A TRAVEL BOOK FOR ONE TRIP

Dunhuang: a travel guide to take with you

2 days · 1 place





1 **Dunhuang** 敦煌 2 days

Everything in here works with no internet. The parts marked ✓ were checked against the official page on the date shown.

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Checked for you

What we checked for this trip, and what to do before you go.

- 5 things to book or do.

WHAT TO DO, AND WHEN

☐	**Check its page**	Mogao Caves: when tickets open is not checked yet. Book on its official site, with your passport; each of you books under your own name. Its booking pages are in Chinese, and we have not checked them step by step yet.
☐	**Check its page**	Crescent Lake: when tickets open is not checked yet. Book in its WeChat mini program “游敦煌（小程序）；鸣沙山月牙泉（公众号）”, with your passport; each of you books under your own name. **游敦煌（小程序）；鸣沙山月牙泉（公众号）** In WeChat, tap search and type or paste this name to find its mini program. Its booking pages are in Chinese, and we have not checked them step by step yet.
☐	**Now**	Alipay takes foreign bank cards — link yours in the app before you fly, then scan to pay wherever Alipay QR codes are accepted. Keep a physical card and some cash as backup. ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
☐	**Now**	WeChat Pay takes foreign bank cards for everyday purchases — add yours under Wallet, then scan to pay where WeChat Pay is accepted. No fee up to 200 RMB per payment, 3% above; red packets and transfers are not supported. ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
☐	**Now**	Travel eSIMs need an eSIM-capable, carrier-unlocked phone — check yours before you buy. ✓ Checked Sun, Oct 4, 2026 · source

YOUR DATES

- Day 1 and Day 2 are planned light, as if you land by early afternoon and fly home in the evening. Landing late or flying early? Keep those days for getting in and out, and move their sights.
  guide

NOT CHECKED YET

We say what we could not check rather than guess.

- Choose your passport and we'll check how you get in.
- Dunhuang: a hospital with services for visitors is not checked yet — in an emergency, call 120.



1

Dunhuang 敦煌

Buddhist cave art and desert dunes on the Silk Road

2 days here

Where I'm going in Dunhuang (3 cards) · Help in Chinese · Emergency

- Yulin Caves is about 2h40 from Dunhuang town (109 km).
  an estimate

WHERE I'M STAYING

Good areas: Shazhou night market (old town) 沙州夜市老城 (15 min to Dunhuang Railway Station 敦煌站) · Mingsha Dunes & Crescent Lake 鸣沙山月牙泉片区 (20 min to Dunhuang Railway Station 敦煌站)

Hotel name

Address in Chinese



Mogao Caves Day 1

Painted caves at the edge of the desert

Give it: half a day

About 45 min by bus from Dunhuang town (an estimate)

HOURS, PEAK SEASON (APR 1 – NOV 30)	08:00–18:00
HOURS, LOW SEASON (DEC 1 – MAR 31)	09:00–17:30

✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

CLOSED	None — open every day
BOOKING	Required ahead — real-name, with your passport
TICKET	¥140–238 (depends on the ticket)

✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

FOREIGN PASSPORT	Yes, with a passport

✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

> *Bring a small torch — cave interiors stay dim and guides light only parts of each chamber*

> *Cave visits run guide-only in groups — about two hours and around eight to ten caves, with no independent wandering*

Show the driver · Mogao Caves

莫高窟



Crescent Lake Day 1

Desert spring shaped like a crescent moon

Give it: half a day

About 20 min by bus from Dunhuang town (an estimate)

HOURS (WHICH MONTHS: NOT CHECKED YET)	06:00–19:30
HOURS (WHICH MONTHS: NOT CHECKED YET)	06:00–19:30 · last entry 19:30

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CLOSED	None — open every day
BOOKING	Required ahead — real-name, with your passport
TICKET	¥110

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> *Bus 3 runs from town to the dunes*

> *Climbing the big dune is the slog and sliding down is the fun — budget an hour for the round trip*

Show the driver · Crescent Lake

月牙泉



Yulin Caves Day 2

Painted Buddhist caves on the old Silk Road

Give it: half a day

HOURS, PEAK SEASON (MAY 1 – OCT 31)	09:00–17:30
HOURS, LOW SEASON (NOV 1 – APR 30)	09:30–17:00

✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

CLOSED	None — open every day
TICKET	¥40–55 (depends on the ticket)

✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

FOREIGN PASSPORT	Yes, with a passport

✓ Checked Mon, Oct 5, 2026 · source

Show the driver · Yulin Caves

榆林窟

WHAT I'M GOING TO EAT

驴肉黄面

Donkey meat with yellow noodles

The dish Dunhuang is known for: springy yellow noodles with a side of braised donkey meat and mushroom gravy.

Usually contains: wheat (flour, wheat gluten), soy (a guide — always show your allergy card)

> 您好，麻烦您来一份黄面，配一份驴肉。
> Hello, one yellow-noodle bowl with a side of donkey meat please.

胡羊焖饼

Lamb stew under dough sheets

Dunhuang's old caravan pot: lamb stewed dark, then a thin dough sheet laid on top to soak up the broth.

Usually contains: lamb, wheat (flour, wheat gluten), broth (a guide — always show your allergy card)

> 您好，麻烦您来一份胡羊焖饼，两个人吃。
> Hello, one lamb-under-dough-sheet pot for two people please.

杏皮水

Apricot-peel drink

Dunhuang's desert cooler: dried apricot peel boiled with sugar into a tart amber drink sold iced everywhere.

> 您好，麻烦您来一杯杏皮水，冰的，少糖。
> Hello, one iced apricot-peel drink with less sugar please.

泡儿油糕

Puffy fried date pastry

The night market's pastry balloon: a wheat-flour shell fried until it puffs hollow around a sweet date-or-sugar heart.

Usually contains: wheat (flour, wheat gluten) (a guide — always show your allergy card)

> 您好，麻烦您来两个泡儿油糕，刚出锅的。
> Hello, two puffed fried pastries fresh from the wok please.

- Night-market stalls post century-brand signs that no authority checks. Judge by where the local families queue.
- Donkey yellow noodles are two purchases: the noodle bowl and the donkey-meat topping, charged separately. A plain bowl without the topping is just noodles.

Point at the big Chinese — it is the name on the menu. To order, show the sentence under it.

Also here: Yumen Pass · Dunhuang Yardang National Geopark

APPENDIX

The plan, roughly

A sketch, not a schedule — it follows the order and the days above.

Day 1–2	Dunhuang

When something goes wrong

IN AN EMERGENCY

- **110** Police
- **120** Ambulance
- **119** Fire
- **122** Traffic accident
- **12345** City service hotline
- **12367** Immigration service
- **12328** Transport hotline

A hospital at each stop

- Dunhuang: a hospital with services for visitors is not checked yet — in an emergency, call 120.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

When a phone payment fails

- If WeChat Pay says your payments are restricted, it usually means real-name verification is not finished yet; once you complete it, the account is unfrozen and you can pay again.
  1. Tap the notice on the payment screen and add your passport details, full name exactly as printed, phone, address and occupation
  2. Upload a photo of your passport page and a clear photo of your face
  3. Pay with your physical card or cash while you wait

  If that doesn't work Pay with the physical card at a card terminal or with RMB cash - shops that take payment face to face must accept cash.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- To link a foreign card to WeChat Pay, your name and ID number must match the ones your bank account was opened with, the country must match the one on your ID, and your bank texts a code to the phone number it has on file.
  1. Check the name is entered exactly as on your bank account, including spaces and punctuation
  2. Make sure the phone number registered with your bank can receive texts in China
  3. If the wallet still declines the card, try a second card or pay by card at the till

  If that doesn't work Pay with the physical card at a card terminal, or with cash; Bank of China ATMs take Visa, Mastercard, UnionPay, JCB and Amex for RMB.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- A foreign card in WeChat Pay works for everyday purchases in mainland China but not for red packets or money transfers. Payments of 200 RMB or less carry no fee; above 200 RMB the fee is 3%.
  1. Use the wallet for shop and taxi QR payments
  2. For anything above 200 RMB, a card at the till or cash avoids the 3% fee
  3. Ask friends to settle shared bills with you in cash rather than by transfer

  If that doesn't work Cash or a physical card at a card terminal.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- By rule in force since 1 February 2026, businesses that take payment in person must accept RMB cash and keep reasonable change; self-service setups must post a way to pay in cash.
  1. Offer RMB notes
  2. If refused, point out that cash is legal tender
  3. Keep a receipt or photo; you can report it to the local People's Bank of China branch

  If that doesn't work Pay another way, keep the evidence, and report the refusal to the local People's Bank of China branch.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- Large shopping areas, scenic areas, museums, hotels, transport hubs and hospitals above a set size must be equipped to take mobile payment, bank cards and cash.
  1. At these places, ask to pay by card (look for the Visa, Mastercard or UnionPay signs) if the wallet fails
  2. Or pay in cash

  If that doesn't work Withdraw RMB at a Bank of China ATM and pay in cash.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- Foreign Visa, Mastercard, UnionPay, JCB and Amex cards can withdraw RMB at any networked Bank of China ATM, 24 hours a day; which transactions work depends on your card issuer.
  1. Look for the card-network logos on the ATM
  2. Withdraw RMB
  3. If the machine keeps your card, keep the slip it prints and call Bank of China on 95566

  If that doesn't work Exchange foreign cash at a Bank of China branch with your passport.

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- Bank of China branches exchange 38 foreign currencies into RMB; small amounts need only your passport, no account. Authorised exchange desks at hotels and airports take up to 10,000 RMB per person per day.
  1. Bring your passport and foreign banknotes to a Bank of China branch or an airport or hotel exchange desk
  2. Ask for some small notes for taxis and stalls

  If that doesn't work Use a currency exchange machine at the airport or a Bank of China ATM with your card.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- Bank of China accepts UnionPay, Visa, Mastercard, American Express, JCB and Diners cards at its card terminals, by tap, chip or swipe, where the acceptance sign is shown.
  1. Bring two cards on different networks and keep one apart from your phone
  2. At places showing the card signs, pay by tap or chip if the wallet fails

  If that doesn't work Cash from a Bank of China ATM.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

When a hotel won't take a foreign guest

- Any hotel in China registers foreign guests itself at check-in and reports it to the local police; you just show your passport.
  1. Show your passport at the front desk
  2. The hotel completes the registration

  If that doesn't work If the desk is unsure how to register you, call the immigration hotline 12367 (Chinese and English, 24 hours) for guidance.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- Local authorities and booking platforms should not use licence or other qualification requirements to stop hotels from taking foreign guests, and neither platforms nor hotels should post notices that they do not take foreign guests.
  1. Book through a platform; a listing closed to foreign guests goes against the 2024 national notice
  2. If a desk says it lacks a licence for foreign guests, mention that the notice says licence requirements should not keep foreign guests out, and ask them to register you

  If that doesn't work Book another hotel nearby and report the refusal to 12367.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- The immigration hotline 12367 answers in Chinese and English, 24 hours a day, and takes policy questions, enquiries and complaints, including about hotel stays.
  1. From a phone in China, dial 12367 and ask for English
  2. Say which hotel refused you and where
  3. Meanwhile book another hotel nearby

  If that doesn't work Book another hotel nearby.

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- Staying in a private home or rental rather than a hotel, you or your host must register with the local police within 24 hours of arrival; since 21 September 2026 this can be done online anywhere in China.
  1. Ask your host to register you in the NIA 12367 app, WeChat or Alipay mini program, or the NIA website - the first time, the host does it
  2. Or go together to the local police station
  3. Keep the registration record in the app

  If that doesn't work Call 12367 for help, or visit the local police station or exit-entry office.

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Taxis, and when none comes

- Licensed taxis must run the meter and offer a printed receipt; national rules let you decline to pay if the driver will not use the meter or will not give a receipt.
  1. Check the meter is running as you set off
  2. At the end pay what the meter shows, plus any road toll
  3. Ask for the printed receipt and keep it until you have checked you left nothing in the car

  If that doesn't work If a driver names a fixed price before you leave, step out and take the next taxi or book a ride in the DiDi app

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- Drivers may not refuse a ride once they know where you are going, haggle over the price, or take a detour; the route should be a reasonable one to the address you give.
  1. Show the destination written in Chinese
  2. If the driver quotes a price instead of using the meter, say 'da biao' (use the meter) or take the next taxi

  If that doesn't work Note the plate number and report it on 12328, the transport service line

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source

- At airports, railway stations, coach stations and ports, taxis queue at a marked rank and follow a dispatcher; drivers are not allowed to pick up outside the designated area.
  1. Follow the Taxi signs to the rank
  2. Join the queue and take the car the dispatcher sends
  3. Say no to anyone who offers a car inside the hall or at the exit

  If that doesn't work If the queue is long, use the metro, airport bus or the ride-hailing pick-up area the airport signposts

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- A licensed taxi has a roof light reading 'TAXI' in Chinese and English, a sign showing whether it is free, and its fares, passenger notice, company name and complaint number posted inside.
  1. Wave down a taxi whose sign shows it is free (空车)
  2. Before you get in, check the roof light and the fare card on the window

  If that doesn't work If no taxi stops, book one in the DiDi app, which also dispatches street taxis

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- 12328 is the transport service and complaints line; city transport bureaus point passengers to it for taxis that will not use the meter, overcharge, haggle or refuse a ride.
  1. Keep the receipt or note the plate number, time and route
  2. Call 12328, or ask your hotel's front desk to call for you

  If that doesn't work The taxi company's name and service number are posted inside the car; note them with the plate number and call that number

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- For a ride to a remote area, or out of the city at night, a driver may ask you to come with them to register at the nearest relevant office, and may decline the trip if you do not.
  1. For a late or out-of-town trip, book through the DiDi app or ask your hotel to arrange the car
  2. Carry your passport

  If that doesn't work If no driver will take the trip, ask your hotel's front desk to book a car for you, or stay the night and travel in the morning

  ✓ Checked Wed, Oct 7, 2026 · source
- DiDi China, DiDi's app for the Chinese mainland, has an English version: you can register with your own mobile number, message drivers with English-Chinese translation, choose payment options that include international bank cards, and reach English customer service in the app around the clock.
  1. Install DiDi China before you fly and register with your own mobile number
  2. Add a payment method in the app; the options include international bank cards
  3. To book, enter the destination and wait at the pick-up point the app shows

  If that doesn't work If DiDi will not take your card, a taxi from the rank or the street takes cash

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Help in Chinese: cards to show

您好，这是一位外国游客的中国行程册。

WHAT TO SHOW

Checking in at a hotel or guesthouse

Your phone payment will not go through at a shop or stall

You need someone to make one short call for you

At a train or metro gate with a passport, not a Chinese ID

Where I'm going in Dunhuang (3 cards)

Emergency

Checking in at a hotel or guesthouse

酒店入住

您好，我有预订，姓名是 _____。这是我的护照。麻烦您帮我办理住宿登记，谢谢！
your name

Your phone payment will not go through at a shop or stall

可以用现金吗

您好，我的手机付不了钱，可以用现金吗？或者能麻烦您用自己的手机代我付，我把现金给您吗？谢谢！

You need someone to make one short call for you

请帮我打个电话

您好，能麻烦您帮我打个电话吗？号码是 _____，就说：_____。太感谢了！
phone number　what to say

At a train or metro gate with a passport, not a Chinese ID

人工通道

您好，我用护照买的车票，闸机刷不了。麻烦您带我走人工通道检票。谢谢！

Emergency numbers in China

110	Police	Danger to you or others, or a crime in progress
120	Ambulance	Medical emergency
119	Fire	Fire
122	Traffic accident	Road accident
12345	City service hotline	Public services and complaints including tourism
12367	Immigration service	Visa and entry-stay questions; English spoken
12328	Transport hotline	Taxi or ride-hail dispute or overcharging

这是这位游客在 chinamapbook.com 做的行程册。感谢您的帮助！

Point to where you want to go

Each card asks, in Chinese, for directions or a ride to that one place. Find the one you need and point to it.

DUNHUANG 敦煌

← Dunhuang

Sight · Mogao Caves

您好，我是外国游客，我想去

莫高窟

您能帮我叫辆车或者指一下路吗？谢谢！

Sight · Crescent Lake

您好，我是外国游客，我想去

月牙泉

您能帮我叫辆车或者指一下路吗？谢谢！

Sight · Yulin Caves

您好，我是外国游客，我想去

榆林窟

您能帮我叫辆车或者指一下路吗？谢谢！

THINGS I DON’T WANT TO FORGET

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