobody yet. Knowing this before you buy changes what you ask suppliers.

ENTRY RULES ARE PERSONAL

Visa requirements, visa-free arrangements and the documents accepted at the border depend on your nationality and are revised regularly. Check the Chinese embassy or consulate responsible for where you live, and the National Immigration Administration, before booking non-refundable travel.

NOTES

02 Documents and entry

- [ ] Passport, valid well beyond your return date
- [ ] Visa, or proof that you qualify for visa-free entry, for your specific passport
- [ ] Printed and digital copies of your passport photo page
- [ ] Return or onward ticket
- [ ] Hotel bookings covering every night of the trip
- [ ] Travel insurance policy and the assistance phone number
- [ ] Two spare passport photos
- [ ] A second ID kept separately from your passport
- [ ] Addresses of your hotels written in Chinese characters
- [ ] Emergency contact list, saved offline

CARRY BOTH FORMATS

Print the documents and keep digital copies. Counters, hotel desks and border officers may ask for paper, and your phone may be out of battery or data at the wrong moment.

NOTES

03 Business paperwork

- [ ] One-page company profile, printed in 20–30 copies
- [ ] Business cards
- [ ] Product specification sheets and reference photos
- [ ] Target supplier list with booth, shop or factory addresses
- [ ] Purchase order template or a blank contract template
- [ ] Your bank details for supplier payments — kept offline, never in an email signature
- [ ] Certification requirements for your market, written down
- [ ] A printed copy of your target prices and acceptable MOQ

NOTES

04 Money and payments

- [ ] Two cards from different networks, both enabled for overseas use
- [ ] Bank notified of your travel dates and destination
- [ ] Mobile payment app installed, with a card linked and tested
- [ ] A small amount of local cash for the first day
- [ ] Card issuer emergency numbers saved offline
- [ ] A second phone, or a paper copy of the numbers
- [ ] Agreed limit for samples and deposits, decided in advance

TEST BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

Link your card to the payment app at home and make one small test payment. Discovering that your card is blocked while standing at a market booth is a common and avoidable problem.

NOTES

05 Connectivity and apps

- [ ] Data plan decided: travel eSIM, local SIM, or roaming
- [ ] eSIM installed and tested before departure, not at the airport
- [ ] Messaging app installed and able to add contacts
- [ ] Offline maps of every city downloaded
- [ ] Translation app installed, with the offline Chinese pack
- [ ] Power bank charged and within airline limits
- [ ] Universal adapter (China uses type A, C and I sockets, 220V)
- [ ] Screenshots of hotel addresses and key contacts, in case data fails

NOTES

06

Transport and accommodation

Decide the area first, the hotel second. Prices move, so this section has no numbers.

- [ ] Route between your arrival airport and the first hotel written down
- [ ] Airport-to-city option chosen: metro, official taxi rank, or pre-booked transfer
- [ ] Intercity legs identified, with the station or airport named
- [ ] Train booking rules for your passport checked — the ticket is tied to the ID you booked with, and whether you can enter with the passport alone or must collect a paper ticket varies by station
- [ ] Hotel area chosen for the mornings — market district, fair complex, or transport hub
- [ ] Cancellation terms checked, especially around trade fair dates
- [ ] Walk from hotel to the nearest metro station checked on a map
- [ ] Late-arrival plan agreed with the hotel

BUFFERS BEAT TIGHT PLANS

Leave a buffer between a flight arrival and a same-day train, and between two cities. Delays are ordinary — a late landing, a slow baggage hall or a station queue can each cost an hour — and a missed connection costs a day and a hotel night. On a long-haul arrival, an overnight before the first train is usually cheaper than the risk.

NOTES

07 Sourcing kit and clothing

- [ ] Notebook and two pens
- [ ] Tape measure
- [ ] Small digital scale, if you compare weights
- [ ] Sample bags and a marker
- [ ] Phone storage cleared for catalogue photos
- [ ] Folder for catalogues and business cards
- [ ] Comfortable walking shoes — market and fair days are long
- [ ] Layers for air-conditioned halls and warm streets
- [ ] One smart-casual outfit for supplier meetings
- [ ] Basic medication, in its original packaging
- [ ] Reusable water bottle

NOTES

08

Your sourcing schedule

Fill this in before you fly. A day without a target is a day of walking.

DAY	CITY	MARKET / FAIR / FACTORY	TARGET CATEGORIES	MEETINGS BOOKED
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

A rule of thumb that survives most itineraries: keep one half-day unbooked for every three working days. That is where delayed samples, slow quotations and factory visits that run long get absorbed, instead of pushing your whole plan back. If your trip is only four or five days, one unbooked afternoon is usually enough.

NOTES

09

Budget planner

Your own estimates, not our numbers. Fill the estimate column before you travel and the actual column as you go.

ITEM	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	NOTES
International flights			
Domestic flights or trains			
Accommodation			
Local transport and transfers			
Fair or market entry costs, if any			
Samples			
Sample courier			
Interpretation, if used			
Food and incidentals			
Buffer for changes			
Total			

THE TWO LINES PEOPLE FORGET

Sample courier and the cost of changing a booking. Both are small individually and large across a trip — and both belong in the real cost per unit you calculate later.

NOTES

10 Return and logistics

- [ ] Samples packed so they survive the flight, with the approved unit kept separate
- [ ] Courier or forwarder chosen for anything you are not carrying
- [ ] Supplier invoices and packing lists collected before you leave
- [ ] Photographs of every carton and shipping mark
- [ ] Written confirmation of what was ordered, at what price, on what Incoterm
- [ ] Outstanding quotations saved, with the date they were quoted
- [ ] Contact details of the person handling your order, not just the salesperson
- [ ] A note of what you still need to verify at home — certification, duty, labelling

NOTES

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Seven-day countdown and emergency card

1. **Seven days out**
   Confirm flights, hotel and any fair badge; re-check entry rules for your nationality.
2. **Five days out**
   Print documents; download offline maps; install and test the eSIM.
3. **Three days out**
   Notify your bank and card issuers; prepare the supplier target list.
4. **Two days out**
   Pack the sourcing kit; charge the power bank; confirm the first meeting.
5. **One day out**
   Re-check the flight; save hotel addresses in Chinese characters.

Hotel name and address (Chinese)	
Local emergency numbers	110 police · 120 ambulance · 119 fire
Embassy or consulate	
Insurance assistance line	
Main supplier contact	

NOTES

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Sources and how to verify them

Everything time-sensitive in this document points here. Check the official page before you rely on a date, a rule or an opening day.

China National Immigration Administration — entry and exit policy

https://www.nia.gov.cn/

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs — visa information

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/

China Railway 12306 — train tickets with a foreign passport

https://www.12306.cn/

Links and the structure of this checklist were reviewed on 18 November 2026. Train-ticket and buffer advice was reworded on 19 November 2026 to remove a claim about typical delays, and to note that ticket collection at the station varies. Entry rules, ticket rules and airline baggage limits change; confirm them at the official source for your nationality before you travel.

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About this document

This checklist is published by ChinaSourcing as a free buyer resource. It consolidates the preparation questions buyers ask most often, and pairs with the three free buyer resources on the website.

HOW THIS WAS RESEARCHED

Every date, address and rule in this document is tied to a source listed on the previous page. Where something changes often, the text tells you to confirm it rather than presenting it as fixed. We do not claim to have visited the fair or the market for this document: it is built from official published information and the questions buyers ask most often.

It is general preparation information, not immigration, customs, tax or legal advice, and it does not replace the requirements published by airlines, border authorities or the fair organiser.

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Find It. Source It. Ship It.