Shanghai Hongqiao has two modes of long – distance transport that I know of: High – Speed Rail and Plane. I arrived there on a plane a little over half an hour before my train departs – I barely got on. If I got there late, all I needed to do was to go to the ticketing counter and change my ticket. I would be charged, but it was more forgiving than airline policies (no – show passengers get the remaining part of the reservation cancelled).

**Anyone taking a train from this station should know that ticket – checking begins 15 minutes prior to departure (or more, I’ll get there soon) and ends 3-5 minutes prior to departure, depending on the train.**

**On trains along the Shanghai – Nanjing Intercity Rail (沪宁高铁 or 沪宁城际), note that trains begin boarding 8 minutes prior to departure and ends 3 minutes prior to departure at intermediate stops (for example, if you take a train from Suzhou to Nanjing, where the train originates from Shanghai, Suzhou would be considered an intermediate stop, and where the train boards at 12:00, you would have your tickets and/or your travel documents checked between 11:52 and 11:57, no exceptions). In most cases, that would mean watching the train come in to the station because they usually spend two minutes at the station.**

The station is linked to the airport (I did not see signs noting this in the station though, but I did see signs in the airport). Passengers going both ways need to go through a security screening. It was easy. All I needed to toss my bags into the machine then go to the metal detector – there was no need to empty your pockets or take off your shoes.

After going through security check, I needed to verify my identity. Those using the Chinese citizenship card only needed to go through the turnstile after scanning the card, however, these turnstiles don’t take passports. A look at my passport at the manual checking area and I was in.

Quite hastily, I took a look at the board noting the check – in areas. For most trains, take a look at the upper right corner. I almost ran, only to see lines and the tickets not being checked… yet.

Unbeknownst to me, the Shanghai – Nanjing Intercity Railway has eliminated tickets and only require the citizenship card if the traveler purchased a ticket. The wording of the announcement both on the train and in stations along the railway lead me to believe that tickets are still required for passport users. This also leads me to believe that passport users now need to have someone stamp their tickets.

There are dozens of trains that travel from Shanghai to Nanjing (of many sorts of speed, as they stop at the same stations), ranging from K-trains (“Fast” ordinary trains) to T-trains (“Express” ordinary train) Z-trains (“Direct Express” ordinary trains) to D-trains (EMU High – Speed train or overnight EMU train, depending on the time of day) to G-trains (actual High – Speed trains travelling at over 280 km/h). Unbeknownst to me, some ordinary trains do not begin with a letter, containing numbers only (they are the really slow trains). All letters correspond to the Chinese name. For example, G-trains are actual High – Speed trains because the Chinese character for it “*gao”* begins with a “G” in pinyin. Ordinary trains are mostly painted in dark green with yellow stripes and are hauled by a locomotive. Locals call these trains “Green – skin train.”

Note that these letters describe the speed of the train, not the amount of stops the train makes. In the train station, the Chinese character will be used before the numbers after the prefix.

Some begin at Shanghai Station, or Shanghai Hongqiao station (like mine), or Shanghai South stations for most ordinary trains not originating in Shanghai. They could end at Nanjing or Nanjing South (or make a stop there), and vice versa.

The train number is G7376, which is a high – speed train operating inside Shanghai Railway Bureau. began its journey from Jiangshan and will take a detour to Shanghai Hongqiao before ending its trip in Hefei South. It will stop for two minutes at every station except Nanjing South (stop for 3 minutes) before continuing on its journey. It makes for videotaping the arrival and departure.

I’ll admit this: when I got to the gate, I panicked. Tickets were being checked (and as I was around 10 meters away when I heard this announcement, I started sprinting). So this review may lack some pictures (my apologies).

Ticket checking (they call it check – in) begins 15 minutes prior to departure from Shanghai Hongqiao and ends 3 minutes prior to departure. I don’t recommend cutting it close (especially if you get a carriage near the ends) because doors close around one minute before departure and they won’t hold a train for punctuality reasons.

Two CRH2C trains (looking very familiar to the Shinkansen) coupled together to make it 16 carriages from Shanghai Railway Bureau (I assume) My first class seat has definitely been occupied before I boarded because of the condition. I measured 39 inches pitch (always to the accuracy of my measuring tape). However, the padding must’ve been at least 4 inches thick, come to think of it. The width was 18.5 inches (I measure between the armrests, which were wide), the recline was 5 inches. The armrests were 4 inches at the widest in the middle and 2.5 inches at the widest on the sides.

In First Class of the CRH2, every seat gets a window, to my delight. No need to fight with the passenger behind you.

There was a message as well as a chime when the door closed on the train and when messages were broadcast. Both English and Chinese were broadcast for important messages except for the 12306 message where passengers need not get a paper ticket if they purchased with their citizenship card.

The ride was mostly quiet except for the occasional whirring sound and the sound of air as trains going the opposite direction passed. It was also smooth except for the air as another train going the opposite direction passed, causing us to sway a little bit. I did have this worry before boarding this train, however, as with many countries with a successful High – Speed rail system, a rough ride was not to be felt.

There are TVs positioned around the cabin as well as music available (I did not listen though, neither did I try it).

We passed Kunshan South station, which is also a station on the Beijing-Shanghai High Speed Rail.

We made a stop at Suzhou New City, so we took a siding off but rejoined the track after our stop.

I recommend that if you’re ticketed to get off at a stop that is not the terminus, you should get your belongings ready before the train stops and line up at the door to get off. You won’t have time once you get off and as mentioned earlier as well as the attendants yelling at me to hurry up at the platform (I believe they thought I was getting on), they are focused on punctuality and won’t wait for one person. The good thing is that the platforms are usually level with the train, mostly eliminating the need to lift your bags.

Suzhou Station is a station for both high – speed and green – skin trains. Both have tracks in the middle for trains not stopping (slab tracks for high – speed trains). I have not seen a train that doesn’t stop at this station. Tickets are checked during exit, so you’ll need it for the whole of the journey. Then it’s a hallway to the north square and the south. Both have taxi stands, but different bus routes, so pay attention! The subway station is accessible in the middle of the train station. As a side note, I liked the tune played announcing a message that was broadcast only in Chinese (that part, I didn’t like).

It was then time for a walk to a taxi stand for a taxi to the hotel. By the way, the arrivals section is open-air, even though it might not be obvious as you leave the train platforms and the exit turnstile. Which reminds me...

**You need to have your tickets as you leave the train station or else you can't get out.**