



Shipping to the Chinese consumer

Consumer shipping into China is possible, but predictable delivery depends on customs clearance, duties, and an end-to-end process.

This page summarises UK→China shipping times and explains how Chinese e-Malls use clearing centres to manage customs and tracking.

SHIPPING TO AND FROM CHINA

Air, Sea and Rail – Connecting China to the World

FROM WORLD



AIR FREIGHT

Fast & reliable
Ideal for high value
and urgent goods



SEA FREIGHT

Cost-effective
Ideal for large volume
and bulk cargo



RAIL FREIGHT

Efficient & stable
Good balance of speed
and cost



TO WORLD



AIR FREIGHT

Global reach
Fast delivery
worldwide



SEA FREIGHT

Worldwide shipping
Flexible & scalable
solutions



RAIL FREIGHT

Connecting Asia
and Europe
via China



GLOBAL NETWORK

Connect to 200+ countries
and regions



RELIABLE & SAFE

Secure transportation
and cargo protection



FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

Choose the best solution
for your needs



COMPETITIVE COSTS

Optimized routes
and best value



END-TO-END SERVICE

From pickup to delivery
door-to-door



MOVING YOUR BUSINESS FORWARD

Efficient. Reliable. Connected.

Foundation Being seen in China articles

Discovery Being found in China article

Execution Start trading in China articles

Focus: shipping + customs

Audience: overseas businesses

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Shipping times from the UK

Typical shipping times to China (from the UK) are:

- Airmail - 5 to 7 days
- Air freight - 5 to 7 days
- Train (EU) - 3 weeks
- Sea freight EU - 5 weeks
- Shipment to Chinese consumers is by airmail/air freight.

Shipment to Chinese consumers is usually by airmail or air freight.

Practical takeaway: For consumer parcels, plan around 1 week by air, or ~15 days end-to-end on many Chinese e-Mall cross-border flows.

Shipping into China vs shipping from China

Shipping goods to China is less established than shipping goods from China. A key exception is the cross-border services offered by Chinese e-Malls such as Tmall, Taobao, and JD.

Practical takeaway: If you want predictable consumer delivery, learn from the e-Mall model (clearing centres + tracked app experience).

How Chinese e-Malls handle overseas purchases

Chinese e-Malls often use a standard process for overseas purchases:

1. Goods are ordered/purchased from overseas
2. Goods are dispatched to China to a central clearing centre (e.g., Hangzhou for Taobao / Tmall)
3. Goods clear customs; duties and local taxes are paid
4. Goods are dispatched to the consumer in China
5. If goods are returned, they go back to the clearing centre; forwarding depends on the seller's instructions

Once goods arrive at the clearing centre in China, the consumer can track the shipment process in the e-Mall mobile apps.

Typical delivery time shown on e-Mall sites for international goods is around 15 days.

Practical takeaway: Clearing-centre workflows reduce friction: the consumer gets app tracking, and customs/taxes are handled centrally.

Central clearing centres and customs pre-registration

Clearing centres are often located in specific zones within major cities. In these zones, Chinese Customs can offer fast clearance for imported goods by pre-registering products with Customs.

Customs may issue clearance labels for each product line, allowing packages to be scanned and imports recorded against a customs account. This enables Customs to track imports and collect duties and local taxes efficiently.

Practical takeaway: If you scale beyond occasional parcels, investigate pre-registration and clearance labels to reduce delays.



Use these checks before shipping to Chinese consumers.

Quick checklist

Use these checks to keep trust and usability high.

- Have you decided whether you'll ship individual parcels or use an e-Mall clearing-centre route?
- Have you clarified who pays duties/taxes (you or the customer) and how it's communicated?
- Do you have reliable tracking that works on mobile (and ideally inside China)?
- Have you planned returns: where do they go and who pays for return shipping?
- Have you compared air vs rail vs sea for cost vs urgency (even if you'll ship by air)?

Note: "Looking Chinese" is not the goal. Trust comes from consistency, authenticity, and a smooth mobile experience.

Need help?

If you'd like help improving mobile usability and China accessibility while keeping an authentic overseas brand feel, contact support@accesstochina.com

Pricing, duties, and customer expectations

Anyone can send a package to a Chinese consumer from outside China, and Chinese consumers often purchase goods from overseas websites.

However, postage, customs clearance, and fees can arise. These are typically paid directly by Chinese consumers.

Many products on Chinese e-Malls are sold at a net price to consumers. Because the process is structured, calculating suppliers' net costs can be straightforward.

Practical takeaway: Be clear at checkout: who pays duties/taxes, and what happens if customs requests extra information.

Recommendations

Talk to your local shipping / postal services providers. Use the e-Mall process as your checklist.

We will update this webpage as new shipping services become available.

We also recommend you avoid storing stock overseas in China. If goods do not sell, you must arrange return shipments which can cause damage, delays, and extra cost.

Practical takeaway: Treat returns as the 'hidden cost'—design your process before you ship stock.

 [Test a web page from China](#)

 [Download "Shipping to the Chinese consumer" paper \(PDF\)](#)

[Access to China — Shipping to the Chinese consumer](#)

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