



北京大学 深圳研究生院  
Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School

# Pre-Arrival Information for PKU Shenzhen International Students



Arrival Time:

February 14, 8:30am – 5:00pm



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## 1) Money and Banking

The currency in China is the Renminbi, and is referred to as RMB or yuan. At time of writing, 1 RMB = 0.15 USD = 0.13 EUR. A particularity of the RMB is that it cannot be freely exchanged: you cannot exchange RMB outside China, or if possible, it is at a very poor rate. There is also a limit to the amount of RMB you can change back to your currency, even in China. Although ATMs are widespread in China, the coverage by the VISA, MasterCard and other international networks is still low, and many stores and restaurants will only accept cash or Chinese Unionpay. I recommend that you **notify your bank of your travel to China**, so you won't have any problems when you attempt to withdraw money from an ATM in China. The daily ATM withdrawal limit (at least for Ping An Bank on campus) is 20,000 RMB.

In order to open a bank account upon arrival, you will need to provide your home country tax number on paperwork for Ping An Bank. Please come prepared to present that tax number to staff members, without it you will not be able to open your bank account.

### Bank transfers

Wire money transfers can take up to one month (and at least one week) to be processed, so make sure that you have money available while you wait for your transfer. Your campus card will come with a local Chinese bank account, Ping An Bank. When making a transfer, pay careful attention to all the banking account details for both the sender and receiver, transfers will be denied if any information is input incorrectly.

You also may choose to open a bank account at a larger bank. There are several banks near PKU Shenzhen where you can set up a bank account, at either a Chinese or an international bank (Standard Chartered, HSBC Premier, CitiBank and Bank of East Asia). On campus, there is a local bank, Ping An Bank and both Ping An Bank and Bank of China ATMs.

### Traveler's checks

Many banks in Shenzhen accept Traveler's Checks in USD; however, it takes generally more than 40 working days to process them. We don't recommend Traveler's checks because of the lengthy processing time.

### Chinese Debit, Credit Cards, and WeChat Pay

It is nearly impossible for foreigners to get a Chinese credit card. However, you can easily get a Chinese debit card. Most Chinese debit cards belong to the "Unionpay" network, which is not typically accepted outside of China. Many students transfer money to their Chinese debit card to be able to easily withdraw money in China without incurring fees. You can use a debit card to make purchases at most larger Chinese stores, to withdraw money from ATMs and to shop online from Chinese companies. The campus card provided to you is also a Chinese debit card.

Nearly every basic consumer purchase in mainland China is made electronically through an e-wallet connected to the phone applications [WeChat](#) or Alipay. During orientation when you go to the bank to activate your banking account, the staff will help you set up the electronic wallet and the WeChat pay function.

### Using a Credit Card from a Foreign Bank

Some foreign banks have partnerships with Chinese banks that allow withdrawals without extra fees. For example, Bank of America has a partnership with Chinese Construction Bank. Talk with your bank to see if they have a partnership and consider opening an account at home. Sending money from a partner bank can also ease bank transfers.

### Bringing Cash

The maximum amount you can bring in cash to China without declaring it is 5,000 USD (or equivalent in another currency) or 20,000RMB. This includes cash in all currencies together, so you cannot bring 5,000 USD plus 1,000 EUR. Besides the risk of carrying cash while travelling, please note that you might not be able to exchange the extra RMB back into your own currency when you leave China.

## 2) Payment for Tuition, Accommodation and Insurance:

You should pay all expenses (housing, insurance, tuition) before your arrival by electronic wire transfer. In January, you will receive an invoice from your school detailing your fees. By January 15, you must submit the details of your wire transfer to your school (as instructed by each individual institution), unless your invoice specifically instructed you to pay in person. Please pay the wire transfer as early as possible to avoid any delays. Students that have not sent payment, must pay in RMB cash on the day of arrival (foreign bank cards are not accepted).

- Accommodation fees are as follows:

Accommodation Type	Exchange semester
Single Room	6000 RMB
Double Room	3000 RMB

\* 300 RMB housing deposit that will be returned at the end of the program.

- Tuition payment: dependent upon your scholarship status. If you are uncertain of your first-year tuition cost, please contact a staff member at your school. Not applicable to exchange students
- Insurance: 400 RMB per academic semester

Note: Payment of expenses and your necessary documents will be checked at registration. If you are a degree-seeking student (non-exchange), you need to bring your original diploma to registration. *If your original diploma is not in English or Chinese, you need to obtain a Certificate of Authentication from the Chinese Consulate. Please contact your corresponding school staffer or me as soon as possible about obtaining this document.*

## 3) Arrival Expenses

You can expect to face the following expenses upon your arrival. Please prepare accordingly:

- Internet: 100 RMB for 5 months/200 RMB for 10 months (for the most basic speed)
- Campus card: 100 RMB to pick up, comes loaded with 100 RMB
- Residence permit and Health Check: approximately 1000 RMB for single semester students, 1400



RMB for full-time or year-long students

- Initial hot water and electricity payments: at least 30 RMB each (deducted from your Campus Card amount)
- Dormitory Furnishings: expenses vary (bed sheets, trash bins, pillows, etc.)
- Wire transfer exchange rate fluctuation compensation: Up to 300 RMB
- Living expenses: about 2,000-3,000 RMB/month, depending on your lifestyle

## 4) Health Insurance

### Chinese Health Insurance

As students in China, you are required by law to subscribe to a local Chinese insurance plan. The Ministry of Education recommends using the Ping An Insurance plan, which covers accidental injuries, hospitalization (if you need to stay in a hospital for at least one night) and death. For full-time students, the cost of Ping An Insurance is 400 RMB/semester, and the school will apply for the insurance on your behalf and the cost is included on the invoice. You will be covered from your day of registration on the Ping An Insurance scheme.

### International Health Insurance

As of August 2014, the Ping An Foreign Students Group Insurance does cover outpatient care and some prescription medicines. After one 650RMB deductible, policy holders will be reimbursed 85% outpatient fees with a 600RMB daily limit and an accumulative limit of 20,000RMB.

Please refer to the insurance policy (English version) [here](#) and the claims guidelines here. You can view the website of the insurance company [here](#) (Plan 2 - should there be any discrepancies due to translation, the Chinese version will be considered as the legal version).

For more information on the Ping An Foreign Student Group Insurance Plan, you can call their 24/7 hotline 4008105119) or consult with your school's administrative staff for more information.

In general, basic medications, doctors' visits and dental care are quite inexpensive in China. The Ping An Insurance and other local Chinese insurance will only cover hospitalization in a Chinese hospital (International English-speaking wards are also not covered). If you would like your insurance plan to cover private international hospitals or medical repatriation, you may want to consider also purchasing international or traveler's health insurance. These plans typically cover hospitalization and surgery in a private hospital and emergency evacuation to your home country. For more information on health care in China for foreigners, please visit:

<http://www.smartshanghai.com/articles/wellbeing/in-depth-the-ultimate-guide-to-health-insurance-in-china>

At registration, you will be required to prove that you are insured. We will also collect emergency contact numbers.

## 5) Average Cost of Life



In general, living in China is much more affordable than living almost anywhere in North America or Western Europe. That said, international students from other developing countries are often surprised by the cost of living in Shenzhen, and some do not allot the appropriate amount of money to support themselves for the duration of their studies at PKU Shenzhen.

Shenzhen is the most rapidly developing area in China, and one of the fastest growing in the world. Consequently, the area has experienced cost inflation to match the rising demand for housing, food, and other commodities. After Shanghai and Beijing, Shenzhen is the most expensive city in China. While the cost doesn't compare to the likes of developed countries, students should not misjudge the amount of living costs beyond tuition and housing.

*Below is a brief list of up-to-date Shenzhen prices:*

Meal on campus: 10-25 RMB (or around 45 for a Western meal)  
Meal (per person) in an average Chinese restaurant: 20-50 RMB  
Fancier Chinese restaurant: 100-250 RMB (30 for a vegetable dish, 70 for meat)  
Western meal: 60-250 RMB  
Fast-food: 20-30 RMB  
Chinese beer: 5 RMB (supermarket)  
Beer/drink in an expat bar: 35-60 RMB  
Taxi (20 Minutes): 30 RMB - 10 RMB for the first 2km, then 2 RMB per extra 2.4 km.  
Subway ticket: 2-8 RMB  
Public bus ticket: 2-5 RMB  
Small Refrigerator: 600-900 RMB  
Electric stove: 250 RMB  
Mattress: 900-1,500 RMB  
Heater: 100-200 RMB

## 6) Accommodation

On the PKU Shenzhen website, you can take our [campus tour](#) to discover our campus and dorm rooms. We recommend that students live on campus, but it is not required. International students live in rooms that are 16 square meters, with a private bathroom<sup>1</sup> and a balcony. The majority of the rooms have 1.2 meter beds, a small percentage have 1.5 meter beds. All international student rooms have a western style toilet, hot water and an air conditioner. The rooms come equipped with basic furniture including: a bed, chair, desk, wardrobe and bedside table.

All dormitory buildings have 24-hour security and surveillance. All students have a campus card that only allows residents entry into the dormitory building. The first floors of all dormitories have a laundry room with washing machines.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite what may be pictured in the virtual campus tour, all international student dorm rooms have Western (seated) toilets rather than squat toilets.

Students may live off campus if you so choose. The school doesn't provide accommodation outside campus and you will ultimately be responsible for negotiating your own off campus housing. However, we can advise you and recommend areas in Shenzhen.

Accommodation fees must be paid in full upon arrival to the Campus Service Center including a 300RMB deposit. Provided there are no damages to your room at the end of the year, this deposit will be returned to you in full upon check out. However, your cold water bill and the cost of any unreturned dorm materials (AC remote hot water card, etc.) will be deducted from your deposit. All students must sign a [housing contract](#) to live on campus.

You must register your residence within the first 24 hours of entering the country. This registration can be done online through the app WeChat. You should download the app before you arrive, or on arrival. For students living on campus there will be a QR code on the door of your room for you to use in order to register. For instructions on how to register, please refer to this [document](#). Do not attempt to register before your arrival.

Utilities are paid separately from your accommodation fees. Hot water and electricity are pre-paid through an on-campus rechargeable machine available from 7:00 AM to around 10:30 PM. Depending on your personal habits, utilities are typically 400-500 RMB for about 4 weeks of electricity (for peak A/C season); but around 100 for cooler months; these numbers vary with the weather and your own usage. For hot water, 100 RMB usually lasts about 2 months. Cold water is about 20 RMB per month.

## 7) Academic Calendar

The Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School Academic Calendar can be found [online](#). Please note that the School of Translational Law and HSBC Business School have their own academic calendar, this is only the general calendar for the university.

## 8) Weather

Shenzhen has a warm subtropical climate. Winters are fairly mild and dry with average temperatures 11-16C (51-60F). The rainy season in Shenzhen lasts from April until October with its peak in the summer. Summers are quite hot and humid with temperatures 29-36C (80-95F).

## 9) Packing List

You will be able to find most everything that you will need in China. Clothes, toiletries, shoes, cell phones etc. are relatively inexpensive. Shenzhen has many international stores such as H&M, Decathlon, Ikea and UniQlo. However, some things can be harder to find.

*Some recommendations on what to bring to China:*

- *Lightweight clothes.* Inexpensive clothes can be found, but most international clothing brands are more



expensive in China. If you need larger sizes (especially for shoes or pants) you will find suitable sizes hard to find. There are also many affordable tailors.

- *Cosmetics and personal hygiene products.* Foreign brand cosmetics are typically more expensive. Take a few samples of your favorite brands, as you may have difficulties finding the same products in China. Feminine hygiene products of one's liking can be tricky to find as well.
- *Mementos and photos* from home
- *Small gifts.* Gift giving is very prominent in Chinese culture. Chinese friends will always appreciate something that you have brought from home to share.
- *Bug Spray, sunscreen, antiperspirant.* Will likely be cheaper in your home country
- *Prescription or name brand medications.* You may not be able to find the same brand of medication in China. It is also helpful to bring basic medicines, such as ibuprofen, cold medicine, anti-diarrhea medicine, etc.
- *Books* in your native language or an Electronic book reader
- *VPN* to access sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc. VPN access is always changing in China; we suggest that you do some research before purchasing your VPN. Additionally, we suggest purchasing and installing your VPN on your devices prior to your arrival.

## 10) Communication

### Mobile phone

There are almost a billion mobile phone users in China. The two major Chinese mobile network providers, China Unicom and China Mobile, have multiple store locations around Shenzhen, though very few have English speaking staff. Students will register with China Mobile for a SIM card upon their arrival to campus (please have your admission letter and passport prepared). You can purchase or upgrade to different data plans after you receive your SIM card.

### Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)

Services such as Skype on mobile phones are quite popular, as the rates are very cheap. The only drawback is the lack of internet speed at peak times of use for the shared campus wireless internet.

### Internet

On-campus internet is fairly reliable and comes at a low cost to students. The basic speed is 20mb per month, and higher speed connection plans can be purchased as well. Once a student has received his/her Username and Password, the internet will be available for use on a 24-hour basis. Internet in the dormitories can be accessed with a personal router or Ethernet cable. To access websites that are blocked by the Chinese firewall, students may purchase VPN coverage for their laptop. It is advisable to purchase and install your VPN subscription before arriving in China.

## 11) Culture Shock

Culture shock can be an unexpected issue when living in a foreign country. Most foreigners do experience a degree of culture shock even if they don't realize it. If you are familiar with the stages of culture shock, you will be better prepared on how to cope with adapting to a new culture. Living in China can pose new challenges even





for seasoned travelers. The four stages of culture shock that you may experience: the honeymoon stage of initial euphoria, withdrawal and irritability, adjustment phase, and finally adaption and acceptance.

*For more informational and tips on coping with culture shock visit:*

<http://www.cie.uci.edu/prepare/shock.shtml>

Personal Account: [“Learning to Embrace Guanxi: On Living Communally in China”](#) by Elizabeth Lindsay Rogers

Beginning to prepare for culture shock before can ease your transition in adapting to a new culture. We encourage you to start learning Chinese, keeping up to date on Chinese news and reading books and watching movies about China. Most of all, expect the unexpected, and understand that things that push you out of your comfort zone can be rewarding and enlightening.

Here are some resources to get you started!

## 12) Book and Movie List

### Recommended Book List:

The Geography of Thought, by Richard Nisbett

Peter Hessler's China Trilogy:

*Country Driving: A Journey Through China from Farm to Factory*

*Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present*

*River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*

Dreaming in Chinese, by Deborah Fallows

Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in New China by Evan Osnos

Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy – Vanessa L. Fong

### Recommended Movie List:

The Last Emperor (1987) by Bernardo Bertolucci

Tells the life of Puyi, the last emperor of China and the fall of the imperial China

Shower (1999) by Zhang Yang

Follows a family who runs an old fashioned bath house in modern China

Red Sorghum (1987) by Zhang Yimo

Follows a woman's life after being arranged to marry a man who runs a rural sorghum distillery.



Still Life (2004) Jia Zhangke

Depicts a small town about to be destroyed for the 3 Gorges Dam project.

Youth (2017) Feng Xiaogang

A young troupe of military acrobats and performers face the challenges of growing up, the threat of war with Vietnam, and the decline of the Mao era in China during the 1970s.

#### **News, Blogs and Shenzhen Expat Websites:**

Chinafile

<http://www.chinafile.com/>

China Daily

<http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/>

Shenzhen Daily

<http://www.szdaily.com/>

SupChina

<https://supchina.com/>

That's PRD

<http://thatsmags.com/prd/>

Shenzhen Stuff

<http://www.shenzhenstuff.com/>

Sara Jaaksola: Living a Dream in China (a personal blog from a long-term expat)

<http://sarajaaksola.com/>

### **13) Learning Chinese**

PKU Shenzhen has basic Chinese class offerings for enrolled students. These courses are included in the cost of tuition. Learning Mandarin Chinese while in China can also help you with cultural integration and adjusting to culture shock. Coursework is not intensive, so students looking to improve their Chinese more quickly can also take advantage of language exchange partners.

***In addition, we recommend investigating these resources:***

*Chinese Pod*: A great online resource of podcasts and lessons. This is my main resource for studying Chinese, but they have recently lost a lot of staff and are in a transitional phase. There is a large selection of free lessons for you to check out to get a feel for the service. I have found it far more productive than a traditional textbook.

<http://chinesepod.com/>



*Yellow Bridge*: Character dictionary, lots of beginner and advanced readings, flashcards, and other helpful resources

<https://www.yellowbridge.com/>

LINE Dictionary: My go to Chinese dictionary

<http://ce.linedict.com/dict.html#/cnen/home>

*Memrise*: Online flashcard game to help you start recognizing characters right away by using mnemonics.

[www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com)

## 14) What to Expect at Orientation

In order to help international students acclimate to PKU Shenzhen and China as a whole, the school organizes an Orientation specifically for new students from overseas. The Orientation is divided into the General Orientation, which offers students opportunities to explore Shenzhen and take advantage of social events on and off-campus, and then school-specific Academic Orientations.

*Among other events, Orientation will include:*

- Campus and surrounding neighborhood tour
- Converting student visa to residence permit
- Shopping trip to IKEA
- Purchase of transport cards and a scavenger hunt through Shenzhen
- Events to help you bond with classmates and Campus Advisors