



A night view of the Bund in Shanghai. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

City renowned for its energy

Vibrant, cosmopolitan Shanghai's charming contrasts of old and new have something for everyone

By ALLYWIN CHEW in Shanghai

Editor's Note: In the wake of the China International Import Expo, held in Shanghai from Nov 5 to 10, here is an overview of what the host city has to offer to visitors.

Be it from the mouths of foreigners who have lived there for a few years or from stories on travel websites, one of the most common qualities that people list about Shanghai is the infectious energy that courses through the city.

For some, this energy is defined by the way of life — Shanghai is a city that never sleeps. In the day, the streets are always bustling with people from all over the world. After all, the city has long been China's most cosmopolitan city, having been the epicenter of trade and cultural exchange between Chinese and foreigners since the city was forced to open its door to the world in 1843 after the First Opium War (1840-42).

Shanghai's ubiquitous delivery people can be found on the roads even past midnight, rushing from point to point on their trusty electric scooters to satiate the hunger of night owls. Even before the break of dawn, pensioners can be found gathering in parks, ready to kick-start their day with a tai chi session.

For others, this energy is generated from the friction between the contrasts the city has. Indeed, it does not take long for one to realize that Shanghai's charm lies in it being a binary of old and new.

Here, charming neoclassical architecture and art deco structures stand alongside modern buildings with



A trip to Shanghai would not be complete without exploring the iconic waterfront promenade along the Bund.

shimmering glass and metal facades, rustic lane houses and decrepit *shikumen* buildings. Humble mom-and-pop shops that look stuck in time can often be found right next to hip dining venues or industrial-chic boutiques selling designer apparel.

It is also not uncommon to find Maseratis, Ferraris and Rolls-Royce cars sharing the road with cyclists riding their colorful shared bikes or the classic models of Forever Bicycles, one of the nation's most famous domestic brands.

One of the best places to get an overview of these surreal contrasts is none other than the tallest building in the city — the Shanghai Tower in Lujiazui. Measuring a dizzying 632 meters in height, this architectural marvel boasts having the world's highest observation deck within a building or structure. It also comes with the world's fastest elevators which would get you from the bottom to the top at 20.5 meters per second.

On the other side of the Huangpu River is the Bund, which is home to magnificent neoclassical buildings such as the HSBC Building, the Custom House and the Waldorf Astoria. The Bund is to Shanghai what Times Square is to New York or what the Champs-Élysées is to Paris. A trip to Shanghai would not be complete without exploring this iconic waterfront promenade.

As a hub for all types of sectors in China, including finance, innovation, aviation, science and technology, it is perhaps natural that Shanghai too is a vibrant hotspot for many food trends.

While China is traditionally a tea-drinking nation, Shanghai's effervescent coffee scene paints a different picture. From hip and cozy specialty coffee joints to the sprawling Starbucks Reserve Roastery in the city center — it is the first of its kind outside the United States — java addicts are spoiled for choice when it comes to searching for a caffeine fix.

The city is also the leader in the country when it comes to beverages such as cocktails and craft beer. Among the most illustrious of the city's cocktail offerings are Speak Low, Sober Company and the Union Trading Company, all of which are listed in the Asia's 50 Best Bars rankings.

One of the latest entrants to the vibrant craft beer scene is the renowned US brewery Stone Brewing. Located in a charming old warehouse in the upscale Jing'an district, this outpost is the company's first in Asia, a nod to the city's reputation as a hotbed for gastronomy.

As the city where the Michelin Guide first made its China debut, Shanghai is also where one can find the only three-Michelin-starred restaurant in the country — Ultraviolet by French chef Paul Pairet — where the set menu price starts from a whopping 4,000 yuan (\$575) per person. At the other end of the spectrum, the *xiaolongbao*, the humble, quintessential Shanghai delicacy in the form of a delicate dumpling containing moreish soup and meat or vegetables, can be had for as little as 6 yuan per serving of eight. There is also Canton 8, a restaurant serving hearty Cantonese fare and dim sum that was in 2016 declared the world's cheapest two-Michelin-starred dining establishment.

Autumn is the best time to experience Shanghai on foot, not merely because the weather is conducive for walking, but because this is when the roads and sidewalks in many areas are blanketed with a layer of colorful fallen leaves.

The best places to view this seasonal spectacle are the numerous parks across the city as well as the

idyllic former French Concession, which is home to a bevy of lifestyle boutiques, trendy cafes and historical buildings such as Wukang Mansion, Shanghai's version of the Flatiron Building in New York City.

Alternatively, the new 45-km long walking path that hugs the Huangpu River was opened earlier this year, offering people serene views of the river and flora and fauna. This path also takes you to many of Shanghai's landmarks, such as the Waibaidu Bridge, the Astor House Hotel, the Yangshupu Water Plant, the Yuz Museum and the Long Museum.

For some people, Shanghai is only truly alive when night falls and the dazzling neon lights come on.

From posh rooftop bars along the Bund that offer stunning views of the Shanghai skyline to mega clubs like Myst which regularly hosts international acts, the nightlife scene in Shanghai is second to none in China.

Those seeking a more muted nightlife experience can check out the numerous live performance venues such as Shanghai Culture Square which is known for hosting productions all the way from Broadway and the West End. There are also several live jazz venues worth your time, such as the Fairmont Peace Hotel where the famous band is made up of only octogenarians, and JZ Club in the bustling Found 158, a below-ground lifestyle venue within a park in downtown Shanghai.

True to its reputation as a first mover in China, Shanghai also has its own dedicated standup comedy club. Called Kung Fu Comedy, the club features an extensive lineup of international and local comedians who could help you end your Shanghai trip on a high.