

# Useful Phrases

你好  
HELLO





# Speaking the language

Cantonese has been a culturally significant language for centuries, notably producing Cantonese opera, which dates back to the Song Dynasty of the 13th century. More recently, the language reasserted itself in the Chinese-speaking world through the frenzied activity of Hong Kong's film industry, which trailed only Hollywood and Bollywood in movie output for much of the 1970s and 1980s. Later, Cantonese kept up its influence with the rise of Cantopop songs that ruled the roost across China for much of the 1990s.

Some 60 million people in China claim Cantonese as their mother tongue – roughly the same number of people worldwide whose first language is Italian. Despite this vast user base, many Cantonese perceive their language as under threat. Since 1955 China has promoted Putonghua (common speech Mandarin) as its *lingua franca*.

This has led to some sensitivity in Hong Kong where there was little interest in speaking Putonghua before the territory was returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Now Putonghua has overtaken English as the second-most spoken language, although Cantonese remains dominant in daily conversation, the media and local commerce.

There's unease in Guangdong too, where the massive

influx of migrant workers from other parts of China has seen Cantonese become a secondary language to Putonghua in some cities, such as Shenzhen. In Guangzhou, however, Cantonese has better maintained its dominance, leading to protests when efforts were made to replace Cantonese-language television with programming in Putonghua. This preservation of local Cantonese culture and language is one of the things that makes Guangzhou distinct.

However, while differences in spoken Chinese can vary dramatically – depending on whether someone is speaking Putonghua, Cantonese or a dialect – the same is not true of China's writing system. Chinese characters are universally understood. So if you are trying to get a taxi to a key attraction, or even order food, just show the page opposite and point at what you want.



# Point and Go

请带我去。。。。  
Please take me to...

广州塔  
Canton Tower

沙面岛  
Shamian Island

广州大剧院  
Guangzhou Opera House

中山大学，南校区（海珠区，新港西路135号）  
Sun Yat-sen University, Main (South) Campus

天河城（天河区，天河路208路）  
Teemall

太古汇（天河区，天河路383号）  
Taikoo Hui

高德置地广场（天河区，花城大道85号）  
GT Land Plaza

白马服装市场（越秀区，站南路16号）  
Baima

丽柏广场（越秀区，环市东路367号）  
La Perle

我要。。。。  
I would like to eat/drink...

虾饺  
Shrimp dumplings

猪肠粉  
Pork rice noodle rolls

烤乳猪  
Roast suckling pig

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