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City Slicker in Shanghai

This Chinese city will host the World Expo next year. And preparations are well under way. Evelyn Chen offers a guide for new and returning visitors

Sunday, 22 November 2009

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Why visit?

Shanghai is gearing up to host the six-month-long World Expo, which opens in the Pudong district in May 2010 – a staggering 70 million visitors are expected, bringing with them around 300bn yuan (£26bn) to spend.

As the deadline approaches, this densely populated city of 20 million is being transformed into an enormous construction site, with major projects including two new airport terminals, subway lines and a £420m renovation of the Bund's historic promenade.

An extra 20,000 rooms will be available by 2010 to cope with the swelling tourist numbers, including the recently opened five-star Peninsula Shanghai, the urban resort PuLi, and The Waterhouse, a boutique offering at South Bund, which is due to open in December. There's also a bumper crop of restaurant openings – including the star-studded Restaurant Martin, by three-Michelin-star Martin Berasategui – which look set to raise the bar even higher in a city that was already gaining an excellent reputation for its dining scene.

Don't miss

*The chance to stroll around the cobbled streets of the waterfront Bund area with Patrick Cranley, co-founder of Historic Shanghai ([historic-shanghai.com](#));

*M50, a hip arts centre set in an old textile mill. It houses more than 120 galleries and art studios ([m50.com.cn/en](#));

*Xintiandi, a modish enclave of upscale dining and shopping with a traditional shikumen facade and slick contemporary interiors;

*A ride on the Maglev, the fastest train in the world, which zips from Longyang Lu Metro to Pudong International Airport within eight adrenaline-pumping minutes;

*Tianzifang at Taikang Lu, an artsy maze of laneways with laid-back, Bohemian cafés and boutiques;

*A visit to Jing An Park at dawn to watch the locals practise tai chi;

*A cruise along the Huangpu river;

*Shanghai Museum, for its collection of 120,000 pieces of prized Chinese art, such as bronze ware, porcelain and paintings ([shanghaimuseum.net](#)); A

*A trip to the French concession streets of Chang Le Lu to pick up a *qi pao* (one of those body-hugging, Mandarin gowns), Xin Le Lu for fashion boutiques, and Julu Lu for ceramics and textiles;

*Yuyuan Garden, a classical Chinese garden complete with Ming Dynasty pavilions, rockeries, ponds and arched bridges;

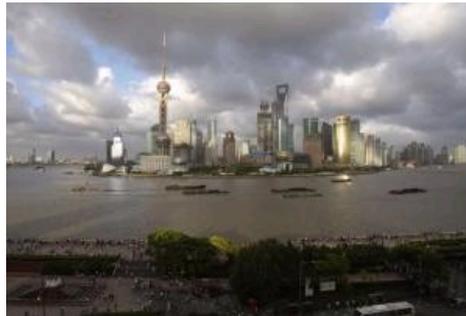
*Dinner at M on the Bund and Three on the Bund, for great food with views of the neon-lit skyline of the Pudong ([m-restaurantgroup.com](#); [threeonthebund.com](#));

*A drink in the world's highest bar, on the 92nd floor of the Park Hyatt Shanghai in the 101-storey Shanghai World Financial Centre ([shanghai.park.hyatt.com](#)).

What's new?

Cool Docks

A mile south of the Bund, Cool Docks is taking the crown from Xintiandi as the hippest place to hang out in the city. Shanghai's newest cultural hotspot centres on a large, open square



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Look to the future: Pudong, the district that will host World Expo, sits in sharp contrast to the old city across the river

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framed by *recherche* bars, restaurants – including chef Stefan Stiller's European gourmet restaurant – fashion and jewellery boutiques. Drop by Zhu Jun, one of Shanghai's favourite *qi pao* tailors, and enjoy a drink and a game of pool at Spring Surprise.

Barbie Shanghai

This is the stuff that girlie dreams are made of: a six-storey pink palace where you can live out your Barbie fantasies. Mattel's 35,000sq ft Barbie flagship store houses the world's largest collection of Barbie dolls and licensed Barbie products. But make no mistake, this is not just another toy shop. You can take to the cat walk in Barbie-style designer clothes; nibble on cupcakes crowned with pink icing at The Pink Room; have a facial or a manicure at the Barbie Spa; or simply admire the 875 Barbie dolls on display at the heart of the three-storey spiral staircase.

Details: barbieshanghai.com

1933

Named after the year it was completed, this Art Deco building in the historic Hong Kou district was once East Asia's largest slaughterhouse. Now, after years spent derelict, it has been given the kiss of life by architect Paul Li (of Three on the Bund fame) and turned into a cultural centre – and an architectural tour de force – housing slick restaurants, trendy boutiques and a stunning glass-encased events studio. Next door to 1933, the Factory is creating a buzz, serving food and drinks in a glass recording studio.

Details: 1933shanghai.com

Chinatown

Shanghai's nightlife just got a shot in the arm with the introduction of the city's first Chinatown entertainment emporium. Chinatown is cabaret, burlesque and vaudeville nightclub all rolled into one and in Shanghai it's set in a three-storey building in the atmospheric Hongkou District. Watch the Chinatown dolls dance, sing and perform acrobatics in a sensuous interior decorated in gold and ruby-red tones, with velvet and dark wood. Get an invite to the Observatory Bar or check out the box seats on the balcony level.

Details: chinatownshanghai.com

Mr and Mrs Bund

Paul Pairet is making a big comeback after hanging up his apron as chef-de-cuisine at Jade on 36. This time, he's at the helm of a sensual, Art Deco-inspired French dining salon with a grazing menu of up to 250 affordably priced creations. The lure? Part classic, part avant-garde French cuisine is executed with flair and finesse. Choosing favourites is impossible, but you will not want to miss the intensely flavoured, toasted bread crowned with slices of black truffles and meuniere foam, and Pairet's legendary sweet and tangy lemon tart, a candied lemon dessert filled with lemon sorbet and vanilla chantilly cream.

Details: mmbund.com

Insider's secret: Walter Zahner, General Manager, T8

"Visit Wujiang Lu, Shanghai's famous food street, and join the queue at Xiao Yang Sheng Jian Guan, a local institution for juicy shengjian bao [pan-fried dumplings]. Bite into one of those near-perfect pillows of dumplings bursting with heart-warming pork stock. It's well worth the wait."

Compact Facts

How to get there

Evelyn Chen travelled to Shanghai with Mandarin Journeys (mandarinjourneys.com), which offers a five-night tour of Shanghai from £850 per person, based on two sharing, including half-board accommodation and private sightseeing excursions. Mandarin Journeys offers a Shanghai Expo tour package from £790 per person. Return flights from London to Shanghai with Singapore Airlines (0844 800 2380; singaporeair.com) cost from £845 in January.

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