

Small City Breaks: Enchanting Shanghai

This matchless synthesis of old and new ensures something for everybody and makes Shanghai the perfect city break for the whole family.

If you're arriving from Shanghai's Pudong airport, make a fantastic entrance into the city via the world's fastest train, the Maglev, which runs from the airport to the Lujiazui Financial district. Kids will like the way the train appears to "fly" over the ground, forced upwards to the air by virtue of a solid magnetic field. Having less surface contact allows the train to reach incredible speeds: up to 433 km per hour. Be sure to show your airport ticket if you have one; this grants you a slight discount on the train ride.

An attractive in addition to educational place to begin your exploration of the city could be the Jade Buddha Temple. Though built relatively recently (between 1911 and 1918), the temple's upturned pagoda-like eaves and vivid red and yellow walls draw on centuries of Chinese architectural tradition. After admiring the colorful exterior, have a go through the treasures inside, the center-piece of which can be the temple's namesake: an enormous white jade Buddha, covered in jewels, measuring nearly 2 meters high and said to weigh about one thousand kilograms.

After inspecting the cultural treasures inside the temple, spend some time in the open air with a trip to the Yuyuan gardens. With its beautiful layout and harmonic blend of water, plants, zigzagging bridges, and dragon-lined walls, the gardens offer an unequaled introduction to the Ming Dynasty classical style. Most of the buildings house cultural artifacts including centuries-old furniture, artwork and literature. Kids will love the Exquisite Jade Rock, a 5-ton porous, translucent and oddly-shaped mineral. After wandering through the gardens, browse the bazaar just outside and flick through traditional Chinese products and jewelry.

If you're tired after wandering through the gardens but nevertheless wanting to ingest the sights, consider a cruise on the Huangpu River, the longest river that passes through Shanghai. You can pick from several cruises which run from 30 minutes to 3.5 hours. This is a superb, relaxing way to take in both historic and modern components of the city. You'll go by British colonial architecture on the city's historic east side (Bund) as well as the futuristic skyline on the present day east side (Pudong).

After taking in the cultural sights of Shanghai, why not indulge in a little bit of shopping? A great place to start is Xintiandi, a pedestrian zone shopping center integrated restored shikumen, typically Shanghainese buildings which incorporate both Western and Chinese architectural styles. Combined with upscale shopping options, you can select from a range of international restaurants -- even the pickiest eater will see something to satisfy!

While it's still daylight, visit the very best of Jin Mao (literally "Golden Prosperity Building") tower to consume the spectacular sunset over Shanghai's skyline. At 88 floors high, it has only been recently eclipsed as the next tallest building in China.

About the Author

End your day with a bang by wowing the kids with the unforgettable spectacle of the Shanghai Acrobats. The jaw-dropping feats of strength and daring coupled with colorful costumes and props could keep everyone at the edge of their seats for the whole show. Using its historical landmarks and vibrant cultural scene regarding [xian layover tours](#), Shanghai educates along with delights the whole family.

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