



📍 Learn more ▶ Information Vault ▶ Being seen in China ▶ Chinese telephones and mobiles

Chinese telephones and mobiles

In China, office desk phones are increasingly rare in small and medium businesses. Mobile-first communication — often inside social media apps — is the normal way people call and message.

For overseas businesses and travellers, the key is to plan for mobile connectivity, validate contacts carefully, and understand building-level telecom arrangements when renting offices.



Foundation Being seen in China articles

Discovery Being found in China article

Execution Start trading in China articles

Focus: telecoms + mobility

Audience: overseas businesses

Last modified: v5.1 – 16 October 2026

Why this matters

Telephone and mobile services in China are modern, low cost, and widely available. However, the way Chinese people and businesses use voice and data differs from many overseas markets — especially the shift to mobile calling inside social platforms.

Practical takeaway: Plan for mobile-first communication in China. Assume that voice, messaging, and “calling” may happen inside apps like WeChat and depend on reliable data/Wi-Fi.

Desk telephones vs mobiles

- Most small and medium businesses no longer rely on desk phones.
- Large companies may still operate desk telephone systems, often as part of a broader PBX/enterprise setup.
- Mobile numbers are the primary “business identity” for many people.

Calling over social media

Mobile calls are increasingly made over social media platforms such as WeChat. This works well with good local Wi-Fi or mobile data, but international connectivity can slow during peak periods.

This affects calls that depend on international routing or overseas services. One day a connection can be excellent and the next week it can perform poorly.

Validating contacts and company identity

The shift to mobile and mixed communications can create practical issues:

- It may be difficult to confirm which company a person works for using only an email address or a phone number.
- People may use personal numbers and accounts for business communication.
- Many businesses use multiple channels at once (email + WeChat + phone).

Note: For important business decisions, validate identity using multiple signals (company website, official email domain, invoice details, and trusted introductions).

Office buildings and telecom commitments

Many older commercial buildings already have telephone systems installed. If you rent an office in China, it is important to understand:

- Whether you are required to use the building’s telecom provider.



Quick checklist

Use this checklist when travelling or setting up operations in China.

- Do you have reliable mobile data in China (local SIM, travel SIM, or eSIM)?
- Have you tested calling and messaging inside China networks?
- Do you have WeChat set up (common for voice + messaging)?
- Do you avoid relying on overseas VoIP without testing?
- If renting an office, do you understand the building’s telecom requirements and costs?
- Do you have a method to validate contacts (company identity, email domain, official channels)?
- Have you planned for translation support when needed?

Note: For time-critical communication, always plan a backup channel (mobile data + Wi-Fi + alternative operator).

- The cost and process for installing and using an internet connection.
- That Chinese commercial buildings may have the right to supply telephone services.

Need help?

If you want help planning telecoms and mobile access for China travel or business operations, contact support@accesstochina.com

VoIP in China

Voice over IP (VoIP) is widespread and cost-effective in China. Chinese VoIP services often support calls to and from overseas and mobiles.

Some overseas VoIP systems may work in China, but inbound international traffic can be erratic. Test real performance rather than relying on assumptions.

Telephone support services

China has many telephone support services available, including:

- **Telephone translation support:** call centre support for translation while travelling or doing business.
- **Customer support:** first-line support for your customers.
- **Sales lines** and lead handling.
- **Reception services** and call answering.

Almost all services that can be purchased overseas are also available in China.

Working with major telecom operators

If you have business operations in China, review telecom requirements directly with major operators such as China Telecom or China Unicom.

China Mobile services

Chinese mobile services are leading the world in quantity, coverage, and usage.

- Most people have a modern mobile, and many devices are Chinese brands.
- Most offices, shops, hotels, and restaurants provide Wi-Fi (often accessed via SMS or social login).
- Internet data costs are much cheaper (your reference: approximately US\$0.50 per GB), depending on plan and provider.

Many shops and venues offer promotions if you share your mobile number or social media account. Social media and SMS are often the most effective marketing methods.

Using an overseas mobile in China

Having internet access on your mobile in China is valuable for travel information and support in unfamiliar situations (translation, maps, and day-to-day navigation).

Using an overseas SIM card is not recommended because roaming can be very expensive depending on your plan.

Recommendation: Consider an international SIM card (or travel eSIM) with low China data rates, and forward your overseas number to the travel SIM while you are in China.

Related: Messaging in China

Related: Emailing in China

 [Test a web page from China](#)

 [Download "Chinese telephone and mobile" paper \(PDF\)](#)

[Access to China — Chinese telephones and mobiles: practical guidance for business and travel.](#)

Last modified: v5.1 – 16 October 2026

Written by Peter Heather

Hits: 16,046