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Front Page | Community | How To | News | **Places** | Archives



Front Page [Places](#) [Shanghai: The Best of The Bund](#)



## Shanghai: The Best of The Bund

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Running along the west bank of the Huangpu River, The Bund is a short strip of land with a long history. Its stately architecture and incredible views make it the undisputed symbol of the city and the place to start any exploration of Shanghai.

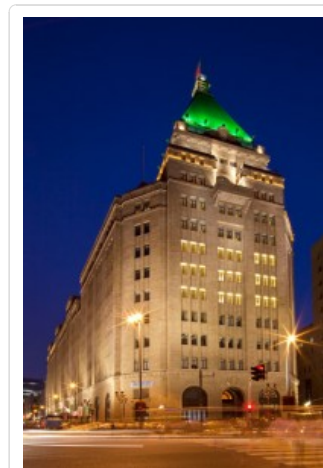
Since its beginnings as an international settlement in the late 19th Century, the area has been through a lot of changes, but The Bund has recently recovered its former glory in full. When Shanghai hosted World EXPO in 2010, the spotlight on the city prompted extensive renovations, making it a world class destination once again.

### Look!

Essentially, The Bund is all about the buildings: Neo-Classical, Gothic and Art Deco structures that transport you to another era, to days of decadence. Now that traffic lanes have been reduced out front and the promenade has been widened, you can really take the in the whole scene. However, some structures definitely warrant a closer look:

#### Peace Hotel (20, The Bund)

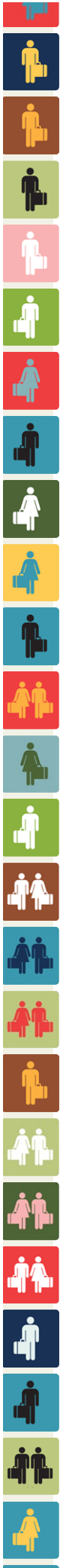
An Art Deco marvel, the newly reopened [Peace Hotel](#) was the toast of the town and *the* high society hangout in the 1930s during its first life as the Cathay Hotel. It's impressive enough from the outside, but whether you're staying or not, don't miss out on the lavishly refurbished interior. Treat yourself to dinner at The Cathay Room and soak up some of that old world grandeur and an unparalleled view over The Bund. And don't miss out on the classic stylings of the septuagenarian six-piece Old Jazz Band in the Jazz Bar.



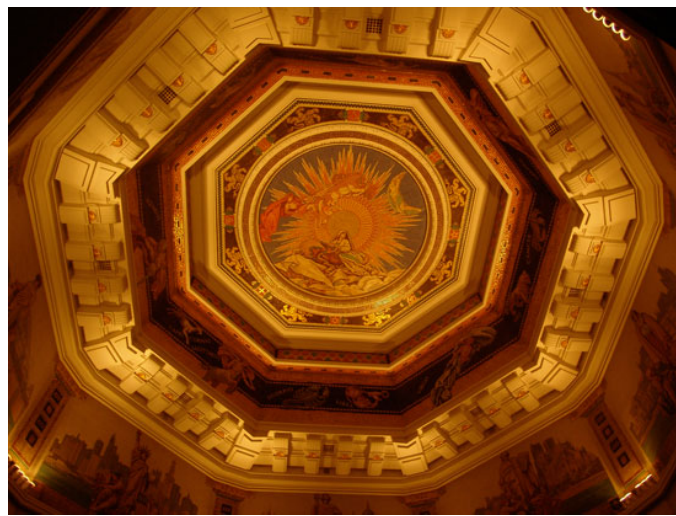
Peace Hotel © Fairmont Hotels

#### HSBC Building (12, The Bund)

This magnificent neo-classical structure, built in 1923 and now home to the Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, held a secret for many years. During the Cultural Revolution,



the original mural mosaics that decorated its domed ceiling disappeared. Cannyly preserved under stucco, they avoided destruction, but weren't restored until 1997. Returned to their former splendour, the mosaics serve as a great reminder of The Bund's (first) glory years. Well worth a peek inside.



HSBC Building Mural by Bryce Edwards on Flickr

### Astor House Hotel (15 Huangpu Road)

Not actually on The Bund but just across the landmark Garden Bridge, the [Astor House Hotel](#) is nevertheless evocative of the same era. The first ever Western-style hotel in China, its story, which begins in 1846, is long and convoluted; it has served as the Shanghai Stock Exchange and more recently as cheap, backpacker-friendly accommodation. Now owned and protected by the government, the building retains tons of original features. Sneak a look at the ballroom and galleries and have a nose through the plaques and photos of the many famous and noble guests the hotel has, or, in the case of Charlie Chaplin, hasn't hosted over the years.

If you want easy, all-in-one sightseeing, a one to three-hour Huangpu River Cruise is the way to go and definitely more illuminating than the Bund Tourist Tunnel.

### Wine and dine

In keeping with its roots as an international settlement, the area around The Bund has some of Shanghai's best European and global cuisine.



M on The Bund by jwalsh on Flickr

[Mr & Mrs Bund](#) is the home of French "culinary egalitarian" chef Paul Pairet, whose extensive mix-and-match style menu has earned him a great reputation. The place for something unique.

For amazing views of the street and across the river to the skyscrapers of Pudong, the terrace at [M on The Bund](#) can't be beaten. The delicious upscale European cuisine brings in the crowd to match, so you may even spot international celebs at

adjacent tables.

If you want a break from the high life and fancy something more down to earth, [The Bund Brewery](#), just off the main strip on Hankou Road, is the place to head. Opened in 1998, it's Shanghai's oldest brewery and the aroma of its own wheat beers and dark lagers welcomes you as soon as you walk in. Unpretentious international platters make up the food menu.