

# CHINA HIGH-SPEED RAIL: THE COMPLETE TRAVEL FACT SHEET

Your essential quick-reference guide to navigating the world's largest bullet train network.

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## NETWORK OVERVIEW & SCALE

- **The World's Largest:** The network spans over 50,000 km (31,000 miles), accounting for more than two-thirds of all high-speed rail lines globally.
- **National Coverage:** Connects every single mainland Chinese province, Hong Kong, and nearly all major cities.
- **Efficiency vs. Flying:** For journeys under 6 hours, taking a high-speed train is typically faster than flying when factoring in airport transfers, security checks, and wait times.

## RECOMMENDED HIGH-SPEED TRAIN ROUTES

Add these bucket-list journeys to your travel itinerary:

1. **Chengdu to Kunming:** *The Geological Museum Route*
2. **Beijing to Shanghai:** *The World's Fastest Average Speed Train Route*
3. **Dali to Lijiang:** *The Snow Capped Mountain Route*
4. **Hefei to Fuzhou:** *The Yangtze River Route*
5. **Lanzhou to Dunhuang:** *The Ancient Silk Road Route*

## UNDERSTANDING THE TRAIN TYPES (G, D, and C)

When looking at departure boards or booking apps, the prefix letter before the train number dictates the speed and service tier:

### 'G' Trains (Gaosu) - High-Speed Flagship

- **Top Speed:** Up to 350 km/h (217 mph).
- **Details:** The fastest flagship bullet trains. They operate on dedicated high-speed lines and primarily utilise advanced Fuxing CR400 trainsets.

### 'D' Trains - Long-Distance

- **Top Speed:** Up to 250 km/h (155 mph).
- **Details:** Slightly slower, long-distance routes. Certain "D" trains also operate as overnight sleeper services between major cities.

### 'C' Trains - Intercity Regional

- **Top Speed:** Generally between 160 km/h and 200 km/h (100-125 mph), though some can reach 250 km/h.
- **Details:** Designed for shorter regional commutes, connecting neighbouring cities within large metropolitan hubs.

## TRAVEL CLASSES (From Cheapest to Most Expensive)

Unlike aviation, **Business Class** is the absolute highest tier of luxury on Chinese trains.

- **Second Class:** 3+2 seating configuration. This is the only class where standing tickets can be purchased if all reserved seats sell out.
- **First Class:** 2+2 seating configuration. Includes complimentary refreshments and snacks.
- **VIP Class:** 2+1 seating configuration. Similar seats to First Class, but typically located in the nose of the train. Includes complimentary refreshments and snacks.
- **Premium First Class:** 2+2 layout featuring large reclining seats. Currently exclusive to upgraded Fuxing CR400 trains on the Beijing–Shanghai route. Includes complimentary refreshments and snacks.
- **Business Class (Top Tier):** 2+1 seating layout. Features premium lie-flat seats, and some also have closing-door suites. Includes complimentary refreshments and snacks, and hot meal service on longer routes.

## HOW TO BOOK TICKETS

- **Booking Window:** Official ticket sales open exactly **15 days before departure**.
- **Where to Book:** Use the official China Railway app/website (**12306.cn**) or reliable third-party platforms like **Trip.com**.
- **The Trip.com Advantage:** Highly recommended for international tourists. It features a user-friendly English interface, accepts foreign credit/debit cards, and allows you to pre-book tickets up to 2 months in advance (they will automatically purchase them for you the second the official 15-day window opens).
- **Passport Requirement:** All tickets are completely electronic and digitally linked to your passport number. **You must bring your physical, original passport** to pass through the station entry gates.

## AT THE STATION & ONBOARD EXPERIENCE

- **Airport-Style Stations:** Stations are massive, modern hubs resembling international airport terminals. They feature vast dining options, including well-known Western brands and local shops.
- **Station Security:** You must pass through a pre-departure security check featuring a bag metal detector and a body X-ray.
- **Security Rules:** Security is more relaxed than an airport. Liquids *are* permitted, though guards may occasionally ask you to take a sip of your beverage or inspect aerosol items like deodorant.
- **Onboard Amenities:** Seats can be rotated to face the direction of travel. All trains feature large tray tables, power outlets, digital displays, onboard food/beverage services, and free WiFi on newer trainsets.

## CRITICAL TRAVEL WARNING: HOLIDAYS

- **The Lunar New Year Peak:** During major public holidays, most notably Lunar New Year, the network facilitates the world's largest annual human migration, moving hundreds of millions of people.
- **The Strategy:** Trains will sell out almost instantly once the 15-day booking horizon opens. If you must travel during these periods, utilise pre-booking services immediately or expect to face complete sell-outs.

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Thank you for watching our video "Chinese High-Speed Rail: All You Need To Know!". Every video we post on the [Asian Train Guide YouTube](#) channel will have a free factsheet like this to download.