INDEPENDENT · MADE IN CHINA · TRACKED

HOW TO BUY CHINESE RUNNING SHOES.

ALIEXPRESS · TIKTOK SHOP · TAOBAO + CAINIAO · SUPERBUY

A US buyer's field guide: who the brands are, how to size, and four ways to buy - AliExpress, TikTok Shop, Taobao + Cainiao, or an agent-assisted service such as Superbuy.

QUICK START

WANT THE SIMPLEST ROUTE? AliExpress **WANT DIRECT U.S. SOCIAL CHECKOUT?** TikTok Shop
ALREADY HAVE TAOBAO ACCESS? Taobao + Cainiao **WANT AN AGENT?** Superbuy

Written for runners who commented GUIDE. Updated October 1, 2026. Includes a completed Taobao + Cainiao purchase: the shoes arrived in the original retail shoebox, and the buyer confirmed the size and fit were perfect. Total paid was $107.56, with no additional delivery charges reported. U.S. Taobao app availability and TikTok Shop availability were rechecked for this update; services and rules can change.

I may earn a commission if you buy through some links on 172project.com. You do not pay more.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR First-time US buyers, runners looking for China-only models or colorways, and anyone deciding which checkout to use for one specific purchase.

READ THIS FIRST Choose one purchasing path per order. AliExpress and TikTok Shop offer direct U.S. checkout when the shoe is listed; Taobao + Cainiao uses a China warehouse and a second shipping payment; Superbuy is an agent-assisted alternative. Compare final totals, seller status, return terms and import-charge language. This guide includes one real $107.56 Taobao + Cainiao case study; that price is not a general estimate.

IMPORTANT This guide is for general educational and planning purposes. It is not legal, tax, or customs advice, not a CBP ruling, and not a substitute for the live listing, checkout total, or import treatment of your parcel. Duties, classifications, shipping eligibility, delivery times, seller policies and specs can change by shipment, construction, account and destination. Verify the current listing and live AliExpress, TikTok Shop, Cainiao or Superbuy checkout terms, plus applicable U.S. import rules, before you pay. Brand names are editorial unless a partnership is specifically disclosed. As the buyer, you are the importer of record.

BEFORE YOU BUY

The 172 Project tracks Chinese running shoes for runners outside China - new releases, translated specifications, firsthand testing, and practical ways to buy. This guide covers the part that creates the most confusion: brands, sizing, authenticity, and getting the right shoe from China to the US.

MEET THE BRANDS

Brand	Lane	Look for
Li-Ning 李宁	Premium performance	Feidian, Red Hare. Deep R&D, race-day credibility. Can run short.
ANTA 安踏	Broadest major player	Zone2, C202. Huge group. Easier first Chinese shoe. US site.
Xtep 特步	Running specialist	160X, 2000km. Race, tempo, high-mileage depth.
361°	Performance + value	Flame, Miro, Mega Pro. Competitive prices.
QIAODAN 乔丹体育	Performance value	Feiying PB / Plaid, Leili. Not Jordan Brand.
BMAI 必迈	Smaller running specialist	Jingtan / Turbo. Modern foams, less visibility.
PEAK 匹克	Basketball-first, growing in running	Wave, Taichi running SKUs — not lifestyle.
Do-Win 多威	Track heritage	PB Pro and stripped-down racers. Some run narrow.
ERKE 鸿星尔克	Large domestic sportswear	Judge the exact running model, not the logo.
Dynafish	Viral / emerging	Xiaonian / Danian. Interest is ahead of durability data.

IF YOU ARE NEW Start with Li-Ning, Xtep, ANTA, 361° or QIAODAN. Then explore BMAI, PEAK, Do-Win, ERKE, Dynafish and smaller niche brands once you know the ride and fit you prefer.

USEFUL CHINESE TERMS

Chinese	Meaning	Chinese	Meaning
脚长	foot length	旗舰店 / 官方旗舰店	flagship / official flagship
碳板	carbon plate	缓震	cushioning
支撑 / 稳定	support / stability	竞速	racing / speed
慢跑	easy running	男款 / 女款	men / women

SIZE BY MILLIMETERS

HARD RULE Match 脚长 (foot length) on the listing chart first. Treat US/EU as secondary. Measure both feet at night. Buy to the longer foot.

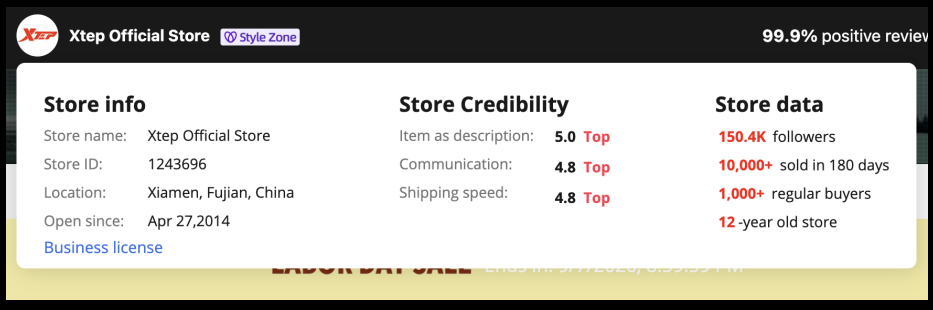
Chinese running lasts can run short or narrow depending on the model, especially some racing shoes. Match foot length on that listing's chart. Do not convert from a generic EU/US table.

OFFICIAL STORE AND AUTHENTICITY

- On Taobao / Tmall look for 旗舰店 or 官方旗舰店 next to the shop name.



- Example Taobao phone screenshot – XTEP Brand Store
- On AliExpress open the store page. Prefer the brand's official storefront.



- Example Aliexpress phone screenshot – XTEP Brand Store
- Confirm the exact model name: Pro vs Ultra vs 5.0 vs 5.5.
- A price far below the official Tmall tag is a reason to verify — last-season, wrong model, or a bad listing — not proof it is fake.

- Official flagship = lowest counterfeit concern, not zero. Third-party sellers: check followers, review score, transaction history and product-specific feedback.

VISUAL CHECK Look for the official-store badge, then compare the exact model name and suffix. Do not rely on the hero photo alone. App screens change; use the live UI.

CHEAP DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN FAKE Domestic China pricing can sit far below US or AliExpress pricing. Focus on the exact SKU, flagship status, store history and listing details.

PICK ONE PATH

Four routes can work. Follow one route for a given order and compare landed cost, not sticker price: AliExpress for broad direct checkout; TikTok Shop for direct U.S. checkout when the shoe is listed; Taobao + Cainiao for China-market access when you already have working Taobao access; or Superbuy for an agent-assisted alternative.

Path	Best for	Skip it when
Path A - AliExpress	First pair, English checkout, broad marketplace selection.	You need China-only stock that is not listed.
Path B - TikTok Shop	Direct U.S. checkout when a brand/model is sold there.	The model, size or seller you want is not available.
Path C - Taobao + Cainiao	Existing Taobao users seeking China-market stock or colorways.	You are starting from zero without working Taobao access.
Path D - Superbuy	Agent-assisted access to supported China marketplace products.	You want fully direct purchase or have not compared total agent + freight cost.

RULE OF THUMB

Compare the same model and size using the final checkout amounts, seller/store status, shipping ETA, import-charge terms and return options. Choose the route that fits your total cost and risk tolerance; do not compare a China domestic shoe price alone with a U.S.-delivered price.

TAOBAO ACCESS NOTE

For U.S. buyers, Path C assumes working Taobao access. The iOS app is unavailable for new U.S. downloads, and a public Google Play page does not guarantee U.S. storefront availability. Confirm on your own device/account; if Taobao is unavailable, use Path A, B or D.

PATH A — ALIEXPRESS

English checkout, your US address and a single marketplace checkout. Read only this section if this is your route. The Taobao + Cainiao case study below does not describe an AliExpress order.

HOW TO BUY

- Search the exact model plus brand. Filter Choice and/or Ship from United States.
- Open the official brand storefront when it exists. Confirm Pro vs Ultra vs 5.0 vs 5.5.
- Match 脚长 on that listing's chart. Do not trust the US size in the title.
- Checkout to your US address with a normal card.
- At AliExpress checkout, inspect the complete order summary and any import-charge language. Do not assume taxes, duties or delivery fees are included merely because a product page shows a price. Save a screenshot of the final terms and total.

- If the order summary explicitly says shipping and applicable import charges are included, record that checkout total as the amount paid and retain the terms. If import charges are excluded or unclear, ask the seller/platform before ordering and budget for possible additional charges.
- Stack store coupons and coins. Recheck the final total — prices move daily.

DUTIES ON THIS PATH

Import-charge treatment varies by listing and shipment. Check the live order summary for whether duties and taxes are included, prepaid, estimated or collected later. Do not apply the Cainiao purchase costs to an AliExpress order.

RETURNS

Usually easier than Taobao after export. Buyer Protection and dispute tools remain available. Photograph the pair on arrival and open a dispute immediately if the model, size or condition is wrong.

ALIEXPRESS CHECKLIST

- Exact model name written down.
- Foot length matched to that listing.
- Official storefront, or a third-party seller with real review volume.
- Choice or Ship from United States checked when available.
- The checkout explicitly states whether import charges are included or may be collected later.

PATH B - TIKTOK SHOP

Direct U.S. checkout when the shoe is listed. Selection changes quickly, so treat TikTok Shop as a live marketplace rather than a complete catalog of Chinese running shoes.

HOW TO BUY

- Search the exact brand + model inside TikTok Shop and open the seller/store page.
- Prefer the brand's official or clearly identified storefront; verify the seller, exact model suffix and listing reviews.
- Confirm the size chart, shipping origin, delivery estimate, return terms and final checkout total before paying.
- Save the order summary. TikTok Shop availability does not mean every Chinese-market model or colorway is offered.

CURRENT EXAMPLE

As of October 1, XtepOfficial has a U.S. TikTok Shop storefront with multiple 2000km-series running shoes. Inventory, pricing and seller status can change; verify the live store before ordering.

PATH C - TAOBAO + CAINIAO

China-market access using a China warehouse and separate international shipping payment. For U.S. buyers, this route now assumes you already have working Taobao access.

U.S. APP AVAILABILITY - OCTOBER 1, 2026

iPhone/iPad: Taobao is currently unavailable for a new download from the U.S. Apple App Store. Storefront monitoring records the U.S. app as unavailable since August 12, 2026.
Android: Taobao still has a public Google Play page, but that does not establish installability from a U.S. Google Play account. U.S. users are reporting that the app may not appear in their Play Store.

IF YOU ALREADY HAVE ACCESS

The workflow on the following pages remains useful and is the route I have personally tested. Existing users may continue to have working access.

IF YOU ARE STARTING FROM ZERO

Use AliExpress, TikTok Shop or an agent-assisted option such as Superbuy instead. Do not assume the Taobao website is a guaranteed workaround; login, browsing and listing access can vary by account and region.

TYPICAL FLOW - FOR USERS WITH WORKING TAOBAO ACCESS Taobao seller -> Cainiao warehouse -> photos -> consolidation -> international transit -> U.S. delivery.

1. SET UP CAINIAO FIRST

Before ordering anything on Taobao, set up Cainiao so you have the correct warehouse address for your purchases.

- Download the Cainiao international consolidation app. Set your region to United States and language to English.
- Log in using the same phone number / Taobao / Alipay account associated with your purchases.
- Select Go Consolidation (or the current equivalent). Cainiao will provide your personal China warehouse address.
- Copy the entire address, including your Cainiao member ID. Your member ID tells the warehouse which incoming package belongs to you.

2. SAVE YOUR CAINIAO ADDRESS IN TAOBAO

Open Taobao and add the Cainiao warehouse as a shipping address. Paste the complete warehouse address you copied from Cainiao and save it as something recognizable, such as Cainiao Warehouse.

- Double-check every field after Taobao separates the address. In particular, make sure your Cainiao member ID has not disappeared from the street-address line.
- You only need to set this up once unless Cainiao changes your warehouse information.

3. FIND AND ORDER YOUR SHOES ON TAOBAO

Shop on Taobao normally. Choose the shoe, color and size you want and proceed to checkout.

- For the delivery address, select your saved Cainiao Warehouse address.
- At this stage, you are paying the seller for the shoe/order. You are not yet paying Cainiao for international shipping to the United States.
- The Taobao seller ships the order domestically within China to your Cainiao warehouse. Use whatever payment method your account actually offers.

4. WAIT FOR CAINIAO TO RECEIVE THE PACKAGE

After the seller ships, Cainiao will receive and scan the parcel into your account. Once processed, the package should appear under To Merge.

- Before doing anything else, check the warehouse information and Inbound Photos. Verify the correct shoe/model, size, color and package condition.
- This is your best opportunity to catch a problem while the shoes are still in China.

5. WAIT FOR ALL ORDERS YOU WANT TO COMBINE

If you bought shoes from multiple Taobao sellers, you do not need to ship each pair internationally as soon as it arrives. Let the other packages reach your Cainiao warehouse.

- As they arrive, they will appear individually under To Merge. Once everything you want in that shipment has arrived and you have checked the inbound photos, select the packages you want to consolidate.
- Multiple domestic Taobao orders can be combined into one international shipment.

Warehouse storage - new policy effective October 1, 2026

Cainiao is reducing free warehouse storage from 90 days to 60 days. The new policy applies to all packages in the warehouse, regardless of when they arrived.

- After 60 days: ¥2 per package per day during normal periods, regardless of package size.
- Peak-season surcharge: October 15 through December 15, packages already over 60 days are charged ¥5 per package per day.
- At 120 days: Cainiao’s disposal process begins; this rule is unchanged.

CONTINUED >

- Packages already in the warehouse before October 1 are handled by actual days in storage. If a package is already over 60 days on October 1, the ¥2/day fee starts October 1 rather than being charged retroactively back to day 61. If it is still under 60 days, the remaining free days continue before the new fee begins.
- 172 PROJECT TIP: Do not use the warehouse for long-term storage. Once the items you want to combine have arrived and you have checked the warehouse photos, consolidate and ship them.

6. REVIEW PACKAGING AND BILLING WEIGHT

Before paying for international shipping, review the package weight and dimensions Cainiao is using to calculate freight.

- Cainiao may offer packaging options such as removing outer packaging or shoeboxes and repacking the shipment.
- Do not automatically remove the shoebox just because the actual weight decreases. International freight can also be affected by package dimensions / volumetric weight. Compare weight, dimensions, freight quote and protection before choosing how you want the shipment packed.
- For running shoes, keeping the original box may be worth the additional cost if the savings from removing it are small.

7. MERGE AND CHOOSE INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING

Select the packages you want shipped together and proceed with Merge / Consolidation.

- Cainiao will show the international shipping services currently available for your shipment and U.S. destination. Compare the live quote, estimated delivery, service description and treatment of import charges rather than relying on a fixed shipping estimate.
- For the completed test order in this guide, the Cainiao checkout displayed a tax-included air option. Service names and availability may change.

8. PAY CAINIAO

This is the second major payment in the process: Taobao covers the shoe purchase; Cainiao covers the international shipment.

- Before paying, check the itemized Cainiao checkout and confirm whether the selected service says taxes/duties are included or whether import charges may be collected separately.
- Pay the amount shown at Cainiao checkout and save a screenshot of the final quote, itemized receipt and service description. Do not assume a duty deposit, refund or later true-up unless your particular checkout says so.
- If combining shoes with apparel, liquids, batteries or other goods, check the service’s item restrictions and price again. A mixed parcel may change shipping eligibility, charges or import treatment.

9. TRACK THE INTERNATIONAL SHIPMENT

After payment, Cainiao prepares the consolidated parcel and sends it internationally.

- Track it directly through Cainiao as it moves through Warehouse → International Transit → U.S. Customs → Local Delivery → Delivered.
- Use Cainiao’s current tracking and ETA rather than assuming a fixed delivery time.

10. DELIVERY

Once delivered, inspect the package and shoes again.

- For the completed September 2026 test: 361° Mega Pro 3 $64.89 + Cainiao international shipping $42.67 + $0 additional charges at delivery = $107.56 final landed cost.
- The shoes were delivered September 19, 2026 in the original retail shoebox, protected by an outer shipping carton, with no visible damage and no additional payment required at delivery.

11. REAL PURCHASE: TAOBAO + CAINIAO, SEPTEMBER 2026

This is one documented purchase, not a universal rate or a quote for another buyer. A pair of 361° running shoes ordered through Taobao cost $64.89, with a separate $42.67 Cainiao international shipping payment. Cainiao presented the service as tax-included. The shipment cleared US customs and was delivered September 19, 2026. Both shoes arrived inside their original retail shoebox, protected by an outer shipping carton. The buyer confirmed the size and fit were perfect. No additional delivery charges or shipping refund were reported at completion. Total paid: $107.56. The shipping payment was not itemized into freight versus taxes/duties, so no separate duty amount can be inferred.

Actual cost / status	Amount	What this means
Shoes purchased on Taobao	$64.89	Actual shoe payment
Cainiao international shipping	$42.67	Actual second payment; tax-included option shown
Total delivered cost	$107.56	Shoes + Cainiao shipping; delivery confirmed
Additional delivery charges	$0 reported	No extra charge reported at delivery, Sept 19
Refund or freight adjustment	$0 reported	No refund or reduction reported
Delivery	Delivered Sept 19	Original shoebox retained; both shoes received; size and fit confirmed perfect

This single tax-included Cainiao shipment was delivered September 19, 2026, with no additional delivery charge reported. The original shoebox was retained and the buyer confirmed the size and fit were perfect. The $42.67 shipping payment was not broken down here into freight versus taxes/duties, so no separate duty rate or refund can be inferred. Other products, service levels, destinations and dates may have different charges. Confirm your own live checkout terms and save your receipts.

12. RETURNS ON THIS PATH

Manageable while the pair is still in the China warehouse. After export, returns are very difficult and expensive. Use this path when you know your size.

TAOBAO + CAINIAO CHECKLIST

- Cainiao warehouse address saved in Taobao. Member ID intact.
- Exact model name written down. 脚长 matched.
- Official flagship store.
- Check optional box removal, billed weight and available shipping services; select only after reviewing the live quote and terms.
- Save the Cainiao shipping receipt, tax-inclusion language and tracking; check for any later charge or refund.
- Warehouse storage clock checked; consolidate well before the 60-day free-storage limit.

PATH D - SUPERBUY

ALTERNATIVE BUYING OPTION - NOT YET TESTED BY THE 172 PROJECT

If accessing or navigating Taobao directly is difficult, Superbuy provides an agent-assisted route to products sold on Chinese marketplaces. Instead of placing the Taobao order yourself, you give Superbuy the product listing and Superbuy purchases it from the seller on your behalf.

The basic idea

Superbuy combines the purchasing-agent and forwarding steps into one service: you identify the shoe, Superbuy buys it, the seller sends it to Superbuy's China warehouse, Superbuy photographs and stores it, and you later create an international parcel for shipment to the United States.

1. Find the shoe

Find the model you want on Taobao, Tmall, JD or another marketplace supported by Superbuy. You can paste a Taobao or Tmall product link into Superbuy; its current guidance says the app can recognize supported marketplace links and open the corresponding shopping-agent page.

2. Select the exact item

Choose the model, color, size and quantity shown in Superbuy. Check the translated listing carefully against the original seller page before submitting the order.

3. Pay for the product

Pay Superbuy for the item and any China domestic delivery charge. Superbuy's current guidance describes the shopping-agent process as two payment stages: first the product/domestic-shipping stage, then international shipping after the item reaches the warehouse.

4. Superbuy purchases from the seller

Superbuy places the order with the Chinese seller on your behalf. The seller then ships the item domestically to Superbuy's warehouse rather than to your U.S. address.

5. Warehouse receipt + inspection

When the item arrives, Superbuy checks it into the warehouse and provides QC/inspection photos. Review those photos before international shipment. Confirm the model, color, size and visible condition while the shoe is still in China.

6. Wait and consolidate if desired

If you are buying more than one pair or ordering from multiple sellers, you can wait for the other items to arrive and combine them into one international parcel. Superbuy currently advertises free QC photos, consolidation and up to 90 days of warehouse storage; verify the live policy before relying on those terms.

7. Choose packaging and international shipping

Submit the items you want shipped, review packaging options, and compare the international routes offered for your U.S. destination. Look at the live freight quote, estimated delivery time, package weight/dimensions, customs/tax treatment and any optional services before paying.

8. Pay international freight

This is the second major payment. International freight and optional value-added services are separate from the original product payment. Save the final quote and shipping terms just as you would with Cainiao.

9. Track and receive the parcel

After Superbuy dispatches the parcel, track it through the international route until delivery. Inspect the shoes again when they arrive and keep the order, warehouse and shipping records until you are satisfied with the purchase.

WHY SOME U.S. BUYERS MAY PREFER IT

Superbuy removes much of the direct-Taobao setup friction. You can still access Taobao products without having to complete the purchase inside Taobao yourself, manually route the order to your Cainiao warehouse, and then return to Cainiao to create the international shipment.

THE TRADEOFF

You are adding an intermediary between yourself and the original seller. International freight and optional services still affect the landed cost, and returns become more difficult after export. Compare the complete delivered cost - not just the China-market product price - against AliExpress, TikTok Shop and the direct Taobao + Cainiao route.

FIRSTHAND STATUS

The 172 Project has not yet completed a Superbuy shoe purchase. This section is included as an alternative route based on Superbuy's published process, not as a firsthand cost, delivery-time or service-quality test. The Taobao + Cainiao route in this guide is the route I have personally completed and documented.

SUPERBUY FLOW

FIND SHOE -> PASTE/SEARCH IN SUPERBUY -> SELECT SIZE/COLOR -> PAY FOR PRODUCT -> SUPERBUY PURCHASES -> WAREHOUSE + QC PHOTOS -> CONSOLIDATE IF DESIRED -> CHOOSE INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING -> PAY FREIGHT -> DELIVERY

Sources checked October 1, 2026: U.S. XtepOfficial TikTok Shop storefront, U.S. Taobao storefront availability/public Google Play listing, and official Superbuy shopping-agent guidance. Inventory, app availability, fees, storage terms and shipping services can change; verify the live terms before ordering.

AFTER IT LANDS — ALL PATHS

- Photograph the pair on arrival before the first run.
- First run: easy 3–5 miles on a known loop. Not race day.
- Hot spots in the first 10 miles are a possible last/fit warning, not something to run through.

KEEP GOING

LIVE LINKS + CURRENT PICKS Prices, inventory, service terms and shipping change. Use the live site for current shoe information and buying links. 172project.com/guide I may earn a commission from some links. Partnerships are disclosed where applicable.