# 20 Best Things to Do in Shanghai

Shanghai is a massive city, full of contrasts. From the buzzy Bund to the winding alleys of the French Concession, this Chinese city of more than 20 million has world-class art, historic temples, sprawling parks, and shopping to rival Paris. You'll never run out of things to do in this magical city.

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## [Sample Shanghai's Best Soup Dumplings](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-food-to-try-in-shanghai-4772378)

One of the foods no visitor to Shanghai can afford to not try is the beloved soup dumpling. Dumplings, in general, are a staple food throughout China. But this city is known for its xiao long bao—white clouds of sweet steamed dough filled with savory goodness, served in soup.

Shanghai's street food scene showcases just how versatile soup dumplings are, but for some of the best, visit Jia Jia Tang Bao, which sells *only* soup dumplings in eight varieties in People's Square. Other iconic xiao long bao masters include the Michelin-rated [Din Tai Fung](http://www.dintaifung.com.cn/) (at various locations), credited for making soup dumplings famous, and De Xing Guan on Guangdong Road.

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## See the Ancient Town of Zhujiajiao by Gondola

Zhujiajiao is a 1,700-year-old water town in Shanghai's Qingpu District, on the outskirts of the city. Its narrow waterways serve as streets flanked by antique rice and spice stores—even a post office from the Qing dynasty. Tourists like to marvel at the ancient wonders of Old Town by gondola. Think of it as the Chinese version of Venice.

While you're there, visit the Yuanjin Buddhist Temple, take in the suburb's 36 stone bridges, and bop into one of the eccentric cafes for a cup of Shanghai coffee. Zhujiajiao can be accessed by Line 17 on the Shanghai metro.

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## Sip Cocktails While Taking in a View

One of the most popular things to do in Shanghai is to get high—by "sky walking" on glass floors, taking elevators 100+ stories up to lofty observatories, and so forth. The city is sprawling and marked by some of the world's most identifiable architecture, but it's arguably even more spectacular when viewed from heights at night.

Witness the neon rainbow that emerges from Shanghai's iconic towers while sipping a craft cocktail at the Bund's [Bar Rouge](http://barrougeclubs.com/sh/), which provides epic views of Lujiazui (the financial district). [Flair](https://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/shasz-the-ritz-carlton-shanghai-pudong/dining/), on the 58th floor of The Ritz-Carlton, is an upscale option overlooking the Pearl Tower, and [LAGO](https://www.bellagioshanghai.com/en/dining/details.jspx?contentId=446) boasts a Las Vegas vibe as it's housed in the Shanghai Bellagio.

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## Take a Ride on One of the World's Fastest Trains

Shanghai is home to one of the world's fastest trains, dubbed the "maglev bullet." "Maglev" is short for magnetic levitation, and China has been using these levitating locomotives for decades. Shanghai's was built to connect Pudong to the [Shanghai Pudong International Airport](https://www.tripsavvy.com/shanghai-pudong-international-airport-guide-4783946) 19 miles away. And it can do so in just eight minutes achieving top speeds of 270 mph. It was the fastest train in the world before a [new maglev in nearby Qingdao](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-maglev-train-5194019) debuted at top speeds of 373 mph in 2021.

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## [Explore the Former French Concession Area](https://www.tripsavvy.com/visitors-guide-former-french-concession-shanghai-1495574)

The former French Concession is a lovely part of Shanghai; despite the fact that you're in the heart of a city with a population exceeding 20 million, it feels like you're just in a local neighborhood. The French imported plane trees in the early 1900s and they still line both sides of every street in the area. These days, old villas and lane houses are being renovated and turned into lovely shops and homes. It's fun to wander the less-congested streets and watch old folks chatting on the sidewalks and vendors marketing their wares.

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## Take a Walking Tour of the Bund

**ADDRESS**Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu, Waitan, Huang Pu Qu, Shang Hai Shi, China, 200002

The Bund is Shanghai's most famous landmark. You might have buzzed in and out of a fancy dinner in one of the renovated buildings, but take a morning to really enjoy the area and peek inside some of the buildings. A great way to visit the Bund on a nice day is to be dropped off at the Fairmont Peace Hotel (formerly the Cathay Hotel) and walk south, ducking into buildings along the way.

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## [Immerse Yourself in Nature at Yu Garden](https://www.tripsavvy.com/visitors-guide-yuyuan-garden-bazaar-shanghai-1495567)

**ADDRESS**China, 上海市黄浦区控江地区 邮政编码: 200010

While kitschy, the Yu Garden area is a fun place to explore. The whole area around the gardens has been renovated in traditional style Chinese architecture with curving tile eaves that make you feel like you've finally found "Chinatown." Wander through the lanes and alleys and find everything you might want to take home as souvenirs from silk pajamas to chopsticks. Eventually, you'll come to the Huxinting Tea House that supposedly inspired the design in the famous Blue Willow china pattern. Across the way is the entrance to Yuyuan Garden itself where you can follow crowds through a classical Ming garden.

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## Check Out Contemporary Art on Moganshan Road

**ADDRESS**50 Mo Gan Shan Lu, Pu Tuo Qu, Shang Hai Shi, China, 200071

**PHONE** *+86 21 6276 9932*

If you'd like to see what's happening on the contemporary art scene in China, take a taxi to Moganshan Road near Suzhou Creek. Once just factories and warehouses, the area is now a thriving art colony full of galleries of all sizes. There's a café near the entrance to the lane where you can have a nice coffee once you've seen the scene. Don't miss the Art Scene Warehouse, the EastLink Gallery, and ShanghART.

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## Spend an Afternoon at Xintiandi

**VIEW MAP**

**ADDRESS**Huangpu, Shanghai, China, 200020

Xintiandi is a restaurant, bar, and club development that utilizes Shanghai's traditional *shikumen* architecture. Shikumen buildings are recognizable by the gray and red brick facades, numerous ornamental front gates, and low two- to three-story heights. Originally built by the thousands in rows for middle-class Chinese, these classic Shanghainese houses are being destroyed and replaced by modern skyscrapers. Enjoy the restaurants and shopping, but don't miss the small free-entry museum that educates visitors on what life was like in the lane houses of the past.

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## See the City from 1,614 Feet

**ADDRESS**Shang Hai Huan Qiu Jin Rong Zhong Xin, 数浦港 Pu Dong Xin Qu, Shang Hai Shi, China, 200120

The Shanghai World Financial Center (or SWFC) is one of the tallest buildings in China. There are multiple viewing platforms, one of which has a glass floor. Beware if you have vertigo! It's quite a fun experience to see Shanghai from so far above, but it is rather pricey. If you just want to go up high, try the Jin Mao next door. At 88 floors, its remarkable architecture is recognizable on a clear day from all over the city. Enjoy great views over a cup of coffee or a cocktail in the Grand Hyatt hotel (inside the Jin Mao). You can do the same from within the SWFC's resident hotel, the Park Hyatt, but they have a table charge in the lounge.

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## Live Like a Local on Taikang Road

If you're in the mood for some shopping but are tired of touts shoving fake watches in your face, head to Taikang Road. A walk down the road lets you see local Shanghai life at its best: street vendors selling pancakes and fruit, kids scampering about, and women hanging up laundry. Then find alley 210 and wander down the lane. It's full of shops and cafes selling everything from traditional Chinese qipao dresses to funky silver jewelry.

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## Play at Shanghai Disneyland Resort

tth the opening of Shanghai Disneyland Resort in 2016, [entertaining kids in Shanghai](https://www.tripsavvy.com/top-activities-kids-shanghai-1495582) got a lot easier. The park has multiple distinct areas, which include Mickey Avenue (similar to Main Street, U.S.A.), Gardens of Imagination (a Chinese Zodiac garden), Fantasyland (an area dedicated to Disney films), Treasure Cove (a pirate's island), and more.

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## [Get Spiritual at Shanghai's Largest Temple](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-temples-in-shanghai-to-visit-1495583)

Shanghai's largest temple, Longhua, consists of five halls, two towers, and an impressive seven-story pagoda. You might recognize the landmark from "Empire of the Sun." If you visit during the eponymous temple fair, you'll find vendors lined up selling various goods.

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## Get Lost in the Old City

Elizabeth Beard/Getty Images

This neighborhood was once Shanghai's center, filled with winding, narrow streets surrounded by a fortified wall. Now, it's a great place to take in the old *shikumenstone* gatehouses and catch a glimpse of what life in Shanghai used to be like before the skyscrapers took over.

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## See More Contemporary Art in an Old Power Station

This museum, housed in a former power plant building that was used for 2010's World Expo, has no permanent exhibitions, instead focusing on world-class temporary displays of art. The previous exhibits have ranged from retrospectives of top American artists to up-and-coming Chinese talents.

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## Admire Chinese Artifacts at the Shanghai Museum

Designed to look like a *ding*, an ancient vessel used for cooking, the Shanghai Museum is home to more than 120,000 different pieces of Chinese art and history. The collection includes paintings, furniture, jewelry, ceramics, and more, and is also home to an expansive dress gallery that showcases clothing from China's 55 ethnic minority groups.

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## Glimpse Shangai's Future at the Urban Planning Exhibition Center

This bustling, expansive metro is hard to wrap your head around the first time you visit, but if you want a glimpse into what Shanghai past, present, and future, a visit to the Urban Planning Exhibition Center is quite interesting. The museum even includes a 6,500-square-foot highly-detailed model of Shanghai.

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## Marvel at Jade Buddha Temple's Special Statues

This colorful temple was built in the style of the Song Dynasty, with bright yellow walls, upturned eaves, and symmetrical courtyards. It's also home to a seven-foot white jade Buddha and a wonderful, inexpensive vegetarian restaurant.

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## Shop Under the Lights of Nanjing Lu

Shanghai's main shopping street has something to offer everyone. East Nangjing Road is awash with neon billboards and bright lights (and plenty of large stores), while West Nanjing Road is an upscale thoroughfare lined with hotels and retail.

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## Embark on a Treasure Hunt on Dong Tai Road

This small road, not far from Xintiandi, is Shanghai's answer to Beijing's [Panjiayuan Market](https://www.tripsavvy.com/top-shanghai-markets-1495370). While tiny in comparison to Panjiayuan, Dong Tai Road is lined with stalls and shops selling all that is junk and treasure in chinoiserie. You can find all kinds of items including Mao memorabilia, porcelain, old wooden rice buckets, and brightly painted opera masks. It's worth a wander just to see what's on offer but don't forget your [bargaining skills](https://www.tripsavvy.com/bargaining-101-rules-myths-shopping-china-1495332).