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## Shanghai Surprise

by Catherine Shaw



Historic Bund sees incredible revival

After decades of neglect, Shanghai—renowned as the “Paris of the East” during its heyday in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—is experiencing a dramatic revival. At the center of the quest by the bustling metropolis to be one of the world’s greatest cities is the Bund, a mile-long embanked riverfront, lined with grand stone-fronted neo-classical and beaux art buildings.

These architectural tributes to the international banks and trading companies that once vied for the most grandiose headquarters along the waterfront have become the most striking symbols of modernday Shanghai, thanks to a revival largely led by unprecedented investment on the part of the private and public sectors at the time of the 2010 World Expo.



Salon De Ville

The embankment, which forms the centerpiece of Shanghai’s \$45bn urban makeover, saw a \$700-mn, three-year facelift, as part of which traffic lanes were diverted underground, allowing landscaped public plazas to be created. Anticipating a resurgence of international travel to the city, many of the waterfront’s most distinctive buildings also enjoyed a facelift (some changes more authentic than others) that brought to the area new hotels, chic restaurants and bars, art galleries and stylish boutiques. Here are WIFM’s best new places to stay and dine.

**History, celebrities and modern chic** In its heyday, the original 12-story Cathay Hotel—popular in the 1930s and 1940s, and also known

as the Peace Hotel during the 1950s—was one of the most luxurious hotels in the Far East. It was owned by Sir Victor Sassoon, whose wild parties in the Cathay Ballroom are still the stuff of legends. A favorite of Charlie Chaplin and Noël Coward (who wrote *Private Lives* in the Cathay Suite), the hotel recently underwent restoration for three years, emerging as the Fairmont Peace Hotel.

Happily, although modern indulgences such as flatscreen televisions, Bose iPod docking stations and wireless internet access have been added, the original art deco style has been retained. At the hotel’s entrance, look out for the original stained



glass rotunda that had been covered over for decades.

The Sassoon Presidential Suite, which occupies the entire 10th floor penthouse, offers spectacular views of the Huangpu River and vast marble bathrooms complete with claw-foot baths. The hotel's famous Jazz Club, an institution for decades, remains one of the city's most popular places.

Next door is the Swatch Art Peace Hotel, the old Palace Hotel that once occupied the south building of the Peace Hotel and was famous for hosting important events, such as the International Opium Commission meeting in 1909 that was the first international conference to discuss the world's narcotics problems.



Local expert Spencer Dodginton in Shanghai

The Swatch Art Peace Hotel is an intriguing mix, comprising a contemporary design center and seven modern art-inspired guest suites with interiors by Jouin Manku. The suites are set to redefine the meaning of luxury when they open later this year.



Long Bar

The hotel's innovative concept blends retail, hotel and culture-related facilities with specially designed studio apartments and workshops where artists-in-residence can work, live and exhibit their creative talents. Each artist will leave a "trace" of their work that will become part of the hotel's contemporary art collection.

But, when it comes to truly sophisticated décor, it is hard to beat the Waldorf Astoria Shanghai on the Bund—widely acknowledged as one of the most authentic restorations along the waterfront.

Opened in 1911 as the Shanghai Club, the city's most exclusive gentlemen's club enjoyed fame for its elegant English Renaissance headquarters and legendary 110-ft Long Bar. Now, with 269 rooms and suites—occupying a modern tower connected to an all-suite heritage building—the hotel is a glorious celebration of sumptuous European design with all the modern touches you would expect. The hotel also has one of the city's best-informed concierge services.

Further down the Bund, the Waterhouse at South Bund is a highly inventive blend of boutique hotel and cutting-edge style. The original derelict industrial warehouse in the historic Shiliupu dockyard district was transformed into a stunning, modern, 19-room urban retreat by the Shanghai-based Neri & Hu Design and Research Office. Visit to indulge in the architect's fresh take on blurring internal and external spaces, private and public areas. The three-story lobby is a fascinating mix of steel columns, exposed brick and original unfinished concrete, complete with a paper chandelier by Studio Job for Moooi.

**Smorgasbord of stylish dining and drinking** Although yet to be awarded Michelin stars, Shanghai is a veritable smorgasbord for gourmands. Again, the Bund is the place to go. Although there are plenty of wellknown restaurants, such as M on the Bund (for superb breakfasts) and Jean Georges (for fine French cuisine), the newest additions to the dining scene are set to shake things up.

The latest newcomer, located in the chic Swatch Art Peace Hotel, is appropriately named Shook! It embodies an international dining concept imported from Singapore and led by UK-born chef Kevin Cape, whose culinary skills were honed at London's Connaught Hotel (under Michel Bourdin) and as executive chef with the Eastern & Oriental Express Luxury Train. Try the stirfried prawns and hot mayonnaise sprinkled with honeyglazed walnuts.

The restaurant's wine cellar also offers oenophiles two rare vertical collections of Bordeaux's most famous estates—Chateau Cheval Blanc and Château d'Yquem, with vintages from 1945 through 2008.

The building's roof terrace garden is another mustsee for its panoramic views over the city and domed towers that house intimate restaurant dining spaces for romantic diners.



Waldorf Astoria Club facade

A few steps away, on the 6th floor at Bund 18 is Mr. and Mrs. Bund—an avant-garde French restaurant, run by Paul Pairet, that is as much a draw for peoplewatching as for its "consensual cuisine" (anything a guest wants) and smooth service. This is dining for the innovative: think fine French cuisine with a bold sense of fun. Don't miss the jumbo tiger shrimp steamed in a glass jar with citrus, lemongrass and vanilla.



The Waterhouse's industrial-chic, gastro-bar Table No. 1 has already won a clutch of awards



Waldorf Suite bedroom and reading area

(including the Best Restaurant prize at the Travel + Leisure 2011 Annual Design Awards), and is the perfect place for busy shoppers with its express three-course set meal served in under one hour.

Meanwhile, the Waldorf Astoria's Long Bar retains all of its original charm with classic martinis stylishly mixed at the table, a chic oyster bar and perfectly replicated Waldorf salad. Across the elegant foyer, Pelham's serves up New York favorites and modern American cuisine (such as

the Wagyu New York strip with chickpeas, red Swiss chard and chimichurri), while the hotel's traditional afternoon tea, served in the elegant Salon de Ville, is a must on any itinerary for the addictive Red Velvet Cupcakes: the ideal treat after a long day's shopping.

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