



Quintessential Shanghai

China's financial hub and cultural capital allures at every turn.

BY JENNIFER BRADLEY FRANKLIN

Shanghai is a city of superlatives — no small feat in the world's most populous country — and descriptors like “complex,” “futuristic” and “a collision of old and new” spring to mind after even a brief sojourn. The “City on the Sea” sprang to life as a small fishing village during the Qing dynasty, but after the first Opium War ended in 1842, the British named Shanghai a treaty port and its growth exploded. The city was carved up into international settlements called “concessions” in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with many areas retaining some character and architecture of their once-ruling countries.

While walking the streets of Shanghai, don't be surprised to find a centuries-old *shikumen*-style building next to an ultra-modern structure.

THE SIGHTS

Get the lay of the land by touring the **Oriental Pearl TV Tower**, one of the city's most recognizable buildings. The “VIP tour,” lead by a guide clad in a trippy, '60s-era astronaut costume, allows you to skip the often massive lines. From (nearly) the top at 1,150 feet, you'll have a 360-degree view from the glass-floored observation deck.

If you have time to take in only one cultural experience, a walk on **The Bund** is it. The approximately 1-mile span on the west bank

of the Huangpu River has been called “a museum of international architecture,” since visitors can observe building styles including Renaissance, Gothic, Baroque, Romanesque and Classic. Early risers can watch locals practicing tai chi at sunrise, and night owls will enjoy a view of the illuminated Pudong skyline across the river.

For a deeper dive into Shanghai's history, visit the **Shanghai Museum**. With more than 120,000 artifacts including calligraphy, jade, ceramics, ancient coins, paintings and furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties, a visit can feel a bit overwhelming. Though the museum was founded in 1952, it moved to its new sleek, Xing Tonghe-designed building

in 1996 and the structure itself—shaped like a *ding*, or an ancient bronze cooking vessel—is a work of art. For those with more specialized interests, the **Shanghai Film Museum** is a must for anyone interested in the golden age of Chinese filmmaking. Located south of the Xujiahui district in a former film studio, its 70 interactive exhibits spread over four floors are sure to engage both film and history buffs.

Perhaps surprisingly, even in the middle of a city of more than 24 million residents, plenty of serenity exists. Visit the lush **Yu Garden's** winding paths full of traditional Chinese architecture, halls, pavilions, koi ponds and stone dragons. Continue your cultural odyssey at the even older **Jing'an Temple** (literally “Temple of Peace and Tranquility”), built in 247 A.D. A giant Buddha, which is nearly 30 feet high and comprised of 15 tons of silver, is the centerpiece of the working temple, home to monks who meditate and pray within the serene walls.

Sometimes it's nice to observe pulsing city life from a distance. In that case, see the glittering skyline from above with a classic cocktail at **JW Marriott Shanghai Changfeng Park's** Panorama Bar. The views offer near-endless points of interest, since the city's sprawl shows no sign of slowing.

SHOPPER'S PARADISE

Spend any time on **Nanjing Road**, and you'll know that the Shanghainese have raised shopping to an art form. There, designer aficionados can get their fix with internationally coveted brands including Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Chanel and Celine in both stand-alone stores and massive multilevel shopping malls. If you're staying at the **JW Marriott Shanghai at Tomorrow Square**, step out of the hotel and you're already right on China's busiest shopping street. While wandering, pop into **10 Corso Como**, the brainchild of Italian fashion maven Carla Sozzani. In its multifunctional concept store, you'll find men's and women's clothing, books, makeup, home decor and an in-house tailor to make sure your purchases fit perfectly. For a more local experience with a beloved Chinese designer, visit **Uma Wang's** flagship

boutique in Shanghai's Xintiandi neighborhood, where you can shop her signature women's looks featuring contemporary draping and textures. To walk and shop at a less frenetic pace, wander the streets of **Tianzifang**, a shopping enclave in the former French Concession. Though still bustling, there you'll find independent boutiques, art galleries, restaurants and more.

THE FLAVORS

Locals and tourists alike flock to **Din Tai Fung** (multiple locations around the city) for *xiao long bao*, the tender soup-filled dumplings that are arguably Shanghai's most famous culinary contribution. Sure, the menu is filled with other tasty, shareable dishes like shrimp and pork shao mai and tender pork buns, but the soup dumplings are the primary draw.

Make reservations at **Old Jesse** restaurant in the former French Concession, and ask your trusty concierge to help pre-order dishes like *Cōngkǎo yútóu* (braised fish covered in fried spring onions) and *hóngshāo tí pàng* (red-braised pork shank), since many of the most popular menu items sell out. Don't miss

the *xin tai ruan*, red dates stuffed with glutinous rice flour, for dessert.

Tea is available just about everywhere in China, but at **Wan Ling Tea House**, you can have a tasting and a little education, with traditional Chinese tea ceremony demonstrations and workshops. After you've found your perfect brew, choose your favorite to take home, as well as all the pots, trays, cups and utensils you'll ever need.

Tucked into the Tianzifang neighborhood, **Kommune Cafe** serves fresh smoothies, pressed juices, breakfast, sandwiches, cocktails and coffee with a side of kitsch. It's a popular spot for local artists and traveling hipsters who flock to the shaded patio and small indoor dining room for flat whites, lattes and tea drinks.

COMING SOON

The ultra luxe **JW Marriott Marquis Shanghai Pudong** will be opening in 2019 with 515 rooms and suites. No matter your style of travel, interests or tastes, Shanghai certainly has something to suit. □



Clockwise from top left: Shanghai Yu Yuan Gardens, Din Tai Fung, JW Marriott Shanghai at Tomorrow Square.