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Where to Go in Shanghai



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21/6279-2545.

Morning Market: There are many morning markets in nearly every neighborhood, but this one, around the corner from my house in the French Concession, is my favorite. Shanghai is changing quickly, but the rich and the poor still mix at the stalls here, each selling homemade traditional food from the countryside. For a classic Shanghai breakfast, try the *you tiao*—a long piece of fried dough that looks like a Chinese churro but without the sugar—and dip it in soy milk. *At Xiang Yang N. Rd. and Chang Le Rd.*

Din Tai Fung: Taiwan-based Yang Bingyi was one of the first people to elevate street food into something more elegant. At Din Tai Fung, the Shanghai branch of his chain of excellent cafés, the waitresses are impressively dressed, and a row of men in white aprons make Shanghai's best *xiaolong bao* (soup dumplings) behind a glass wall. *At Shanghai Center, 1376 Nanjing W. Rd.; 86-*

WanShang Flower and Bird Market:

When I created a series of bird-shaped light sculptures (right) for London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2008, I came to this market—which is sprawling with men, bamboo cages, fighting crickets and, of course, there's the chaotic chorus of chirps—for inspiration. This is a part of Shanghai that might soon disappear, but for now it's as lively and overwhelming as always. *At 405 Xizang S. Rd.*

El Coctel: The walls of this reservation-only, no-standing-allowed cocktail den are simple and unvarnished, so I was surprised when I looked up to see an ornate, hand-painted watercolor mural on the ceiling. The service is just as painstaking: Japanese bartenders punctiliously prepare drinks, from standards like a gin and tonic to a Cognac-and-rye cocktail finished with an absinthe-rinsed ice cube. *At 47 Yongfu Lu; 86-21/ 6433-6511; [el-coctel.com](#).*

Spin: Porcelain has a four-millennia history in China, but at Spin, partners Jeremy Kuo, a restaurateur, and Gary Wang, a designer, make it new. Opened in 2004 with a mandate to supply flatware for Kuo's restaurants, Spin has a scope that has since expanded to cultivate modern ceramic artisans. I love the elegant contemporary plates and the minimalist bowls and teapots rich with what the Japanese call *wabi-sabi*, or "perfect imperfection." *At 360 Kangding Rd.; 86-*

21/6289-9182; dintaifung.com.tw.

Shi Zhi Ying: Every time I return to Shanghai, I discover new artists emerging from the vibrant art scene. One of my favorites is 31-year-old Shi Zhiying. Her paintings—she makes sculpture, performance pieces and animation as well—often depict oceans or fields of grass, which gives a contemporary take on the classic Five Elements of Chinese philosophy. *By appointment only*; 86-136/6171-2955.

Xian Qiang Fang: When I first came to America, I wasn't interested in Chinese traditions. But since then, I have rediscovered what we have. Xian Qiang Fang is a classic example of Shanghai's depth of culture. Run by former designer Wang Xing Zheng, the restaurant doubles as a Chinese opera theater. In America, you are serious and quiet watching opera. But in China, they are there to entertain you. The audience laughs and talks and enjoys Shanghainese dishes like tea leaf-smoked duck and braised diced pork. *At 600 Jiu Jiang Rd.*; 86-21/6351-5757; xianqiangfang.com.

The Table No. 1: There's no better vantage point to take in the endlessly shifting Shanghai cityscape than from the roof of The Waterhouse, a boutique hotel on the Bund. Four floors below, the Huang Pu River snakes its way through the spires and sprawl while the kitchen serves cutting-edge communal dishes like smoked beetroot with mascarpone, tarragon and walnuts to a well-heeled and urbane clientele. *At 1-3 Maojiayuan Rd., Zhongshan Rd. S.*; 86-21/6080-2918; tableno-1.com.

Song Fang Maison de The: Paris-born Florence Samson was the general manager of Veuve Clicquot China before turning to the way of tea and opening this charming shop in 2007. I love that she mixes Western colors with Chinese patterns in the peaceful four-story boutique and teahouse. The fabric in this alcove is a classic countryside pattern. Most Chinese decorators would say it's too country, but Samson pairs it with a white table, something else they wouldn't do. The result is a beautiful, calm and completely unexpected place to pass the afternoon. *At 227 Yongjia Rd.*; 86-21/6433-8283; songfangtea.com.

The Chinoise Story: With bright chairs by Philippe Starck and lighting design by German industrial designer Ingo Maurer, dinner at this elegant restaurant in the Jin Jiang Hotel is about more than the food. It's about using a sophisticated Western aesthetic to create a modern Shanghai spot. The same is true for the food, which reinterprets Shanghainese cuisine with a Western gloss. *At 59 Maoming Nan Rd.*; 86-21/6445-1717; jinlu-china.com.

YongFoo Elite: The food is great, and the setting, a former British Embassy, is among the most memorable in Shanghai, but I come to this exclusive club, by playboy owner Wang Xing Zheng, for the wallpaper: a Victorian-style gold-leaf pattern in the back of the corridor, near an imported Tibetan wall with hand-painted stripes. *At 200 Yong Fu Rd.*; 86-21/5466-2727; yongfooelite.com.

The House of Blues & Jazz: By day, Lin Dong Fu is an actor, starring in films like James Ivory's *White Countess* and his own local talk show, but his real job is jazz impresario at The House of Blues & Jazz. I've spent many Sunday nights in the wood-paneled room watching jazz musicians from China to Chicago trade chops during the weekly jam sessions. *At 60 Fuzhou Rd.*; 86-021/6323-2779; houseofbluesandjazz.com.

Mr. and Mrs. Bund: Paul Pairet, the chef at this incredibly sleek restaurant, pairs an almost James Bond level of visual suavity with the best Western-style food in Shanghai. He's constantly experimenting with new dishes, like his Foie Gras Opera, a delightful combination of foie gras, pork, passion fruit and chocolate. *At Bund 18, 18 Zhong Shan Dong Yi Rd.*; 86-159/6323-9898; mmbund.com.

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