

# China Driving: The 7 "Insider" Truths

What Google Maps and AI won't tell you about surviving the Chinese road.

## 1. **SECRET** The "Airport Kiosk" Shortcut

Most blogs tell you to visit a "City Vehicle Management Office." **Don't.** It takes hours. Major hubs like Beijing PEK, Shanghai PVG, and Chengdu TFU now have 24/7 automated kiosks or dedicated police counters *inside the terminal*. You can get your 90-day temporary permit in 20 minutes before you even pick up your rental car.

## 2. **SECRET** The "Google Maps Offset" Trap

Due to the GCJ-02 coordinate system, Google Maps in China is often shifted by 50-500 meters. **AI will suggest using a VPN, but that doesn't fix the map shift.** You must use **Amap (高德地图)**.

**Pro Tip:** You don't need to read Chinese. Use the "Camera" icon in Amap to see real-time lane guidance visuals.

## 3. **SECRET** The "Right Turn on Red" Nuance

In China, you can turn right on a circular red light unless there is a specific **Red Arrow** pointing right. However, if there is a "Social Credit" camera above, and you don't come to a *full 3-second stop* before turning, you may trigger an automatic fine for the rental agency to bill you later.

## 4. **SECRET** Fueling is Now App-Based

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At many Sinopec stations, you cannot just pay the attendant. You often need to scan a QR code. **The Hack:** Use the "Alipay" search bar and type "Sinopec" (中石化). You can often pay via the mini-program directly with your international credit card, bypassing the need for a local fuel card.

## 5. **SECRET** High-Beam Etiquette

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In the West, flashing high beams is often a polite "Go ahead." In China, it almost always means **"I am coming through, do not move."** If you see a car flashing you while merging, they are not giving way—they are claiming it.

## 6. **SECRET** The "ETC" Lane Penalty

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Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) is everywhere. If your rental car doesn't have an OBU device and you accidentally enter the ETC lane, **do not reverse.** Wait for the attendant. Reversing on a highway entry is an automatic 12-point deduction (license revocation) if caught by the overhead AI cameras.

## 7. **SECRET** Parking "Valets"

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In older parts of cities, men in high-vis vests will point you to a curb. They aren't official government employees, but they "manage" the spot. Pay the 10-20 RMB via Alipay. It's a "peace of mind" fee to ensure your rental doesn't get a mysterious scratch or a real police ticket.

### Ready for the full experience?

Get our *Master Guide to China Self-Drive* including translated traffic signs and emergency contact templates at [chinadrivingguide.com](https://chinadrivingguide.com).