I tried the Hexie series in First Class and Second Class, while I tried the Fuxing series in Second Class. I have mixed feelings about the Fuxing train. Having booked the ticket from Wuxi to Suzhou too hastily, I was unable to try First Class in Fuxing, so I will not make a comparison there.

I also have some advice on High – Speed Rail in China mostly between Beijing and Shanghai. I will share them at the bottom.

The Hexie trains include the CRH380 series and the CRH2C (all CRH series are Hexie, but they’re mostly slower D and C head trains and I’m not making a reference to those trains when I discuss the Hexie train).

The Fuxing trains I’m talking about include the CR400AF and CR400BF. They come in variations that I believe mostly depend on the capacity. If I were on a 16-car variant, there will be a -A in the train number.

Hexie is Chinese for “Harmony.” It’s the first type of train the Chinese had going at high speeds over 250 km/h without any major hiccups related to the performance of the train. However, when they were first introduced, they were mostly based on foreign technology, from Sweden (the CRH1), Japan (the CRH2), Germany (the CRH3), and Italy (the CRH5). The CRH380 series are mostly derivatives from the first Hexie trains.

Fuxing is Chinese for “Renaissance.” It’s the first type of train based solely on Chinese technology. It has more safety features, the cabin is taller, and it includes some features that make the interior better, which includes LED lighting and Wi-Fi. This train also has a longer life span by a decade. They are also known as the “Chinese Standardized EMU,” and have been decorated in special colors.

First thing I noted was that the Fuxing train is quieter. I did not hear as much whirring sounds on the train versus on the Hexie on slower speeds. I believe I was seated above the wheels of the train, so the quietness of the train surprised me.

The fastest cruise speed possible by the Hexie train is 380 km/h. They normally operate at 300 km/h to 350 km/h (the latter on the Beijing – Shanghai High – Speed Railway). The Fuxing trains can operate at 400 km/h in cruise but the fastest they operate normally is 350 km/h on the Beijing – Shanghai HSR.

Both trains are mostly smooth. Of course, there’s swaying when trains pass each other because of the speed. On the Fuxing, I feel that there’s some swaying as we rounded curves. That did not happen on the Hexie. On both trains, you can stand without worrying about it getting bumpy. So I thought there wasn’t a difference.

The Fuxing startup and slowdown is louder in the cabin. I could feel a slight vibration and I could hear a motor sound. I believe it’s much quieter on the outside. The Hexie train CRH380B and CRH380BL is much louder when it starts up. Braking is louder on the Hexie series. It was maybe because I was seated in one of the motor cars on the Fuxing, however, First Class on the CRH2C (a Hexie train) is in a motor car and I did not feel any vibration.

I did not notice any difference in the seats on the Fuxing versus the Hexie. I actually measured the pitch to be less than the Hexie in Second Class, sitting on the last row facing a seat in front. On the Hexie, the pitch is 35 inches, while on the Fuxing, it’s 33 inches. I measured twice on the Fuxing to great surprise.

I defend my argument that the pitch has been reduced because there are 90 seats in most Second Class carriages in Fuxing versus 85 seats on the same in Hexie. That’s five more seats! There are luggage racks and bathrooms, which take up similar sizes on both types of trains. The carriages can’t be any larger. Remember: pitch is the distance from one point of a seat to that same point of the seat behind or forward it.

The width is 18 inches standard on the Hexie, however, the armrests are less than 1.5 inches wide. On the Fuxing, the width is 17 inches and 17.5 inches for B seats, however, the armrests are 2 inches wide. So the width between the armrests is mostly exchanged with the armrest size. The Hexie seats are larger by 0.5 inches. Remember that I measure between the inner tips of the armrests.

I was informed by the many announcements on the Fuxing train that there will be Wi – fi onboard. I found out that you’ll need a phone number or WeChat account to access it. So it’s basically useless for me as I lack a WeChat but failed to connect with my phone. A lot of people use cellular data in any case (not defending the difficulty of accessing internet on the train). This means no catching up on work (a wasted day for me). Seeing that I won’t be working on the train, I caught up on sleep.

The Fuxing trains look sleeker than the Hexie trains. Whoever designed this train definitely took some time to think about the decoration of the train, rather than slapping some blue on white. There are two versions: the “Red Dragon” and the “Gold Phoenix.” Both look just like they are named. They are named after Chinese fairy-tale animals. They don’t contain a hint of blue on the outside (except for CR400AF-0207 and -0208. They are model trains but operated by Beijing Railway Bureau).

From a passenger comfort standpoint, I would not go out of my way to take the Fuxing train (unless it was on the Beijing – Shanghai HSR. The short rides are exclusively operated by Fuxing). I will take it if it’s the only option available. I believe there is no need to avoid taking a particular train because of what it’s operated by. I would go with what works with your schedule.

Hexie and Fuxing are both great options. However, if you don’t ride on Fuxing, you really aren’t missing much (other than the sleek design of the train).

Now I offer my advice on these two trains.

If you’re a party of four or more people, you could get adjacent seats and reverse the row in front so you can talk face to face.

Behind the last row, you can store your rollaboard if you need to, if you’re seated in one of the last few rows. Overhead racks (notice my choice of words) are available, but can’t hold anything longer than 15 inches (please don’t pack to that level). Luggage racks are also available but don’t pack any valuables in there.

Finally, try to keep what you bring to a minimum. Not saying you can’t bring your entire wardrobe with you (but I still don’t recommend doing so). Try to keep it to a carry – on and a bag, like airline requirements, unless you’re in Business Class/First Class. There is no underseat storage because it’s reserved for turning the seats around.

**Which trains are operated by Fuxing?** All trains beginning and ending in Beijing and Shanghai that are one digit or two digits are Fuxing (trains such as G1, G6, G21). They are roughly 4.5 hours in duration as they stop 1-3 times (mostly twice, as mine did). When booking trains that originate or terminate in Hangzhou, know that a large majority are operated by Hexie (I think except G20, G32, and G44 going north). Three – digit numbers (such as G123, G134) are operated by a mix of Hexie and Fuxing. They are 5-6 hours long and I don’t recommend taking those trains unless you’re getting off in the middle. I saw G134 being operated by a CR400AF-B, so that is a Fuxing – operated train as of now. Not promising though!

If you’re taking a train, be aware that some trains arrive/depart from Shanghai Main Station, not Shanghai Hongqiao. As far as I’m aware, the trains are G5/G6, G12, G15, G18, and G21 arrive or depart from Shanghai Main Station.