

BACKGROUND

HISTORY

EARLY BEGINNINGS

Up until the 7th century AD, Shànghǎi itself, then known as Shen or Hu Tu (after local bamboo fishing traps; the character hù 沪 still refers to Shànghǎi to this day, observable on local car number plates), was simply marshland. In fact, most of eastern modern Shànghǎi didn't exist until the 17th century, when a complex web of canals was designed to drain the region. The early settlement of Shànghǎi sprung up at the confluence of the Shanghai River (long since vanished) and the Huangpu River (黄浦江; Huángpǔ Jiāng).

Coupled with the silting of the Suzhou Creek, increased migration from other parts of China brought about the shift of the regional administrative centre from Qinglong to Shànghǎi, elevating the town to the status of county seat as part of Jiāngsū in the final decade of the 13th century. Ringed by a defensive wall in the mid-16th century to fend off Japanese pirates raiding the coast, the town of Shànghǎi supported a population of 50,000 by the late 17th century, sustained on cotton production, fishing and, as an opportune consequence of the city's location at the head of the Yangtze River (长江; Cháng Jiāng) and its tributaries, trade in silk and tea.

IT ALL STARTED WITH A LITTLE BIT OF OPIUM

During the early years of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the British East India Company and its later incarnations were quietly trading in the only open port open to the West, Canton (now Guǎngzhōu; 广州), way south of Shànghǎi. British purchases of tea, silk and porcelain far outweighed Chinese purchases of wool and spices, so by the late 18th century the British had decided to balance the books by slipping into India to swap (at a profit) silver for opium with which to purchase Chinese goods. The British passion for tea was increasingly matched by China's growing craving for opium (鸦片; yāpiàn), the pernicious drug that would virtually single-handedly create latter-day Shànghǎi and earn the city its bipolar reputation as the splendid 'Paris of the East' and infamous 'Whore of the Orient'.

From a mercantile point of view, the trade in opium – known as 'foreign mud' in China – was an astonishing success, rapidly worming its way into every nook and cranny of Chinese society. Highly addictive and widely available thanks to the prolific efforts of British traders, the drug – smoked via a pipe – quickly became the drug of choice for all sections of the Chinese public from the lowliest and most menial upwards. Jardine & Matheson's highly lucrative trade empire was founded on the opium business.

No other commodity became so uniquely associated with all of Shànghǎi's spectacular peaks and troughs. Opium became the driving force behind the city's unstoppable rise, and its descent into debauchery: from Shànghǎi's affluent taipans and lucrative hong, its piercing inequalities, its wanton netherworld of prostitution and vice, violent criminal gangs, corrupt police forces and the city's cartographic constitution of concessions, settlements and Chinese districts.

TIMELINE

453-221 BC	AD 960-1126	1553	1685	1793	By 1823
Warring States period: the earliest imperial records date from this period, although Neolithic discoveries in Songze, Qīngpǔ County, suggest human settlement of the region 5900 years ago.	Chinese fleeing the Mongols during the Song dynasty boost the region's population, spurring Shànghǎi on to become the county seat of Jiāngsū in 1291.	The city wall around Shànghǎi's Old Town is first constructed to fend off Japanese pirates. Over 8m high and 4.8km around, the wall stands until the fall of the Qing dynasty, when it is demolished.	A customs house is opened in Shànghǎi for the first time.	Lord Macartney, George III's envoy to the imperial court of China, is rebuffed by the Qianlong emperor in Chéngdé, sinking British hopes of expanding legitimate trade relations with the 'Middle Kingdom'.	The British are swapping roughly 7000 chests of opium annually – with about 140 pounds of opium per chest, enough to keep one million addicts happy – compared with 1000 chests in 1773.

The Opium War between Great Britain and China was similarly fought in the drug's name and as a pretext to extract the concessions that British opium traders had sought from China. The Treaty of Nanking that concluded the First Opium War in 1842 was Shànghǎi's moment of reckoning, for its signing spelt the death of old Shànghǎi and the birth of the wild, lawless and spectacularly prosperous endeavour that would rise up over the Huangpu River.

THE ILLEGITIMATE BIRTH OF SHÀNGHǎI

The Treaty of Nanking stipulated, among other things, peace between China and Britain; security and protection of British persons and property; the opening of Canton, Fúzhōu (福州), Xiàmén (厦门), Níngbō (宁波) and Shànghǎi, as well as residence for foreigners and consulates in those cities (for the purpose of trade); fair import and export tariffs; the possession of Hong Kong (香港), and an indemnity of US\$18 million. Ironically enough, the trade of opium, legal or otherwise, never entered into the treaty.

Following Great Britain's lead, other countries were quick to join in, including the US and France. In 1843 the first British consul moved into a local house in the Old Town, signalling a foreign presence in the city that would last for the next 100 years.

Of the five port cities, Shànghǎi was the most prosperous due to its superb geographical location, capital edge and marginal interference from the Chinese government. Trade and businesses boomed, and by 1850 the foreign settlements housed more than 100 merchants, missionaries and physicians, three-quarters of them British. In 1844, 44 foreign ships made regular trade with China. By 1849, 133 ships lined the shores and by 1855, 437 foreign ships clogged the ports.

Foreigners were divided into three concessions. The original British Concession more than tripled in size between 1846 and 1848. Bishop William Boone set up a mission in Hóngkǒu a few years later, which founded the city's American Concession, while the French set up their own settlement.

From regulation to sanitation, everything in Shànghǎi was vested in the foreign oligarchies of the Municipal Council and the

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HISTORY BOOKS

- *Shanghai*, Harriet Sergeant. A portrait of the city in its heyday, efficiently combining first-hand accounts with extensive spade work and lively reconstruction.
- *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City 1842-1949*, Stella Dong. Thoroughly researched, rip-roaring profile of the city's good-old bad-old days, but Dong's fondness for transcribing Chinese in old-fashioned Wade-Giles Romanisation over Pinyin transliteration can be a drag.
- *In Search of Old Shanghai*, Lynn Pan/Pan Ling. A rundown on who was who and what was what back in the bad-old days. At 140 pages, it's an easy read and an excellent intro to the city's murky past.
- *Shanghai: Crucible of Modern China*, Betty Peh-T'i Wei. This is a more detailed history of the city until 1943. *Old Shanghai*, by the same author, is a shorter, easier read.
- *Secret War in Shanghai*, Bernard Wasserstein. A denser, sometimes heavy-going look at 'treachery, subversion and collaboration in the Second World War'. The real joy of the book is its fascinating cast of characters, such as 'abortionist, brothel-owner and sexual extortionist' Dr Albert Miorini; 'monkey expert, narcotics dealer and friend of Errol Flynn' Hermann Erben; the British gunrunner General 'One-Arm' Sutton; and 'journalist, aviator and pimp' Hilaire du Berrier.

Conseil d'Administration Municipale, a pattern that was to last as long as the settlements. It was not until the early 1920s that Chinese and Japanese residents (eventually the two largest groups in the settlements) were allowed even limited representation on the council.

From the start, Shànghǎi's *raison d'être* was trade. Still sailing to the West were silks, tea and porcelain, and 30,000 chests of opium were being delivered into China annually. Soon great Hong Kong trading houses like Butterfield & Swire and Jardine & Matheson set up shop, and trade in opium, silk and tea gradually shifted to textiles, real estate, banking, insurance and shipping. Banks in particular boomed; soon all of China's loans, debts and indemnity payments were funnelled through Shànghǎi. Buying and selling was handled by Chinese middlemen, known as *compradors* (from the Portuguese), from Canton and Ningbō, who formed a rare link between the Chinese and foreign worlds. The city attracted immigrants and entrepreneurs from across China, and overseas capital and expertise pooled in the burgeoning metropolis.

Foreign ideas were similarly imported. By the 1880s, huge numbers of proselytising American Protestants were saving souls in Shànghǎi, while the erudite Jesuits oversaw a flourishing settlement in Xújiāhù (徐家匯), called Siccawei (or Zikawei).

Gradually sedan chairs and single-wheeled carts gave way to rickshaws and carriages, the former imported from Japan in 1874. Shànghǎi lurched into the modern age with gaslights (1865), electricity (1882), motorcars (1895), a cinema and an electric tram (1908), and its first bus (1922).

The Manchu in Běijīng gave only cursory glances to the growth of Shànghǎi as all eyes focused on the continued survival of the Qing dynasty, under threat from a barrage of insurgencies that arose from within the rapidly radicalising confines of the Middle Kingdom.

SHÀNGHǎI'S REBELLIOUS YOUTH

Wreathed in opium, sucked dry by local militia, crippled by taxes, bullied by foreign interests and increasingly exposed to Western ideas, Shànghǎi's population was stirring, and anti-Manchu rebellions began to erupt. The first major rebellion to impact on Shànghǎi was the Taiping (太平 – literally 'Supreme Peace'), led by the Hakka visionary Hong Xiuquan. The uprising goes down as the bloodiest in human history with a tally of 20 million dead.

A failed would-be official, Hong Xiuquan claimed to have ascended to heaven and received a new set of internal organs by a golden-bearded Jehovah, which he used to battle the evil spirits of the world with his elder brother Jesus Christ. Hong's distorted Christian ideology dates from his contact with Christian missionaries in Canton and an identification of his surname (洪, meaning 'flood') with the Old Testament deluge. Sensing himself chosen, Hong saw the Manchu as devils to be exterminated and set about recruiting converts to establish a Heavenly Kingdom in China. The rebels burst out of Jintían village in Guǎngxī (广西) in 1851, swept through Guizhōu (贵州) and succeeded in taking Nánjīng (南京) three years later, where they established their Heavenly Capital (天京; Tiānjīng).

SHANGHAIED

If New York is so good they named it twice, then Shànghǎi was so bad they made it a verb. To shànghǎi, or 'render insensible by drugs or opium, and ship on a vessel wanting hands', dates from the habit of press-ganging sailors. Men, many of whom were found drunk in 'Blood Alley' (off modern-day Jinling Rd), were forced onto ships, which then set sail, leaving the comatose sailors no choice but to make up the deficient crew numbers when they sobered up.

With the Taiping-inspired Small Swords Society entrenched in the Old Town and fearing the seizure of Shànghǎi, the foreign residents organised the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, a force that would repeatedly protect the interests of foreigners in Shànghǎi.

The Taiping threatened again in 1860 but were beaten back from Shànghǎi by the mercenary armies of Frederick Townsend Ward, an American adventurer hired by the Qing government who was eventually killed in Sòngjiāng in 1862. British and Qing forces joined to defeat the rebels, the Europeans preferring to deal with a corrupt and weak Qing government than with a powerful, united China governed by the Taiping. The Taiping originally banked on the support of the Western powers, but Westerners were ultimately repelled by Hong's heretical concoction.

As rebellions ravaged the countryside, hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into the safety of Shànghǎi's concessions (p43), setting up home alongside the foreigners and sparking a real-estate boom that spurred on Shànghǎi's rapid urbanisation and made the fortunes of many of Shànghǎi's entrepreneurs.

As imperial control loosened, the encroaching Western powers moved in to pick off China's colonial 'possessions' in Indochina and Korea. National humiliation and a growing xenophobia – partly generated by a distrust of Christian missionaries and their activities – spawned the anti-Western Boxer Rebellion, championed in its later stages by the empress dowager, Cixi.

The Boxers were quelled by Western and Japanese troops – who went on to sack the Summer Palace – in 1900, but not before the legation quarter in Běijīng (北京; Peking) had been devastated. Empress Cixi and her entourage fled to Xī'ān (西安), but returned to Běijīng to face massive indemnities strapped on the Qing government by the foreign powers.

The weakened state of the country, the death of the empress dowager and the legion of conspiring secret societies marked the end of the tottering Qing dynasty. Shànghǎi renounced the Qing by declaring independence on the wave of public revolt that swept China in 1911, and all men were instructed to shear off their queues (pigtails that symbolised subjection to Manchu authority). But despite the momentous end to China's final dynasty – one that had ruled China for almost 250 years – insular Shànghǎi carried out business as usual,

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SHÀNGHǎI BIOGRAPHIES

- *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Nien Cheng. A classic account of the Cultural Revolution and one of the few biographies with a Shànghǎi angle.
- *Red Azalea*, Anchee Min. A sometimes racy account of growing up in Shànghǎi in the 1950s and 1960s amid the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.
- *Daughter of Shanghai*, Tsai Chin. This book has less to say about Shànghǎi but is still a good read. Daughter of one of China's most-famous Běijīng opera stars, Chin left Shànghǎi in 1949 and later starred in the film *The World of Suzie Wong* (as the original 'China doll') and in the *Joy Luck Club*. This memoir bridges two worlds during two different times.
- *The Life, Loves and Adventures of Emily Hahn*, Ken Cuthbertson. A look at the fascinating life of Emily Hahn, who passed through Shànghǎi in 1935 (accompanied by her pet gibbon, Mr Mills), got hooked on opium and became the concubine of a Chinese poet.
- *Captive in Shanghai*, Hugh Collar. This is a fascinating personal account of life in the Japanese internment camps in the early 1940s. It's published by Oxford University Press, but is pretty hard to get your hands on.

1839

Tensions between England and China come to a head when British merchants are arrested and forced to watch three million pounds of raw opium being flushed out to sea. Merchants begin demanding compensation from the British government.

1842

On 29 August Sir Henry Pottinger signs the Treaty of Nanking aboard the *Cornwallis* on the Yangtze River, prising open China's doors and securing Hong Kong.

1849

The French establish their own settlement, known as the French Concession, to the south of the British Concession and beyond the walls of the Chinese Old Town.

By 1859

Virtually half of all British troops stationed in Shànghǎi suffer from venereal disease. The diseases are introduced to Shànghǎi by Westerners and disseminated by the city's rampant prostitution industry.

By the early 1860s

Cotton has emerged as Shànghǎi's chief export.

1882

Shànghǎi's first large beauty pageant for prostitutes is held. The pageant is held every year until 1930.

relatively unaffected by the fall of the Qing or the upheavals of WWI. As the rest of China descended into a bedlam of fighting warlords and plunged into darkness, Shànghǎi emerged as a modern industrial city.

THE BIG CITY PEAKS

By the first decade of the 20th century, Shànghǎi's population had swelled to one million. As the most elite and cosmopolitan of China's cities, Shànghǎi ensnared capitalists and intellectuals alike, with literature and cinema thriving in the ferment as Chinese intellectuals began to ponder the fate of a modern China.

The foreigners had effectively plucked out prime locations and, using their ever-increasing wealth, the result of cheap labour, they established exclusive communities designed after their own countries and dovetailing with their needs. Vice and crime continued to flourish, assisted by the absence of a paramount police force. The multiple jurisdictions, each representing the laws of the various settlements and the Chinese city, meant that criminals could simply move from one area to another to elude arrest.

Exploited in workhouse conditions, crippled by hunger and poverty, sold into slavery and excluded from the city's high life created by the foreigners, the poor of Shànghǎi developed an appetite for resistance. Intellectuals and students, provoked by the startling inequalities between rich and poor, were perfect receptacles for the many outside influences circulating in the concessions. The communist manifesto was translated into Chinese and swiftly caught on among secret societies.

In light of the intense dislike that many Chinese felt for foreigners, it seems ironic that fundamental ideals stemmed from overseas inspirations. Shànghǎi, with its vast proletariat (30,000 textile workers alone) and student population, had become the communists' hope for revolution, and the first meeting of the Chinese Communist Party, when Mao Zedong was present, was held in July 1921 in a French Concession house (p79). Elsewhere political violence was growing.

In May 1925 resentment spilled over when a Chinese worker was killed in a clash with a Japanese mill manager. In the ensuing demonstrations the British opened fire and 12 Chinese were killed. In protest, 150,000 workers went on strike, which was later seen as a defining moment marking the decline of Western prestige and power.

Strikes and a curfew paralysed the city as the Kuomintang under Chiang Kaishek (with the help of communist supporters under Zhou Enlai) wrested Shànghǎi from the Chinese warlord Sun Chaofang.

Kaishek's aim was not focused on the settlements or even the warlords, but rather his erstwhile allies, the communists, whom he then betrayed in an act of breathtaking perfidy. Backed by Shànghǎi bankers and armed by Shànghǎi's top gangster Du Yuesheng (see boxed text, p28), Chiang Kaishek armed gangsters, suited them up in Kuomintang uniforms and launched a surprise attack on the striking workers' militia. Du's machine guns were turned on 100,000 workers taking to the streets, killing as many as 5000. In the ensuing period, known as the White Terror, 12,000 communists were executed in three weeks. Zhou Enlai and other communists fled to Wùhàn (武汉), leaving Shànghǎi in the hands of the warlords, the wealthy and the Kuomintang.

Nestled away safely in a world of selectively structured law and cruel capitalism, by the 1930s Shànghǎi had reached its economic zenith and was soon to begin its fatal downwards slide.

Shànghǎi had become a modern city equipped with Art Deco cinemas and apartment blocks, the hottest bands and the latest fashions – a place of great energy where 'two cultures met and neither prevailed'. Chinese magazines carried ads for Quaker Oats, Colgate and Kodak, while Chinese girls, dressed in traditional *qípáo* (Chinese-style dresses), advertised American cigarettes. Shànghǎi's modernity was symbolised by the Bund, Shànghǎi's Wall Street, a place of feverish trading and an unabashed playground for Western business sophisticates. To this day the strip alongside the Huangpu River remains the city's most eloquent reminder that Shànghǎi is a very foreign invention.

The 'Paris of the East' and 'Whore of the Orient' became an increasingly exotic port of call. Flush with foreign cash and requiring neither visa nor passport for entrance, Shànghǎi became home to the movers and the shakers, the down-and-out and on-the-run. It offered a place of refuge and a fresh start and rejected no-one. Everyone who came to Shànghǎi, it was said, had something to hide.

By 1934 the world's fifth-largest city was home to the tallest buildings in Asia, boasting more cars in one city than the rest of China put together, and providing a haven for more than 70,000 foreigners among a population of three million. The city had become three times as crowded as London, and the cosmopolitan mix of people was unequalled anywhere in the world. Between 1931 and 1941, 20,000 Jews took refuge in Shànghǎi, only to be forced into Japanese war ghettos, and to flee again in 1949. Adding to the mix was a huge influx of Russians seeking sanctuary from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. In 1895 the Japanese had gained treaty rights and by 1915 had become Shànghǎi's largest non-Chinese group, turning Hóngkǒu into a de-facto Japanese Concession.

THE DEATH OF OLD SHÀNGHǎI

Following Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, with anti-Japanese sentiment inflamed and Chinese nationalistic fervour on the rise, the Japanese seized the opportunity to protect their interests. Warships brought 20,000 Japanese troops, who proceeded to take on the ragtag Chinese 19th Route army in Zhapei. The Japanese conducted an arbitrary aerial-bombing campaign against the district, levelling most of its buildings.

After Japan's full-scale invasion of China in 1937, Chiang Kaishek took a rare stand in Shànghǎi and the city bled for it. The Japanese lost 40,000 men, the Chinese anywhere from 100,000 to 250,000.

The International Settlements were not immune to the fighting, and after Chinese aircraft accidentally bombed the Bund and Nanjing Rd, most foreign residents reacted not by fighting, as they would have done for a colony, but by evacuation. Four million Chinese refugees were not so lucky.

After intense house-to-house fighting, the Japanese invaders finally subdued Shànghǎi in November, allowing their soldiers to proceed to Sūzhōu before advancing on Nánjīng for their infamous occupation of the city. Under Japanese rule the easy glamour of Shànghǎi's heyday was replaced by a dark cloud of political assassinations, abductions, gunrunning and fear. Espionage by the Japanese, the nationalists, the British and the Americans for wartime information was rife. The rich were abducted and fleeced. Japanese racketeers set up opium halls in the so-called Badlands in the western outskirts of the city, and violent gangs ran rabid.

1882

Shànghǎi – and China – is electrified for the very first time by the British-founded Shanghai Electric Company. Shànghǎi's first electricity-producing plant generates 654kw and the Bund is illuminated by electric light the following year.

1912

Republicans pull down Shànghǎi's ancient city walls to break links with the ousted Qing dynasty. Representatives from 17 provinces gather in Nanjing to establish the Provisional Republican Government of China with Sun Yatsen as president.

1921

The first meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), formed by Marxist groups advised by the Soviet Comintern, takes place in Shànghǎi.

1927

Chiang Kaishek takes control of Shànghǎi in March, an event soon followed by his 'White Terror', a brutal slaughter of communists, left-wing sympathisers and labour leaders, also known as the 'Shànghǎi Massacre'.

1930s

Blood Alley – a sordid domain of whore-houses, seedy bars and all-night vice in the Bund area – is the destination of choice for drunken sailors on shore leave.

1930s

Cosmopolitan Shànghǎi is the world's fifth-largest city (the largest in the Far East), supporting a population of four million. Opium use declines as it goes out of fashion, partly dislodged by growing cigarette consumption.

SHÀNGHǎI'S RUSSIANS

In the 1920s and '30s, as China's youth looked to revolutionary Russia for their future, 25,000 White Russians fled for their lives, travelling first to Siberia or Central Asia and then along the railroads to China. Many congregated in Manchuria before being pushed on to Shànghǎi by the Sino–Japanese War. By 1935 they formed the city's second-largest foreign community after the Japanese.

The refugees scraped the highest rungs of Tsarist society, from generals and aristocrats to poets and princesses, but all had to find a way to survive. The wealthy sold off their jewellery piece by piece. Moscow's musicians played in Shànghǎi's hotel bands, and ballerinas from St Petersburg quickly learned how to charge by the dance. The men took whatever jobs they could find: as riding instructors or, more commonly, bodyguards, guarding the wealthy against rival gangs and kidnapping.

Ave Joffre (Huaihai Rd) became the heart of the White Russian community, and was lined with Cyrillic signs and cafés serving Shànghǎi borscht, blini and black bread. There were Russian cinemas, printing presses and even rival revolutionary and Tsarist newspapers. White Russians kept the Russian diplomats on their toes with their regular attempts to storm the Bolshevik Russian embassy, just north of the Bund.

Yet beneath the glamour was deep despair and poverty. White Russians were stateless and so, unlike other foreigners in Shànghǎi, were subject to Chinese laws and prisons. Those without money or skills took the city's lowest jobs, or resorted to begging for alms from the Chinese. Others became prostitutes or ended up as drunks lying on street corners. The British looked down on the Russians, believing they 'lowered the tone', but used the men ('real tough nuts') in the Volunteer Corps.

In 1949 the Russians were forced to flee their second communist revolution in 22 years. There are few signs of Mother Russia in Shànghǎi these days, save for the original Russian embassy, a couple of empty Russian Orthodox churches (p85), and the odd Russian cabaret act flirting with the ghosts of the past.

By December 1941 the hostilities between Japan and the allied powers had intensified abroad, giving the Japanese incentive to take over the foreign settlements in Shànghǎi. Suspect foreigners were taken off for interrogation and torture in notorious prisons such as the Bridgehouse, where JB Powell, editor of the *China Weekly Review*, lost all 10 toes to gangrene. Prisoners were forced to sit for hours in the cold, with heads lowered, facing Tokyo.

The British and American troops had abandoned Shànghǎi in 1942 to concentrate their energies elsewhere, and the British and American governments, unable to overtake the Japanese, signed over their rights of the foreign settlements to Chiang Kaishek in Chóngqing in 1943, bringing to a close a century of foreign influence.

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, a few foreigners, released from their internment, tried to sweep out their Tudor homes and carry on as before, but priorities and politics had shifted. The gangs, con men, dignitaries, merchants, and anyone who could, had already made their escape to Hong Kong. Those who remained had to cope with biting inflation of 1100%.

By 1948 the Kuomintang was on the edge of defeat in their civil war with the communists, and hundreds of thousands of Kuomintang troops joined sides with Mao Zedong's forces. In May, Chen Yi led the Red Army troops into Shànghǎi, and by October all the major cities in southern China had fallen to the communists.

In Běijīng on 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong stood atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace, announced that the Chinese people had stood up, and proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic

of China (PRC). Chiang Kaishek then fled to the island of Formosa (Taiwan), taking with him what was left of his air force and navy, to set up the Republic of China (ROC), naming his new capital Taipei (台北).

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

The birth of the PRC marked the end of 105 years of 'the paradise for adventurers'. The PRC dried up 200,000 opium addicts, shut down Shànghǎi's infamous brothels and 'reeducated' 30,000 prostitutes, eradicated the slums, slowed inflation and eliminated child labour – no easy task. The state took over Shànghǎi's faltering businesses, the racecourse became the obligatory People's Park (Renmin Park; p71), and Shànghǎi fell uniformly into step with the rest of China. Under Běijīng's stern hand, the decadence disappeared, but the splendour similarly faded.

Yet the communists, essentially a peasant regime, remained suspicious of Shànghǎi. The group lacked the experience necessary to run a big city and they resented Shànghǎi's former leadership, which they always regarded as a den of foreign imperialist-inspired iniquity, a constant reminder of national humiliation and the former headquarters of the Kuomintang.

Perhaps because of this, Shànghǎi, in its determination to prove communist loyalty, became a hotbed of political extremism and played a major role in the Cultural Revolution, the decade of political turmoil that lasted from 1966 to 1976 (although its most ferocious period ended in 1969). Sidelined in Běijīng, it was to Shànghǎi that Mao turned in an attempt to reinvent the revolution and claw his way back into power. For most of a decade the city was the power base of the prime movers of the Cultural Revolution, the Gang of Four: Wang Hongwen; Yao Wenyuan (editor of *Shanghai Liberation Army Daily*); Zhang Chunqiao (Shànghǎi's Director of Propaganda); and Jiang Qing, wife of Mao (and failed Shànghǎi movie actress formerly known as Lan Ping, who used her position to exact revenge on former colleagues at Shànghǎi Film Studios).

Encouraged by Mao, a rally of a million Red Guards marched through Renmin Square, a force of anarchy that resulted in the ousting of the mayor. Competing Red Guards tried to outdo each other in revolutionary fervour – Shanghaiens who had any contacts with foreigners (and who didn't?) were criticised, forced to wear dunce caps, denounced and sometimes killed.

Most extraordinarily, in 1966 a People's Commune, modelled on the Paris Commune of the 19th century, was set up in Shànghǎi. (The Paris Commune was set up in 1871 and controlled Paris for two months. It planned to introduce socialist reforms such as turning over management of factories to workers' associations.) The Shanghai Commune, headed by Zhang Chunqiao from headquarters in the Peace Hotel, lasted just three weeks before Mao, sensing that the anarchy had gone too far, ordered the army to put an end to it.

As the Cultural Revolution unfolded, between 1966 and 1970, one million of Shànghǎi's youth were sent to the countryside. Shànghǎi's industries closed. The Bund was renamed Revolution Blvd and the road opposite the closed Soviet consulate became Anti-Revisionist St. At one point there was even a plan to change the revolutionary red of the city's traffic lights to mean 'go'.

In the revolutionary chaos and a bid to destroy the 'four olds' (old customs, old habits, old culture and old thinking), Chinese religion (p34) was devastated. Temples were destroyed or converted to factories, priests were conscripted to make umbrellas, monks were sent to labour in the countryside where they often perished, and believers were prohibited from worship.

1931

In September the Japanese invade Manchuria and extend control over the entire area by December. Shànghǎi's Chinese react with a boycott of Japanese goods, and a Japanese monk is killed.

By 1935

Twenty-five thousand White Russians have flocked to Shànghǎi, turning the French Concession into Little Moscow.

1937

In an event known as Bloody Saturday, bombs fall onto the foreign concessions for the first time on 14 August, killing more than 2000 in separate explosions at the Cathay Hotel, the Palace Hotel and Nanjing Rd.

1938

Twenty thousand Jews arrive in Shànghǎi, fleeing persecution in Europe.

Early 1943

The Japanese round up 7600 allied nationals into eight internment camps as the formal foreign presence in Shànghǎi ends.

1945

Following the Japanese surrender, the Kuomintang takes back Shànghǎi, fusing the International Settlement and French Concession and the rest of Shànghǎi into the Nationalist Administration, closing treaty ports and revoking foreign trading and self-governing rights.

GREEN GANG GANGSTERS

In Shànghǎi's climate of hedonist freedoms, political ambiguities and capitalist free-for-all, it was perhaps inevitable that Shànghǎi should spawn China's most powerful mobsters. Ironically, in 1930s Shànghǎi the most binding laws were those of the underworld, with their blood oaths, secret signals and strict code of honour. China's modern-day triads and Snakeheads owe much of their form to their Shanghainese predecessors.

One of Shànghǎi's early gangsters was Huang Jinrong, or 'Pockmarked' Huang, who had the enviable position of being the most powerful gangster in Shànghǎi, while at the same time holding the highest rank in the French Concession police force. Now sadly closed, Great World (大世界; Dà Shìjiè) opened in 1917 as a place for acrobats and nightclub stars to rival the existing New World building on Nanjing Rd. It soon became a centre for the bizarre and the burlesque under the seedy control of Huang Jinrong in the 1930s before being commandeered as a refugee centre during World War II.

Another famous underworld figure was Cassia Ma, the Night Soil Queen, who founded a huge empire on the collection of human waste, which was ferried upriver to be sold as fertiliser at a large profit.

The real godfather of the Shànghǎi underworld, however, was Du Yuesheng, or 'Big-Eared' Du as he was known to anyone brave enough to say it to his face. Born in Pūdōng, Du soon moved across the river and was recruited into the Green Gang (青帮; Qingbāng), where he worked for Huang Jinrong. He gained fame by setting up an early opium cartel with the rival Red Gang, and rose through the ranks. By 1927 Du was the head of the Green Gang and in control of the city's prostitution, drug running, protection and labour rackets. Du's special genius was to kidnap the rich and then to negotiate their release, taking half of the ransom money as commission. With an estimated 20,000 men at his beck and call, Du travelled everywhere in a bulletproof sedan, like a Chinese Al Capone, protected by armed bodyguards crouched on the running boards.

His control of the labour rackets led to contacts with warlords and politicians. In 1927 Du played a major part in Chiang Kaishek's anticommunist massacre and later became adviser to the Kuomintang. A fervent nationalist, his money supplied the anti-Japanese resistance movement.

Yet Du always seemed to crave respectability. In 1931 he was elected to the Municipal Council and was known for years as the unofficial mayor of Shànghǎi. He became a Christian halfway through his life and somehow ended up best known as a philanthropist. When the British poet WH Auden visited Shànghǎi in 1937 Du was head of the Chinese Red Cross!

During the Japanese occupation of Shànghǎi, Du fled to the city of Chóngqing (Chungking). After the war he settled in Hong Kong, where he died, a multimillionaire, in 1951.

Posters of Chairman Mao were posted over the doors of the Jing'an Temple to stop Red Guards bursting in, and an image of Mao was even added to the St Nicholas Church on Gaolan Rd. Amid all the chaos, Shànghǎi's concession architecture stood largely preserved, their wealthy occupants merely fading memories of a vanished era.

In 1976, after the death of Mao, the Gang of Four was overthrown and imprisoned. Accused of everything from forging Mao's statements to hindering earthquake relief efforts, the gang's members were arrested on 6 October 1976 and tried in 1980. Jiang Qing remained unrepentant, hurling abuse at her judges and holding famously to the line that she 'was Chairman Mao's dog – whoever he told me to bite, I bit'. Jiang Qing's death sentence was commuted and she lived under house arrest until 1991, when she committed suicide by hanging.

When the Cultural Revolution lost steam, pragmatists like Zhou Enlai began to look for ways to restore normalcy. In 1972 US president Richard Nixon signed the Shanghai Communiqué at

the Jinjiang Hotel. The agreement provided a foundation for increased trade between the US and China, and marked a turning point in China's foreign relations. With the doors of China finally reopened to the West in 1979, and with Deng Xiaoping at the helm, China set a course of pragmatic reforms towards economic reconstruction, which would result in consistently strong annual growth rates.

In communist China, however, the rush of economic reform has generated very little in the way of political reform. Corruption and inflation have between them led to widespread social unrest, which in 1989 resulted in the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

The demonstrations overtaking Běijīng's Tiananmen Square spread to Shànghǎi. While students and workers demonstrated, students based at Fudan University constructed their own 'statue of liberty'. The city was threatened with martial law and four days after the massacre in Běijīng on 4 June, tanks arrived in Shànghǎi's Renmin Square. Mayor Zhu Rongji intervened and the momentum petered out after a week or so. Recriminations were swift and several demonstrators were publicly shot.

THE RECENT PAST

Speeding on cruise control along a highway of its own making, Shànghǎi has effortlessly outstripped every other city in China, bar celebrated rival Hong Kong. Popping Shànghǎi into any conversation abroad prompts a flood of superlatives, agitated adjectives and breathless hyperbole. Reading the international papers, Shànghǎi can do no wrong. Wherever you look, the smart money is flooding into Shànghǎi, to help it pen the next chapter in Shànghǎi's dazzling chronicle.

The government has declared its aim to make Shànghǎi the financial centre of Asia. Nothing would satisfy the central government more than for Shànghǎi to replace Hong Kong as China's frontier of the future, swinging the spotlight of attention from the ex-colony on to a home-grown success story. The Shànghǎi Chinese love to compare themselves with Hong Kong; the Huangpu River city is still several years behind its southern rival but is catching up at breathtaking speed.

In 1990 the central government began pouring money into Shànghǎi. By the mid-1990s more than a quarter (some sources say half) of the world's high-rise cranes were looming over Shànghǎi. As the 20th century drew to a close, the city had built two metro lines, a light-railway system, a US\$2 billion international airport in Pūdōng, a US\$2 billion elevated highway, several convention centres, two giant bridges, several underground tunnels and a whole new city (Pūdōng).

Served by two airports and the world's first MagLev train – designed to sum up Shànghǎi as an ultramodern path-breaker – Shànghǎi's denizens now command the highest salaries in China. Runaway property prices have furnished a new class with money to burn, despite a nationwide property tax launched in 2005 to hit speculators. Swelling numbers of residents now dwell in gated villa communities, rewarding a life of hard graft with an enviably middle-class standard of living.

Having grown faster than virtually any other Chinese city in the past two decades, Shànghǎi remains the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow for China's swarming migrant workers, who now constitute almost four million of the city's total population of over 20 million. In 2005 the number of cars roaming the streets of Shànghǎi looking for a parking space topped two million. The Shànghǎi of even the late 1980s is now a nostalgic vision of a vanished city of yore.

1949

Hyperinflation means that one US dollar is worth six million Chinese dollars. Communist forces take Shànghǎi and the establishment of the People's Republic of China is proclaimed by a triumphant Mao Zedong.

1966

The Cultural Revolution is launched from Shànghǎi; eventually one million Shanghainese are sent to the countryside. St Ignatius Church finds new employment as a grain store while Jing'an Temple becomes a plastics factory.

1972

President Nixon visits Shànghǎi, as China rejoins the world.

1976

Mao Zedong dies in September – the same year as the Tangshan earthquake – preparing the way for a rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping to assume leadership of the PRC.

1989

Antigovernment demonstrations in Shànghǎi's Renmin Square mirror similar protests in Běijīng's Tiananmen Square; the demonstrations are broken up and the brief Beijing Spring comes to an end.

1990

Vegetable-growing Pūdōng discovers it will become a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). The decade continues to throw money and construction cranes at the district, converting it from flat farmland into one of the world's most ultramodern urban landscapes.

SHANGHAI VICE

Underneath the glitz and glamour of 1930s Shanghai lay a pool of sweat, blood and crushing poverty. In the words of a British resident, Shanghai was violent, disreputable, snobbish, mercenary and corrupt – ‘a discredit to all concerned’. ‘If God allows Shanghai to endure’, said the missionaries, ‘He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.’ Others agreed: ‘Shanghai is a city of 48-storey skyscrapers built upon 24 layers of hell.’

The city was often a place of horrific cruelty and brutal violence. After the Small Sword Rebellion, 66 heads, even those of elderly women and children, were stuck up on the city walls. In 1927, striking workers were beheaded and their heads put in cages. Up to 80,000 rickshaw pullers worked the littered streets until they dropped, while overcrowded factory workers routinely died of lead and mercury poisoning. In 1934 life expectancy of the Chinese in Shanghai stood at 27. In 1937 municipal refuse workers picked up 20,000 corpses off the streets.

Shanghai offered the purely synthetic pleasures of civilisation. Prostitution ran the gamut from the high-class escorts in the clubs of the International Settlement and ‘flowers’ of the Fuzhou Rd teahouses, to the *yēji*, or ‘wild chickens’, of Hóngkǒu, who prowled the streets and back alleys. The ‘saltwater sisters’ from Guāngdōng specialised in foreigners fresh off the boats. Lowest of the low were the ‘nail sheds’, so called because their services were meant to be as fast as driving nails, of Zhapei. Lists of the city’s 100 top-ranking prostitutes were drawn up annually and listed next to the names of 668 brothels, which went by such names as the ‘Alley of Concentrated Happiness’.

Prostitution was not the exclusive domain of the Chinese. The traditional roles were reversed when White Russians turned to prostitution and Chinese men could be seen flaunting Western women. An American madam ran Gracie’s, the most famous foreign brothel in town, at 52 Jianguo Rd, in a strip of brothels called The Line.

Linked to prostitution was opium. At the turn of the century Shanghai boasted 1500 opium dens (known locally as ‘swallows’ nests’) and 80 shops openly selling opium. Even some hotels, it is said, supplied heroin on room service, ‘served on a tray like afternoon tea’. Opium financed the early British trading houses and most of the buildings on the Bund. Later it funded Chinese gangsters, warlord armies and Kuomintang military expeditions. It was true that the police in the French Concession kept a close eye on the drug trade, but only to ensure that they got a reasonable slice of the profits. Not that there was much they could do even if they had wanted to; it was said that a wanted man in 1930s Shanghai need only pop into the neighbouring concession to avoid a warrant for his arrest.

In recent years, a gradual Disneyfication of Shanghai has also crept in. Xintiandi (p78) can come across as a fancy epitaph to the city’s once ubiquitous *shíkǎimén* (stone-gate house) housing. Aimed squarely at the Shanghai nouveau riche, the recently constructed towns in the suburbs – each modelled on cities in England, Germany, Spain, Italy etc – are by definition inauthentic. Pūdōng will always look like what developers thought Shanghai *should* look like.

Pundits recently warned that the race skywards, which defined the 1990s and much of the current decade, may have to stop. With Shanghai sinking into its marshy morass under the weight of its skyscrapers, architects are turning to the suburbs where a further cluster of new towns will house the swelling population.

The winds of change have long billowed down Nanjing Rd. For all its economic triumphs and the eager speculation of the past decade Shanghai is not immune to the historical forces that buffet modern China. Visitors like to see Shanghai as a fledgling Singapore or even a Hong Kong, a city-state construct somehow doing its own thing. The future of Shanghai, however, is closely enmeshed with nationwide trends way beyond its control. Shanghai is rich, but this has been of little consolation to the land’s 750-million-strong peasantry. With a population of 39 million, Guizhōu province in China’s southwest has a GDP a mere

one 10th of Shanghai’s. The Communist Party has continued to hunt for a system that can protect the underprivileged and impoverished while encouraging those with ambition to realise their dreams.

Perhaps alarmed by Shanghai’s economic supremacy, Běijīng has made attempts to curb the city’s influence. In March 2007, Xi Jinping was chosen as the new Shanghai Communist Party secretary after Chen Liangyu was dismissed from his post on corruption charges the previous year. The choice of Shanxi-born Xi Jinping is seen by many as a victory for President Hu Jintao in replacing members of the Jiang Zemin-allied Shanghai clique with officials loyal to his tenure.

Shanghai has been busy recasting itself as a global city, but it still lacks the *bon vivant* romantic allure of Paris, the multicultural vibrancy of London or the creative zest of New York. At times spectacular, Shanghai can seem like the latest thing, a city about the here-and-now and a future in the making, but also a work in progress, if not a metropolitan-sized construction site. Shanghai’s triumphant skyline is certainly something to write home about, but the city’s creative flatline and aversion to spontaneity still guarantee that many expats arrive to make money, and move on.

It does not really matter whether Shanghai has the biggest or the best, as the city has charted its own successful path – due to its unique history, location and sense of purpose – while other parts of China have simply looked on. But behind the percentile leaps and glittering statistics are questions about Shanghai’s ultimate destination. Besides solutions to problems such as transport infrastructure or how to build the world’s largest Ferris wheel, the city should be considering how to become a *true* exemplar for the 21st century. As long as China remains authoritarian and uncompromising in its politics, Shanghai will remain a city that can certainly dazzle, but struggles to illuminate.

CULTURE

Like Hong Kong, Shanghai maintains a deep underlay of traditional Chinese practices and beliefs beneath its often superficial modern guise. Chinese society is conservative, conformist and resilient to change, despite the simplistic presentation of Shanghai as a rapidly Westernising city where designer labels have long been the new face of town. Awareness of this underlying adherence to Chinese tradition – despite one’s first impressions of a city enamoured with all things foreign – should be noted by business travellers in particular.

That said, the Shanghainese are less bound to the Chinese traditions of gift-giving and elaborate ceremonies, and Shanghai weddings are often quite bereft of traditional Chinese practices. According to the Shanghainese, the reason for this pragmatic individualism is that for over 100 years Shanghai has been a magnet for refugees and fortune seekers, all forced to look out for themselves in a competitive, tough environment.

Despite this individualism, at the heart of Shanghai society is the family, a tightknit unit that is highly idealised. Confucian in design, the Chinese family follows a hierarchy from father to youngest child, although the structure is less strict and rigid than the South Korea example. The Confucian template is quite loose, but filial obedience – despite the wayward behaviour of the internet generation – is far more marked in Shanghai than in the West. The instinctive Chinese impression that

DOS & DON'TS

- When receiving a gift, put it aside to open later to avoid appearing greedy.
- Take your shoes off when entering a Chinese person’s home.
- When presenting your business card, proffer it with the first finger and thumb of both hands (thumbs up).
- Don’t plunge your chopsticks upright into your rice, but lay them down on your plate or on the chopstick rest.
- When beckoning to someone, wave them over with your palm down, motioning to yourself.
- Always hand your cigarettes around in social situations.
- You rarely see Chinese pecking each other on the cheek when meeting, so try to refrain.
- Don’t insist on paying for the dinner or bar bill if your fellow diner appears determined.
- Avoid writing in red ink, unless correcting an exam, as the colour is used for letters of protest and conveys unfriendliness.
- Don’t bite your fingernails.

2004

The world’s first commercially operating MagLev train begins scorching across Pūdōng. Plans to connect Běijīng and Shanghai are later put to sleep, but Shanghai and Hángzhōu later get the thumbs up for a shorter link

2004

Shanghai hosts its first Formula 1 Grand Prix

2006

Shanghai party secretary Chen Liangyu is dismissed on corruption charges and is later replaced by Xi Jinping, an ally of President Hu Jintao

CULTURAL HINTS & TIPS

Shànghǎi, like China before it, is not much of a meritocracy: those with *guānxi* (关系; connections) call the shots. Businesspeople invest endless hours in cultivating and massaging (networking) their *guānxi*, normally through business dinners, gift-giving and banqueting. Intractable proposals can suddenly get the green light when discussed over a plate of abalone, a bottle of whisky and a carton of cigarettes.

It helps to understand 'face'. Face can be loosely described as status, ego or self-respect, and is by no means alien to foreigners. Losing face (丢面子; *diūmiànzi*) is about making someone look stupid or being forced to back down in front of others, and you should take care to avoid it. In the West it's important; in China, it's critical. Circumvent a problem with smiling persistence rather than tackling it straight on, and always give your adversary a way out. Avoid direct criticisms of people. Venting your rage in public and trying to make someone lose face will cause the Chinese to dig in their heels and only worsen your situation. Business travellers should take note here as success can hinge on this issue. Don't lose sight of your own 'face' however – things should be reciprocal.

Linked to face are displays of respect and politeness (礼貌; *lǐmào*). Always offer gifts, cigarettes and food several times, and expect them to be refused several times before finally being accepted. It's good to refer to elders with the appellation *lǎo*, which means 'old'; for example, *lǎo* Wang means Old Mr Wang (remember that Chinese put their surnames first, thus Wang Zenghao is Mr Wang). You may find the old chestnut 'my English is no good' – 'no, it is very good' – 'no, my English is no good' repeated ad nauseam. Chinese convey respect by handing over business cards with the thumb and first finger of both hands. Another way of showing respect to prospective partners is to show them to the door of your office and even the entry of your building when they leave. They will probably say '*bié sòng wǒ le*' (don't see me off), but you should insist.

High-density levels and a high tolerance for crowding mean that personal space is generally not a highly valued commodity in Shànghǎi. No-one is ever going to get a lot of personal space in a country of 1.3 billion people, but the reasons for this are as much cultural as they are physical. Chinese rarely have that sacrosanct 30cm halo of private space around them that foreigners expect. For example, don't expect someone to walk out of your path if you are headed on a collision course. And when you are standing 30cm from a museum exhibit or notice board you will be surprised if someone squeezes into the space between you and the plate glass, blocking out your view. Car drivers refuse to give way, so standoffs become a sheer battle of wills.

Whether it be an evening meal out or a day at the park, the Chinese have a preference for things being '*rènao*' (literally 'hot and noisy') or lively. This helps explain the penchant for cacophonous banquets and top-volume karaoke sessions. The Shànghǎi Chinese also put ostentatiousness high on the list. All of this helps explain why Chinese restaurants are often such large, bright, brash and deeply unromantic places.

they are more a unit rather than a collection of individuals encourages family cohesion and a dampening of rebellious impulses. This helps explain why resistance to the Communist monopoly is so hesitant and ambivalent. In rebellion – whether it's taking on corrupt local officials or staging a demonstration against land confiscation – the Chinese will bide their time until critical mass with fellow sympathisers is achieved.

IDENTITY

Shànghǎi's reputation as a melting pot of East and West gained currency during the century of Western domination of the city from 1841 to 1949, when Shànghǎi was considered a 'foreign adventurer's playground'. Shanghainese nowadays are proud of their cosmopolitan history and culture, but other Chinese sometimes interpret this pride as snobbery, and the dalliance with Western culture as a loss of authentic Chinese values.

To the Shanghainese, however, other Chinese are at best *wàidìrén* (外地人; outsiders) or at worst *tǔbāozi* (土包子; country bumpkins). On the other hand, Shànghǎi people of all ages generally welcome foreigners, especially Westerners, to the city, and the city government has set a goal of 5% foreign residents in order to become an 'international city'.

As ever in China, language (p34) plays a supreme role in forging an exclusive identity, and the Shànghǎi dialect creates a deep common bond between locals, especially in the face of large influxes of immigrants coming to the city to work.

Chinese from other parts of China describe the people of Shànghǎi as pragmatic and stingy. Observing those very same traits that others see in them, the Shanghainese describe themselves as modern and individualistic. Going Dutch on a meal in Běijīng may be un-

heard of, but in Shànghǎi it is far from taboo – this is one of the few cities in China where most people would rather split the bill at a restaurant than fight for the honour of paying for the entire party.

Shànghǎi society also has its own set of internal divisions and stereotypes. The leafy west end of Shànghǎi, once home to rich foreigners and Chinese tycoons, is still known as Shànghǎi's 'high corner'. The industrial northeast, outside the boundaries of the old foreign concessions, is the 'low corner'. Low-corner Shànghǎi also became home to most of Shànghǎi's poor migrants from the north of the Jiāngsū province, who filled many of the dirty and dangerous trades in prerevolutionary days. Their descendants maintain a distinctive dialect, as well as their own cultural identity. Newer divisions in Shànghǎi are overtaking these old ones, however. 'White-collar' professionals with foreign MBAs are the new elite, sipping cocktails at chic retro bars, while working-class Shanghainese can only afford to stroll past and watch.

Local affiliations aside, as Han Chinese (汉族; Hànzú), the Shanghainese share in the myths and legends associated with their folk. The Shanghainese may consider themselves superior to the Chinese of Běijīng or Hong Kong, but at heart they remain Han Chinese.

Despite the Shànghǎi Chinese having a coherent sense of identity, a 2007 study revealed that 30% of high-school students and 50% of middle-school students in Shànghǎi wanted to change their nationality.

EDUCATION

As a result of China's Confucian heritage, the teacher is venerated and obediently respected by pupils. The reverence of teachers creates a sense of efficient order and harmony in the classroom and encourages academic excellence in Shànghǎi and other cities across China (and abroad).

China never quite shrugged off its love-hate affair with the crippling hard imperial examination system, inaugurated in the Tang dynasty, and do-or-die competitiveness among Shànghǎi's scholars continues undiminished. The one-child system has further heaped pressure on Shànghǎi's teeny academic shoulders. With the imminent arrival of the *gāokǎo* (university entrance examinations), hopeful parents flock to the Confucius Temple to light incense in hope of a nod from the sage of sages. At exam time, students and their parents avoid taxis with a 'four' or 'six' in the registration number ('four' throughout China chimes with the word for death, while 'six' in the Shànghǎi dialect resembles the word for 'fall'). A mushrooming pharmaceutical industry steps in to supply expensive brain-boosting drugs to parents anxious to unleash their children's full mental powers.

Education in Shànghǎi is patriotic and is marked by a semiregimented theme, as pupils are drilled in the advantages of uniform behaviour and exacting discipline. Not surprisingly, there are downsides to this culture of conformity. The absence of political debate in Chinese society can be partially traced back to the classroom taboos on questioning the teacher, as children learn to agree with what they are told. Foreign teaching staff in Shànghǎi frequently complain that students are very reluctant to debate either what they read in textbooks or are taught by lecturers. Shànghǎi students excel at absorbing information by rote learning, but are disadvantaged at disputing information or adopting arguments that counter accepted wisdom. Even when encouraged to adopt a contrary stance, a powerful resistance to debate influences students to agree with collective opinion.

Neither is the conformist atmosphere of Shànghǎi schools – and China's schools in general – conducive to thinking out-of-the-box or creative problem-solving. The majority of high-school students aim to study economics or business, subjects ideally suited to linear thinking. Creative subjects remain sidelined.

This partly explains why China suffers the world's largest brain drain. A recent study discovered that seven out of 10 Chinese studying in universities overseas fail to return to their homeland for work. Another reason for this reluctance to return is China's one-child policy: Chinese living abroad can have as many children as they want. A further reason is China's disinclination to being a meritocracy, with career advancement in China still often depending on *guānxi* (connections).

RELIGION

In China, an estimated 400 million Chinese adhere to a particular faith. Efforts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to replace religion with its own secular tenets have been undercut by the startling volte-face on its very own credo during the decades of reform since 1979. The yawning gap between rich and poor, and the failure of the Chinese Communist Party to protect the destitute and powerless has left a spiritual hole that has been increasingly filled by other beliefs that offer salvation. Traditionally belonging to either Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian belief systems – and occasionally all three – the Shànghǎi Chinese have not yet abandoned superstition, despite the decades of wrenching modernisation that followed hard on the heels of the heathen Mao era. The other major faiths that are currently practised in Shànghǎi are Christianity and Islam.

With Chinese society showing growing signs of dysfunction, religion is enjoying an upswing. But while religious freedom exists in China, this is freedom with Chinese characteristics. Belief systems – such as Falun Gong – can be banned overnight, and religious leaders of the major faiths are cherry-picked by Běijīng. Proselytising is banned, although this is having minimal effect on the spread of the Christian gospel (*hǎo xiāoxi*) as legions – Shanghainese included – turn to Christianity.

Indeed, if any religion faces a bright future in China, it is Christianity. By wiping the slate clean, Mao Zedong allowed the monotheistic religion – which has had an indecisive presence in China since the 8th century – to flourish in a land of people who suddenly found themselves unsure of what to believe in. Associations between Christianity and first-world status have a powerful appeal among Shànghǎi Chinese who suspect the religion lies behind the economic and political successes of the West. Travellers to today's China are increasingly approached by Chinese Christians, many of whom speak good English. Most belong to illicit house churches, rather than the state-recognised Protestant or Catholic churches, so the precise number of Christians is hard to fathom, although the figure of 90 million is sometimes posited.

The growing ebullience even prompted former Běijīng bureau chief of *Time* magazine David Aikman to pen *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, in which he predicts almost one-third of Chinese turning to Christianity within 30 years. Aikman sees Christianity reaching a critical mass and hence becoming unstoppable, propelling the nation into the league of Christian nations (like South Korea) and forever redrawing the geopolitical status quo.

LANGUAGE

Spoken by 13 million people, Shanghainese belongs to the Wu dialect, named after the kingdom of Wu in present-day Jiāngsū province. To Mandarin or Cantonese speakers, Shanghainese sounds odd, perhaps because it is a more archaic branch of Chinese. Furthermore, the tonal system of Shànghǎihuà differs considerably from Mandarin and Cantonese, displaying closer similarities to African tonal languages. A marked Japanese sound to the Shànghǎi dialect can also be heard. As the dialect is rarely heard on radio or TV and failed to make the transition to pop songs in the way Cantonese did, Shanghainese has a very small fan base among non-native speakers. With increasing immigration into Shànghǎi by speakers of other dialects, this trend is unlikely to be reversed. Furthermore, because of the growing prevalence of Mandarin and the absence of a standard form of Shanghainese, the dialect is constantly transforming and is quite different from how it was spoken just a few generations ago. Consult www.earnshaw.com/shanghainese/shanghainese.cfm for further fascinating information on

PIDGIN

In the 1920s and '30s few foreigners ever thought of trying to learn Chinese; if the natives did not speak English they considered that to be their tragedy, and foreign speakers of Chinese were eyed with suspicion. Most communicated with their head servant (the 'number one boy') using pidgin, a mix of English words twisted up with Chinese grammar. Interestingly, many of the words – like 'can do', 'savvy', 'chop chop', 'look-see' and 'chow' – eventually entered common English usage. Many of the phrases are a riot: a live fish is a 'walkee walkee fish' and a brain is a 'savvy box'.

DOES ANYONE HERE SPEAK CHINGLISH?

Wherever you glance in Shànghǎi, you enter a tortured linguistic realm where the laws of English grammar and spelling are miraculously inverted. You may at first be confused by a sign that says 'Be Seated Defecate', but it's actually just a way of saying that the loo you are about to use is not a squat version. 'Deformed Man Toilet' may sound like something from the David Lynch cutting-room floor, but it's merely a toilet for the disabled. By now you may have cottoned on that a 'Disabled Elevator' does not mean the lift is broken. 'The Green Grass is Afraid of Your Foot' is simply a somewhat roundabout way of saying 'Keep off the Grass'. Upstanding Shànghǎi speakers of Chinglish are regularly reminded 'Don't Expectation Everywhere. Don't Attaint Public Property. Don't Destroy Virescence. Don't Random Through Street. Don't Say Four-letter Word.' Welcome to the bizarre and compelling world of Chinglish.

A shop sign had the gall to advertise itself as 'OC SLOOT YTUABE & GNISSERDRIAH', which at first glance resembles some kind of outlandish code. Reading from right to left exposes the true gist, although the lettering is not mirror-writing as each letter faces the right way, but in a reverse sequence. The McDonald's at Shànghǎi's Hongqiao Airport offers some priceless advice: 'A tender remind from the police: Please use the crook under the table to ensure the safety of your belongs'. You may as well hand your valuables away, it seems.

It's all part of a growing linguistic empire, and with a potential 1.3 billion speakers, it's a force to be reckoned with. It won't be long before you have a small armoury of Chinglish phrases of your own. Before you know it, you'll know without thinking that 'Be Careful not to be Stolen' is a warning against thieves; that 'Shoplifters will be Fined 10 Times' means that shoplifting is not a good idea in China; that 'Do Not Stroke the Works' (generally found in museums) means 'No Touching' and that 'Slip Carefully' means the floor could be wet.

The days of Chinglish in Shànghǎi could, however, be numbered. In their bid to turn Shànghǎi into a truly sophisticated city, the authorities have dispatched an anti-Chinglish task force to crack down on deviant signage in the run up to the 2010 World Expo. They have, however, to contend with supporters of Chinglish who see it as an English patois in its own right and worthy of protection. Zhèjiāng-born author Guo Xiaolu took it all a stage further by writing her marvellous *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2007; Chatto & Windus) entirely in Chinglish. So there go you.

the Shanghainese dialect. For an introduction to the Mandarin dialect, refer to the Language chapter at the end of this book.

ARTS

Despite Shànghǎi's hedonistic and decadent past, the contemporary arts scene is something of an exasperating conundrum. Given its reputation for fashionable excess and flamboyant showiness, an invigorating art world would seal Shànghǎi's copper-bottomed standing as a glamorous destination. Yet a manifest reluctance in Shànghǎi's creative milieu stifles the vital frisson that fires up the world's eminent art capitals. Don't expect to be tripping over streetside performance artists, sidestepping wild-haired poets handing out flyers or clawing change from your pocket for an itinerant jazz band in Pùdōng.

Revolutionary credentials aside, Shànghǎi is neither alternative nor left-field; it is predictable in its ambitions and the bespectacled white-collar worker serves as an unlikely urban hero. Like the Chinese intelligentsia, artists attract suspicion among the *lǎobàixìng* (common people). As the white-hot crucible of China's economic overdrive, Shànghǎi funnels its energies into money-making, realising epic steel and concrete infrastructure projects rather than nurturing bohemian creativity. Abstract musings raise eyebrows, so both artist and dreamer are seen as unfortunate outsiders. Blame it on the one-child policy, the matter-of-fact educational system or the universal Shànghǎi dream to own a Porsche SUV, but Shànghǎi is a lonely city for the creatively inclined. Despite its more authoritarian bent, grittier Běijīng tends to pull in and hang on to China's creative idealists.

But art and prosperity being familiar bedfellows, there is no shortage of art galleries, and a generation of newly rich Shànghǎi art-buyers, eager to fill spaces on their walls, is prowling the city's ever-growing brood of galleries. If art-gazing tops your list of priorities, you will want to visit the recently opened Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (p70), the Shanghai Art Museum (p70), the Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art (p94) and the cutting-edge galleries at 50 Moganshan Rd (p96).

CINEMA

The first cinema opened up in Shànghǎi in 1908, but before movies could reach their glamorous peak in the 1930s, film-makers had to convince the distrustful Shanghainese that it was worth their hard-earned cash. The first cinema-owners shrewdly ran a few minutes of film, cut the reel and went around collecting money from patrons who wanted to see the rest. Soon hooked, the city boasted more than 35 cinemas and over 140 film companies by 1930. Hollywood stars such as Marlene Dietrich, Katharine Hepburn, Claudette Colbert and Greta Garbo were household faces in 1930s Shànghǎi. The Cathay Theatre on Huaihai Rd and the Shanghai Grand Theatre (p175) are among Art Deco cinemas that survive from that Golden Age.

China's first film production was shown in Shànghǎi in 1926. For decades thereafter Shànghǎi was China's Hollywood, and big studios like Mingxing (Star) and Lianhua churned out copies of Western hits, adapted with Chinese flair.

The genre changed in 1932 with the Japanese bombing of Hóngkǒu. As film studios were destroyed and companies lost money, they began showing film coverage of the bombing as a last resort; hence, the patriotic film was born. Film-makers and left-wing scriptwriters turned to social issues for inspiration, and suddenly prostitutes, beggars and factory workers were the characters projected onto the big screen.

This Chinese golden era produced its own adored movie stars, such as Ruan Lingyu, Zhou Xuan, Zhao Dan and Shi Hui, who became national celebrities, hounded by the paparazzi 'mosquito press'. The powerful popularity of film hit home when the wedding of 'Butterfly' Wu, revered actress and film icon, eclipsed the wedding of Song Meiling to Chiang Kaishek.

The Old Film Café (p188) in Hóngkǒu shows old Shanghainese films on demand, some with English subtitles, including *New Woman*, starring Ruan Lingyu and filmed in 1934.

The sun has set on Shànghǎi's cinemas. Theatres and cinemas in town sold 200 million tickets in 1979, but that number was down to below 40 million by 1996. Today's movie-goers are even scarcer, as DVD piracy makes the economics of domestic film-making increasingly dubious.

More innovative film studios in Xī'an and Běijīng have captured much of the international acclaim of contemporary Chinese film. Coproductions have been more successful for the [Shanghai Film Studios](#) (Shànghǎi Diànyǐng Zhìpiàn Chāng; [Map p126](#); ☎ 6438 7100; 595 North Caoxi Rd; 📍 Shanghai Stadium). One critical success was *The Red Violin*, a coproduction between Canada and Shànghǎi. It is possible to get a tour of the studio (Y60) via the Shanghai Sightseeing Bus Center (p213).

A more recent coproduction with Shanghai Film Studios involves Shànghǎi-born Vivian Wu (Wu Junmei; *The Last Emperor*, *The Pillow Book*). Wu has returned to her native city with her husband, director Oscar L. Costa,

top picks

FILMS

- *Shanghai Express*, 1932. One of the world's top-grossing films in 1932–3, this is probably the most famous Shànghǎi-related movie, though the link is tenuous. Based on the real-life hijacking of foreigners on a Běijīng–Shànghǎi train in 1923, it won an Oscar for best cinematography and a best-director nomination for Josef Von Sternberg, though it created a strong backlash in China. It features Marlene Dietrich purring the immortal and enigmatic line: 'It took more than one man to change my name to Shanghai Lily.'
- *Shanghai Triad* (Yáo a Yáo! Yáo Dào Wàipò Qiáo), 1995. Zhang Yimou's stylish take on Shànghǎi's 1930s gangster scene, starring China's most famous art-house actress, Gong Li.
- *Empire of the Sun*, 1987. Steven Spielberg's film based on JG Ballard's autobiographical account of his internment in Shànghǎi as a child during WWII (also see boxed text 'Shànghǎi Fiction', p38).
- *Suzhou River* (Sūzhōu Hé), 2000. A disturbing and obsessive narrative of love in modern Shànghǎi. The plot is heavy at times, but director Ye Lou's vision of Shànghǎi – gritty, disillusioned and duplicitous – is an excellent portrayal of the real city that lies behind the glamorous façade.
- *The Soong Sisters* (Sòngjiā Huángcháo), 1997. A Hong Kong production starring Maggie Cheung, Vivian Wu and Michelle Yeoh in an epic melodrama retracing the lives of the Soong sisters (see boxed text, p84). Although not always accurate (mainland censors demanded script approval), it's nevertheless an intriguing introduction to one of the most powerful families in recent Chinese history.

SHÀNGHǎI IN HOLLYWOOD

Western cinema has been so fixated with Shànghǎi over the years that Shànghǎi films are practically a genre unto themselves. In many, Shànghǎi is a mere backdrop, brought in whenever a bit of mystery, allure or plain sleaze is required. Shànghǎi never even appears in Hitchcock's *East of Shanghai*, Orson Welles' *Lady from Shanghai* or Charlie Chaplin's *Shanghaied*.

Armageddon Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck, Steve Buscemi et al save the earth from meteoric devastation, but not before a quaint and romanticised version of Shànghǎi makes a cameo appearance, to be wiped out by an asteroid impact in this 1998 spectacular.

Code 46 Shànghǎi serves as a futuristic backdrop to Michael's Winterbottom's 2003 sci-fi thriller/love story starring Tim Robbins.

Godzilla: Final Wars The Oriental Pearl TV Tower is toppled during the giant lizard's latest – and possibly final – stomp in this 2004 effort from director Ryuhei Kitamura.

Mission Impossible III Indestructible agent Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) finds himself transported to Shànghǎi for his latest improbable caper. The shots of canalside 'Shànghǎi' are actually filmed in Xítáng (p223) and Zhōuzhuāng, so if you go looking for them in Pǔxi, you won't find them. The film famously upset Chinese censors for its shots of laundry draped out to dry from bamboo poles and the suggestion that ex-PLA security guards were not paragons of efficiency.

Shanghai Surprise Madonna defies the praise she won for 1985's *Desperately Seeking Susan* with this 1986 turkey, starring alongside then-hubby Sean Penn.

The Painted Veil Excellent period tale of marital crisis unfolding against a backdrop of 1920s Shànghǎi and cholera-ridden Guǎngxī province, starring Edward Norton and Naomi Watts.

The White Countess Limp romantic drama framed against the Shànghǎi of the 1930s, starring Ralph Fiennes and Natasha Richardson.

in order to focus on their production company, [MARdeORO Films](#) ([www.mardeorofilms.com](#)). The first production, *Shanghai Red*, starring Wu and Ge You (*Farewell My Concubine*, *To Live*), came out in 2006. Another actress hailing from Shànghǎi is Joan Chen (Chen Chong), who started her career at the Shanghai Film Studios in the late 1970s and gained international fame in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*.

Shànghǎi's indie films are scarce. Look out for Ye Lou's *Suzhou River* (Sūzhōu Hé) and Andrew Chen's *Shanghai Panic* (Wōmen Hàipà). Both were shot with digital camcorders and are notable for showing a decidedly unglamorous and more realistic side of the city.

Chen Yifei's (p38) 1920s period drama, *The Barber* (aka *The Music Box*), was released posthumously in 2006.

For a scholarly look at old Shànghǎi cinema try the book *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai 1922–1943*, edited by Zhang Yingjin.

Cinematic productions in Shànghǎi and China are threatened by the rampant piracy that afflicts the industry. With productions appearing on pirated DVDs the instant they are released, the economics of film-making in China are far more compromised than Hollywood productions, which have more universal appeal and a much wider market.

LITERATURE

Energised by a vibrant literary scene, Shànghǎi in the 1920s and '30s cast itself as a veritable publishing-industry hub. Sheltered from the censorship of Nationalists and warlords by the foreign settlements, and stimulated by the city's new-fangled modernity and flood of foreign ideas, Shànghǎi hosted a golden era in modern Chinese literature.

Although born in Shàoxīng, Lu Xun (p108), China's greatest modern writer, lived in Shànghǎi from 1927 until his death of tuberculosis in 1936. The highly influential modernist author – who single-handedly dragged Chinese literature into the modern era – was one of the first founders of the Shànghǎi-based League of Leftwing Writers. Admirers of Lu Xun can visit his residence (p106) and pay respects at his tomb (p106), both of which are in Shànghǎi.

top picks

SHÀNGHǎI FICTION

- **Candy**, Mian Mian. A hip take on modern Shànghǎi life, penned by a former heroin addict musing on complicated sexual affairs, suicide and drug addiction in Shènzhèn and Shànghǎi. Applauded for its urban underground tone but sensational more for its framing of postadolescent themes in contemporary China.
- **Death of a Red Heroine**, Qiu Xiaolong. Despite some stilted dialogue, this well-received crime novel offers a street-level view of the social changes engulfing Shànghǎi in 1990.
- **Empire of the Sun**, JG Ballard. An astonishingly well-written and poignant tale based on the author's internment as a child in a Japanese POW camp in Shànghǎi, subsequently made into a film by Steven Spielberg.
- **Master of Rain**, Tom Brabdy. Atmospheric, noirish detective story set in the swinging Shànghǎi of the '20s. 'Pockmarked' Huang, a brutally murdered Russian prostitute and a naive British investigator come together for a real page-turner.
- **Midnight**, Mao Dun. In the opening scene of *Midnight*, conservative Confucian Old Man Wu visits his son's home in Shànghǎi. The sight of modern women, in high-slit skirts and revealing blouses literally shocks him to death. A famed presentation of the social mores of 1920s Shànghǎi.
- **Shanghai: Electric and Lurid City**, Barbara Baker. An excellent anthology of more than 50 passages of writing about Shànghǎi, from its pre-treaty port days to the eve of the 21st century.
- **The Distant Land of My Father**, Bo Caldwell. A moving portrayal of the relationship between a daughter and father, and of betrayal and reconciliation, commencing in 1930s Shànghǎi.
- **The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai**, Han Bangqing. Delving deeply into the lives of courtesans and prostitutes in *fin-de-siècle* Shànghǎi, this absorbing novel was first published in 1892 but only recently translated into English.
- **When Red is Black**, Qiu Xiaolong. Realistic detective story that packs plenty of literary muscle. A follow-up Inspector Chen novel (see *Death of a Red Heroine*) and great snapshot of the changing city seen through Chinese eyes.
- **When We Were Orphans**, Kazuo Ishiguro. Subtle and absorbing portrayal of an English detective who sets out to solve the case of his parents' disappearance in Shànghǎi, climaxing in war-shattered Hóngkǒu.

Mao Dun (real name Shen Yanbing), an active leftist writer in the 1930s, penned *Midnight* (*Ziyè*), one of the most famous novels about Shànghǎi (see the boxed text 'Shànghǎi Fiction', below). *Rainbow* (1992), by the same author, tells the tale of a young girl from a traditional family background who travels to Shànghǎi on a journey of political awakening.

Ding Ling, whose most famous oeuvre is *The Diary of Miss Sophie*, lived in Shànghǎi, as for a time did the writers Yu Dafu and Ba Jin. Writers were not immune to political dangers; Lu Xun's friend Rou Shi was murdered by the Kuomintang in February 1931.

Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing, 1920–95) is one of the writers most closely connected to Shànghǎi, certainly among overseas Chinese. Born in Shànghǎi, she lived in the city only from 1942 to 1948, before moving to Hong Kong and then the USA. Seeped in the city's details and moods, her books capture the essence of Shànghǎi. Chang's most famous books include *The Rouge of the North*, *The Faded Flower*, *Red Rose and White Rose*, *The Golden Lock* and *Love in a Fallen City*.

Contemporary voices are sparser. The most respected Shànghǎi writer today is Wang Anyi, whose bestselling novels (in China) include *Love on a Barren Mountain*, *Baotown* and *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, the last detailing the story of a Shanghai beauty-pageant winner from 1940 to the present. Wang also wrote the script for Chen Kaige's film *Temptress Moon*.

More recently, several high-school drop-outs gained notoriety, beginning with Mian Mian, who vividly described the marginalised underbelly of China in *Candy* (see the boxed text 'Shànghǎi Fiction', left). Less known in the West is Han Han, who skyrocketed to fame before his 18th birthday with his novel *The Third Way*, a searing critique of China's educational system (p33). He inspired awe and disgust simultaneously by turning down a scholarship to the prestigious Fudan University in order to race cars in Běijīng.

VISUAL ARTS

Even if the city's artistic output remains limited, there is a growing gallery and art-museum scene here and it's an exciting place to learn more about contemporary Chinese art in general. The warehouse studios/galleries at 50 Moganshan Rd (p96) are the nexus of the city's underground artistic community, and a definite must for anyone who's interested to

SHÀNGHǎI'S OTHER ART GALLERIES

The following galleries frequently stage interesting exhibits. See listings magazines for exhibition details.

Contrasts (对比窗艺廊; Duibichuang Yilang; Map p62; ☎ 6323 1989; www.contrastsgallery.com; 181 Central Jiangxi Rd) Decorative houseware, furniture, sculptures, paintings and rotating exhibitions of contemporary artists. There's a second gallery (Map p62; ☎ 6321 9606; 5th fl, 133 Central Sichuan Rd) too.

Deke Erh Art Center (p83) Fantastic warehouse exhibit space set up by Shànghǎi's cultural *tour de force*, Deke Erh.

Duoyunxuan Art Shop (p134) Calligraphy and traditional ink-painting galleries in the famous art-supplies shop.

Grand Theatre Gallery (大劇院画廊; Dà Jùyuàn Huàláng; Map p62; ☎ 6386 9696; 286 North Huangpi Rd; ☎ Tue-Sun; 📍 People's Sq) Attached to the Shanghai Grand Theatre.

Room with a View Gallery (p65) A typical gallery-meets-bar, with an emphasis on younger artists, particularly women.

Shanghai Chinese Painting Institute (上海中国画院; Shànghǎi Zhōngguó Huàyuàn; Map pp80–1; ☎ 6474 9977; 197 Yueyang Rd; 📍 Hengshan Rd) Occasionally has major exhibitions.

Studio Rouge (红寨; Hóng Zhài; Map p62; ☎ 6323 0833; 17 Fuzhou Rd; 📍 East Nanjing Rd) Right off the Bund, a good primer to the contemporary Shànghǎi art scene.

Unique Hill Gallery (p128) Old Shànghǎi memorabilia; great stop for collectors.

Wan Fung Art Gallery (p125) Modern Chinese paintings completed in traditional style; gorgeous setting on ground floor of the old Jesuit library.

Yibo Gallery (艺博画廊; Yìbó Huàláng; Map p90; ☎ 5888 0111; www.yibo-art.com; 198 Huayuanshiqiao Rd; 📍 Lujiazui) Pop art in Pūdōng.

see where Chinese art is heading today. Big-name galleries in the compound include the premier ShangArt (Buildings 16 and 18), the avant-garde Biz Art (4th floor, Building 7) and Eastlink Gallery (5th floor, Building 6), and the Art Scene warehouse (2nd floor, Building 4). Shànghǎi's growing band of art museums includes the Shanghai Art Museum (p70), the Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA Shanghai; p70), the Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art (p103) and the Pūdōng-side Zendai Museum of Modern Art (p94).

Commercial Chinese art in Běijīng and Shànghǎi is moulded by Western needs and expectations, which binds artistic subject matter within narrow and predictable horizons. Politically *risqué* themes – Chairman Mao still crops up in art works like some weary old prop and the clash between socialism and China's commercial cravings is another tiresome topic – do little to confront universal themes or push the envelope. It also occasionally promotes mediocrity, which is not where art in Shànghǎi should be heading. Political references merely accentuate the here-and-now context of Chinese art, concepts that will rapidly date.

Contemporary Shanghai artists to take note of include Pu Jie, with his colourful pop-art depictions of Shànghǎi, video-installation artists Shi Yong and Hu Jieming, and Wu Yiming, who creates calmer, more impressionistic works.

More traditional art comes from the southern suburb of Jinshan, which has its own school of untrained 'peasant' painters who have been turning out colourful and vibrant

top picks

GALLERIES

- **50 Moganshan Road Art Centre** (p96) The best art centre in the city, with over 30 independent studios and galleries.
- **Art Scene China** (p85) Edgy but accessible exhibits of top Chinese artists, housed in a 1930s villa.
- **Aura Gallery** (p107) Young, cutting-edge Chinese artists display their work in a minimalist warehouse space overlooking Pūdōng.
- **Shanghai Gallery of Art** (p65) The Three on the Bund address means big-name exhibitions and chic clientele.
- **Shanghai Sculpture Space** (上海城市雕塑艺术中心; Shànghǎi Chéngshì Diāosù Yìshù Zhōngxīn; Map pp120–1; www.sss570.com; 570 West Huaihai Rd; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue–Sun) Converted steel factory serving as a platform for up-and-coming sculptors.

top picks

MUSEUMS

- **Shanghai Museum** (p68) Chinese culture in an imposing and modern nutshell on Renmin Square.
- **Shanghai Art Museum** (p70) Lovely building with lashings of period features and an inimitable museum space.
- **Shanghai History Museum** (p92) Entertaining primer for getting a handle on Shànghǎi's flamboyant and chequered past.
- **Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall** (p71) Its Virtual World tour of modern-day Shànghǎi is a whirl.
- **Chinese Sex Culture Museum** (p91) Everything you ever wanted to know about sex (in China) but were too afraid to ask.

paintings for years. Their works have their roots in local embroidery designs and have no perspective. The themes are mostly rural and domestic scenes full of details of everyday life. You can see a selection of paintings from the Jinshan area in several shops in the Old Town's Old Street (p137), or you can head out to Jinshan itself.

The Shanghai Biennale has been held in November every two years since 1996, though the exhibits are watered down by government censors. Related fringe shows spring up around the same time, however, and are often of more interest. Outside of Biennale years the Shanghai Art Fair is an event held in November that brings traditional and modern (Western and Chinese) art, artists and galleries together.

CHINESE OPERA & THEATRE

Contemporary Chinese opera, of which the most famous is Beijing opera (京剧; *Jīngjù*), has a continuous history of some 900 years. Evolving from a convergence of comic and ballad traditions in the Northern Song period, Chinese opera brought together a disparate range of forms: acrobatics, martial arts, poetic arias and stylised dance.

Over 100 varieties of opera exist in China today and many are performed in Shànghǎi. Shanghai opera (沪剧; *Hùjù*), sometimes called flower-drum opera, is performed in the local dialect (p34) and has its origins in the folk songs of Púdong. Yueju opera (越剧; *Yuèjù*) was born in and around Shàoxīng County in neighbouring Zhèjiāng (the ancient state of Yue) in the early 20th century. *Yuèjù* roles are normally played by women. Kunju opera (昆剧; *Kūnjù*) or Kunqu opera (昆曲; *Kūnqǔ*) originates from Kūnshān, near Sūzhōu (p215) in neighbouring Jiāngsū.

Operas were usually performed by travelling troupes who had a low social status in traditional Chinese society. Chinese law forbade mixed-sex performances, forcing actors to act out roles of the opposite sex. Opera troupes were frequently associated with homosexuality in the public imagination, contributing further to their lowly social status.

Formerly, opera was performed mostly on open-air stages in markets, streets, teahouses or temple courtyards. The shrill singing and loud percussion were designed to be heard over the public throng, prompting American writer PJ O'Rourke to say it was 'as if a truck full of wind chimes collided with a stack of empty drums during a birdcall contest'.

Opera performances usually take place on a bare stage, with the actors taking on stylised stock characters who are instantly recognisable to the audience. Most stories are derived from classical literature and Chinese mythology and tell of disasters, natural calamities, intrigues or rebellions. The musicians usually sit on the stage in plain clothes and play without written scores.

China's most legendary 20th-century opera star was Mei Lanfang, who allegedly performed privately for several of Shànghǎi's gangland bosses in the 1930s. Venues for appreciating Chinese opera in Shànghǎi include the Yifu Theatre (p171) on Fuzhou Rd and the Kun Opera House (p171), on Shaoxing Rd.

The lower Yangtze region has a long tradition of storytelling, farce, comic talk and mimicking, all of which were traditionally performed in teahouses. Yangzhōu, Hángzhōu and Sūzhōu all have their own variants. *Píngtán* balladry is a mix of *píngghuà* (Sūzhōu-style storytelling) and *táncí* (ballad singing), accompanied by the *pípá* (lute) and *sānxián* (banjo). You can hear samples of various Chinese operas and *píngtán* at the Shanghai History Museum (p92) in Púdong, or at the Pingtan Museum (p218) in Sūzhōu.

MUSIC

Shànghǎi had a buzzing live-music scene in the 1930s, featuring everything from jazz divas to émigré Russian troubadours, but today it's sadly dominated by Filipino cover bands and

saccharine-sweet Canto-pop. Two independent Shanghaiese bands worth hearing are Crystal Butterfly and the Honeys; both play occasionally at venues such as the Ark Live House (p174).

The Conservatory of Music is a prestigious clearing house of Chinese talent. One of its most famous former students is Liao Changyong, a world-class baritone who has performed with Plácido Domingo, among others.

Classical Chinese-music performances are staged from time to time in Shànghǎi. The *èrhú* is a two-stringed fiddle that is tuned to a low register, providing a soft, melancholy tone. The *húqín* is a higher pitched two-stringed viola. The *yuèqín*, a sort of moon-shaped four-stringed guitar, has a soft tone and is used to support the *èrhú*. Other instruments you may come across are the *shēng* (reed flute), *pípá*, *gǔzhēng* (seven-stringed zither) and *xiāo* (vertical flute).

ARCHITECTURE

SHÀNGHǎI RISING

Like New York and Hong Kong before it, Shànghǎi's skyline is thrusting heavenwards in a dramatic seizing of the future zeitgeist. The city's head-spinning, space-age forest of triumphant towers has inevitably come to define a confident and brash, modern China in the way that the Bund (p61) forever recalls the indignity of foreign encroachment.

In its bid to overtake everywhere else, the Shànghǎi construction craze has no parallel anywhere else on earth. In the mid-1990s, when construction fever was peaking, urban myth attests that one quarter of the world's construction cranes were wheeling above Shànghǎi. Shànghǎi's relentless urban sprawl – the current population of 21 million is expected to jump by over 30% by 2020 – is one reason why half of the world's concrete and a third of its steel is sucked into China's construction cyclone. By 2003, Shànghǎi was accumulating 15,000 tons of construction debris daily.

Writers enthusing about Shànghǎi's contemporary architecture invariably reach for at least one sci-fi movie allusion. Both *Bladerunner* and *Star Wars* are handy analogies to describe the flying saucers, domes, robotic claws and cyborglike protrusions that adorn skyscrapers citywide.

But amid all the dizzying galactic spin, the results are hit-and-miss. Few modern Shànghǎi towers – with the exception of the Jinmao Tower and Tomorrow Square – are architectural phenomena that root you to the spot. Given a blank sheet of paper with few zoning laws, often all that is asked of construction firms is that they manage to propose their fantastical designs cheaply enough to outbid their competitors. Malls, office blocks and hotels are the most outlandish buildings to go up, but some of the city's more graceful structures are also the most modest.

The negative consequences of breakneck development – the lack of homogeneity, solidifying traffic, cheap and shoddy construction, polluted air – are everywhere, but the bottom line

THE ONLY WAY IS UP: THE SHANGHAI WORLD FINANCIAL CENTER

Missing a gaping window of opportunity to clinch the title as the world's tallest building due to a stop-start construction agenda that plagued its ascent, the Shanghai World Financial Center (Map p90) may now need to settle for a less-than-supreme third place. The long-stalled structure, construction on which began in 1997 before grinding to a five-year halt, is finally inching to its 2008 completion date. For years trumpeted as the world's-tallest-building-in-waiting, the 492m-high also-ran now has to swallow hubris as it comes in below 1667ft Taipei 101, the world's most stratospheric tower, located in Taiwan and built in 2004 (itself soon to lose out to the Burj Dubai, aiming to reach at least 2300ft). Construction on the centre originally began in 1997, before running into the Asian financial crisis and then facing local criticism for the circular design of the opening at the top of the building, which had been alarmingly likened to a Japanese flag. The design was redrawn to allow a bridge to fragment the circular form before the final device – a trapezoidal aperture – was approved. The Park Hyatt Shanghai is due to begin pampering guests from the building in 2008. Joining the race, South Korea is planning to build twin 2013ft tall skyscrapers in Incheon, but they could be dwarfed by a staggering 220-storey tower in Seoul – topping off at nearly 3200ft (twice as high as the Sears Tower in Chicago) – if it ever gets off the ground.

is that Shànghǎi is functioning on an international level, which just a decade ago was barely even possible.

Towering above Pǔdōng like a 21st-century, 420.5m-tall pagoda, the US\$540-million Jinmao Tower (p89) is a beautiful structure built by the same firm that constructed the Sears Tower in Chicago. Replete with symbolism, its 88 floors are auspicious (eight being the ultimate lucky number to the Chinese), while its 13 bands allude to Buddhist imagery. The segmented tower is also reminiscent of bamboo joints, while the shape of a pen is also evoked, acting as a counterpoint to the open book-shaped podium.

Elsewhere, the Pǔdōng skyline continues to crystallise into a hi-tech counterpart to the historic Bund across the water. The gaudy flamboyance of the Shanghai International Convention Centre, with its neoclassical lines and giant glass globes, is rivalled only by the shocking-pink baubles of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower (p91), which wouldn't be out of place as runner-up in a high-school architecture contest.

Construction on the long-awaited and much-vaunted Shanghai World Financial Center (p41) is reaching the end of its saga-strewn voyage into the grey altostratus over Lùjiāzui. Designed in the mid-1990s, the towering form makes a striking contribution to the skyline.

The sci-fi-named Tomorrow Square (p71) does what it says on the packet: it's bold, futuristic and more than a little bit otherworldly. Designed by French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier, the Shanghai Grand Theatre (p175) incorporates Chinese sweeping eaves with a futuristic employment of plastic and glass. Its shape is echoed at the other end of Renmin Square by the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall (p71) capped with a distinctive roof with four 'florets', symbolising budding magnolias, the city's flower.

Major upcoming construction projects include developing a stretch of riverside property north of Suzhou Creek (p60) and a total revamp of the southern stretch of the Huangpu banks for the 2010 World Expo.

In its bid to give concrete-and-steel expression to its resurgent self-belief, China has produced vertigo-inducing skyscrapers – capitalist symbols *par excellence* – as a nail gun to the coffin of Chinese socialism. China's crystal ball may remain temporarily obscured by a film of construction dust, but the future will judge whether the skyline will come to symbolise a glorious metamorphosis, or an episode of reckless hubris.

CONCESSION ARCHITECTURE

For many foreign visitors, Shànghǎi's architectural vision of the China-to-be is a mere side salad to the feast of historic architecture lining the Bund and tucked delightfully away down the side streets of the French Concession. The remnants of old Shànghǎi, these buildings are a part of the city's genetic code and inseparable from its sense of identity as the former Paris of the East. From baroque to Art Deco, concession architecture was carefully designed, and purposefully followed structural themes, in contrast to today's more haphazard creations.

The Bund (p61) – Shànghǎi's most famous esplanade of concession buildings – was built on unstable foundations because of the leaching mud of the Huangpu River. Bund buildings were first built on concrete rafts that were fixed onto wood pilings, which were allowed to sink into the mud. Thus, the bottom entrance step usually originated 2m in the air and sank to ground level with the weight of the building. Because of the lack of qualified architects, some of the earliest Western-style buildings in Shànghǎi were partially built in Hong Kong, shipped to Shànghǎi, then assembled on site.

top picks

SHÀNGHǎI'S MOST TALKED ABOUT BUILDINGS

- Jinmao Tower (p89)
- Tomorrow Square (p71)
- Shanghai World Financial Center (p41)
- Qi Zhong Stadium (p16)
- Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (p66)
- Oriental Pearl TV Tower (p91)
- Park Hotel (p193)
- Shanghai Exhibition Centre (p101) – as the website duly notes: 'Architecturally, SEC (Shanghai Exhibition Centre) is blessed with a unique characteristic'
- Ruijin Guest House No 1 Building, Morris Residence (p196)
- Arts & Crafts Museum (p88)

In the 1920s the British architectural firm of Palmer & Turner designed many of Shànghǎi's major buildings (13 buildings on the Bund alone), including the neoclassical Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (see boxed text, p64), the Bank of China Building (p66), the Peace Hotel (see boxed text, p64), the Yokohama Specie Bank, Grosvenor House (Jinjiang Hotel; p88) and the Customs House (see boxed text, p64; apparently inspired by the Parthenon).

Old Shànghǎi's other main architect was Ladislaus Hudec (1893–1958), a Hungarian who came to Shànghǎi in 1918 after escaping en route to a Russian prisoner-of-war camp in Siberia. Shanghai's American Club, the Moore Memorial Church (p71), China United Apartments, the Woo Villa (p102), the Shanghai Grand Theatre (p175) and the Park Hotel (p71) all owe their creation to Hudec.

Many of Shànghǎi's buildings were constructed in baroque, Neo-Grecian and neoclassical styles to affirm ties with the homelands of the British and French. The late 1920s saw the Shànghǎi arrival of Art Deco and its sophisticated, modish expressions of the machine age. The reign of Art Deco is one of Shànghǎi's architectural high-water marks with the city boasting more Art Deco buildings than any other city in the world, from the drawing boards of the French firm Leonard, Veyseyre and Kruze, and others. For a comprehensive lowdown on the style, turn to *Shanghai Art Deco* by Deke Erh and Tess Johnston.

Art Deco buildings of note include the Peace Hotel (see boxed text, p64), the Woo Villa (p102), the Paramount Ballroom (p102), Broadway Mansions (p66), the Cathay Theatre on Huaihai Rd, the Liza Building at 99 East Nanjing Rd, the Savoy Apartments at 209 Changshu Rd, the Picardie Apartments (now the Hengshan Hotel, p196), the Embankment Building (p117) and the Bank of China Building (p66), but there are dozens of others.

After 1949, Communism successfully mummified rather than transformed Shànghǎi, and many of these architectural treasures have been restored.

The French Concession is a delightful compendium of magnificent residential villa architecture, much of which has been well preserved.

LÒNGTÁNG & SHÍKÙMÉN 弄堂 石库门

In the same way that Běijīng's most authentic features survive among its gorgeous *hùtòng* (alleys), so Shànghǎi's *lòngtáng* (or *lìlòng*) are the city's principal indigenous urban architectural feature. *Lòngtáng* are the back alleys that form the building blocks of living, breathing communities, supplying a warm and charming counterpoint to the abstract and machinelike skyscrapers rising over the city. Tragically, Shànghǎi's *lòngtáng* – like Běijīng's alleyways – have pitted little more than a feeble resistance against indiscriminate developers who have toppled swathes of *shíkùmén* (石库门; stone-gate house) to make way for more glittering projects. The nationwide felling of historic buildings and their replacement with identikit functional architecture is an irreversible calamity.

History & Design

Following the strife of the Small Swords Rebellion (p22) in 1853, some 20,000 Chinese fled into the International Settlement. Sensing a newly arrived cash cow, the British decided to scrap the law forbidding Chinese from renting property in the concessions, and foreigners from developing real estate. British and French speculators built hundreds of houses in what became Shànghǎi's biggest real-estate boom.

The result was the *shíkùmén*, a unique mixture of East and West, a successful meeting of the Chinese courtyard house – with its interior-courtyard features and emphasis on natural light – and English terraced housing, which made up 60% of Shànghǎi's housing between the 1850s and the 1940s. As a result of displacement, many of the residents of *lòngtáng* and *shíkùmén* were wealthy migrants from Zhèjiāng and Jiāngsū.

Typical *shíkùmén* houses were typically two to three stories tall and fronted by an imposing stone-gate frame topped with a decorated lintel enclosing two stout wooden doors (frequently black), each decorated with a bronze handle. The lintel was sometimes elaborately carved with a dictum in Chinese, usually four characters long. At the entrance to the alley was usually a *yānzhidiàn* (烟纸店) – literally a 'tobacco and paper shop', where *lòngtáng* residents could pick up provisions round the clock.

BUILDING A NEW FUTURE?

In 2007, China's vice-construction-minister Qiu Baoxing drew an analogy between rampant property development and the twin calamities of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, calling it a 'third round of havoc'. Anyone familiar with China's cities can easily concur. China may enjoy an impressively long history, but it's possible to journey around China's towns and urban sprawls without encountering anything of genuine historical worth outside of the local museum.

The drive for badly built white-tile offices and poured-concrete conversions is a cruel legacy for future generations to contend with. What has survived destruction is furthermore often carelessly patched up and repaired with little thought for the original building materials or pigmentation.

In Shànghǎi and Běijīng this destruction of heritage is well publicised, but the effect is often more shocking in ancient capital cities like Luòyáng or Zhèngzhōu, where precious little survives of their former glories. China has always delighted in smashing its architectural hand-me-downs from former dynasties, but felled palaces, buildings and bridges were often replaced with similarly splendid designs. The communists under Mao Zedong initiated a different phase of destruction by replacing traditional Chinese buildings with grey, socialist architecture on an industrial scale, and the contempt for traditional China that Mao encouraged has yet to fully run its course. Today's developers have merely taken advantage of the institutionalised indifference, further robbing China of its irreplaceable heritage.

Shíkùmén were originally designed to house one family (although rent-paying tenants might inhabit the poky *tíngzǐjiān* room at the top of the stairs), but Shànghǎi's growth and socialist reorientation led to sublets of many families, each of which shared a kitchen and outside bathroom to complement the *mǎtǒng* (chamber pot). Běijīng's courtyard houses (*sīhéyuàn*), originally designed for the use of just one family, were similarly divided up after 1949. For the Shanghainese, a single-family kitchen and separate bedrooms remained a dream until the 1990s.

Today

Unfortunately, the *lòngtáng* world – beyond the prettified museum-piece specimens of Xintiandi (p78) – has been at the forefront of Shànghǎi's impressive deconstruction. With the growing penchant for living in high-rises, *lòngtáng* living became less and less a status symbol, a capitulation that invited further demolition. Today, with Shànghǎi caught in a relentless pursuit of the future, the city has sadly obliterated much of its history. China has long taken a perverse delight in destroying its own heritage and in this vast city of 18 million people, a mere 632 buildings enjoy protection, compared to almost 40,000 in London.

If you want to explore the interior of a *shíkùmén* house, a visit to the Shikumen Open House Museum (p79) is a must. There are also dozens of *lòngtáng* around town, many riddling parts of the French Concession. While wandering round the French Concession, look out for alley openings leading off from main roads. Most *lòngtáng* are numbered today, but a name in Chinese may be found above the alley opening, frequently incorporating the character *fāng* (坊) or *lǐ* (里), designating an alley. Visits to *lòngtáng* are also a feature of the Jing'an & West Nanjing Rd Walking Tour (p101), the French Concession Walking Tour (p87) and the Hōngkǒu & North Shànghǎi Walking Tour (p107).

RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

With today's religious renaissance (p34) sweeping China like a torrent, temples and shrines citywide are again the focus of spiritual aspirations for innumerable worshippers. In addition to the shrines listed below, Shànghǎi has an abundance of Catholic, Protestant and Russian Orthodox churches, synagogues and mosques, many of which are covered in the Neighbourhoods chapter and the walking tours.

Temples 寺庙

The place of prayer for Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian worshippers, Chinese temples (*simiào*) tend to follow a strict, schematic pattern. Most importantly, all Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian temples are laid out on a north–south axis in a series of halls, with the main door of each hall facing south.

One striking difference from Christian churches is their open plan, with buildings interspersed with breezy open-air courtyards. This allows the climate (hail or shine) to permeate; seasons therefore play an essential role in defining a temple's disposition. The open-air layout furthermore allows the *qì* (气; energy) to circulate, dispersing stale air and allowing incense to be liberally burned.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES 佛教寺庙

Buddhist temples (*fó jiào simiào*) tend to follow a predictable layout. The first hall you encounter is often the Hall of Heavenly Kings (天王殿; Tiānwáng Diàn), where a sedentary, central statue of the tubby bodhisattva Maitreya (弥勒佛; Mílěfó), also known as the Monk with the Bag or the Laughing Buddha, is flanked by the ferocious Four Heavenly Kings. Behind is the first courtyard, where the drum and bell towers often stand – if the temple is large enough – and smoking braziers for the burning of incense may be positioned. The main hall is usually called the Great Treasure Hall (大雄宝殿; Dàxióngbǎo Bǎodiàn), typically sheltering a trinity of golden Buddhist statues. The eighteen *luòhàn* (罗汉) are often found here, divided into two rows of nine. In other temples, they appear in a multitude of 500, housed in a separate hall (eg West Garden Temple in Sūzhōu, p218). A statue of Guanyin (观音; the Goddess of Mercy) often stands at the rear, facing north, atop a fish's head or a rocky outcrop. The goddess may also be venerated in her own hall and occasionally with a multitude of arms, for example at the Jingci Zen Monastery in Hángzhōu (p209). The rear hall may be where the sutras (Buddhist scriptures) are stored. A pagoda (塔; *tǎ*) may rise above the main halls or may be the only surviving fragment of a vanished temple. Originally built to house the remains of Buddha and later other Buddhist relics, pagodas were also used for storing sutras, religious artefacts and documents.

TAOIST TEMPLES 道观

Taoism predates Buddhism, and much of its religious culture connects to a distant animism and shamanism, despite the purity of its philosophical school. As a result, Taoist shrines (*dào guàn*) are more netherworldly and a palpable feeling of superstition and magic hangs in the air, although the basic layout echoes Buddhist temples. Decorated with a distinct set of motifs, including the circular *bāguà* (八卦; eight trigrams) formations, reflected in eight-sided pavilions and halls and the Taijī *yīn/yáng* diagram. Effigies of Laozi (founding philosopher of Taoism), the Jade Emperor and other characters popularly associated with Taoist myth, such as the Eight Immortals and the God of Wealth, are customary.

Taoist temple entrances are often guarded by Taoist door gods, similar to Buddhist temples, and the main hall is usually called the Hall of the Three Clear Ones (三清殿; Sānqīng Diàn) and is devoted to a triumvirate of Taoist deities.

Taoist monks (and nuns) are easily distinguished from their shaven-headed Buddhist confrères by their long hair, twisted into topknots, straight trousers and squarish jackets.

CONFUCIAN TEMPLES 文庙

Confucian temples (*wénmiào*) are not as colourful as their Taoist or Buddhist cousins, and can appear musty and neglected. Neither purged nor celebrated in contemporary China, Confucius finds himself today sidelined and abandoned.

Confucian temples bristle with steles celebrating local scholars, some supported on the backs of *bixi* (mythical tortoise-looking dragons). A statue of Kongzi (Confucius) usually resides in the main hall, overseeing rows of musical instruments and flanked by disciples. A mythical animal, the *qilin* (a statue exists at the Summer Palace), is commonly seen. The *qilin* was a hybrid animal (looking like an ox, dragon and sometimes giraffe) that appeared on earth only in times of harmony. The largest Confucian temple in China is at Qūfū in Shāndōng, the birthplace of Confucius.

ECONOMY

As one of the first Chinese cities to open to Western trade, the river and sea port of Shànghǎi enjoy a unique geographical location and historical significance that long ago shunted the city into a different league from rival ports such as Níngbō, Xiàmén or Qīngdǎo. Its superlative

location on the Huangpu River, just south of the mouth of China's longest river, the Yangtze River (长江; Cháng Jiāng), and plonked on China's coastline at a point between Hong Kong and Běijīng furnished Shànghǎi with compelling advantages. Chinese like to compare the Yangtze River to a dragon, with its head at Shànghǎi and its body coiling through half of China, lashing together a potential market of over 400 million people.

Combined with the provinces of Zhèjiāng and Jiāngsū, the Shànghǎi region accounts for almost a third of China's exports. The regional GDP totals a staggering US\$450 billion. With its economy expanding at a rate of 12%, Shànghǎi is the economic and trading heart of the world's fastest-growing economy, and its burgeoning wealth, leadership and intrinsic self-confidence have put it miles ahead of other Chinese cities.

Neither Běijīng nor Guǎngzhōu can match Shànghǎi's superficial, gilt-edged feel of modernity. Doing business and making money runs in the blood of the Shanghainese. Běijīng folk may be generous, erudite and hospitable, but it's the Shanghainese – with their stinginess and obsession with status – who focus their energies on creating wealth.

With gambling illegal in mainland China, China's addiction to making a legal bet – Macau's casino revenues have outstripped Las Vegas, largely thanks to the hordes of mainland high-rollers sweeping into town – helps fuel stock-market speculation. The latest hot stocks and tips are text messaged about town like there's no tomorrow as everyone *chǎogǔ* (literally 'fries stocks'), playing the stock market.

Left out from China's first round of economic reforms in the 1980s, Shànghǎi's economic renaissance dates from 1990, when it became an autonomous municipality and Pūdōng was established as a special economic zone. In 1992 Deng Xiaoping gave the seal of approval to Shànghǎi's redevelopment during his 'southern tour'. Until then 80% of the city's revenue went straight into Běijīng's pockets. Economic reforms and restructuring massively boosted Shànghǎi's GDP, and a flood of foreign investment poured into the city. With average per capita incomes of US\$7000, its residents now enjoy China's highest salaries.

The city also enjoys a unique position at the meeting point of both interior and coastal economic-development areas. As China's economic spotlight swings increasingly westward, Shànghǎi is seen as the key to unlocking the nation's stumbling hinterland. Economic boosters imagine waves of economic energy shooting up the Huangpu into the Yangtze River delta economic zone and from there to the huge cities of Wūhàn and Chóngqīng. Shànghǎi has also become one of East Asia's principle financial centres, attracting legions of foreign banks.

Shànghǎi's traditional rivalry with Hong Kong continues unabated, and the gap in living standards continues to close rapidly. Shànghǎi is targeting 2010 – World Expo year – to fully emerge as a top-flight world city. If it was a mere construction contest, Shànghǎi's sheer ability to stack cement and reinforced concrete would win it the cup, but Hong Kong's particular advantages – take its first-rate transport infrastructure, well-nurtured international status, dependable rule of law, established business culture, flair with the English language and even its more diverse topography and breezy island getaways – keep it in the lead.

Stung by accusations of creative sterility, Shànghǎi has flung open a host of cultural centres and art museums to cock a snook at Hong Kong. Perhaps Shànghǎi's strongest plus point is its youth and enthusiasm. Compared to its rival – where a growing staleness is perhaps taking hold – a palpable buzz is in the air. Shànghǎi's energy and zest could carry it across the line, but this would depend on political and social stability. Hong Kong's myriad freedoms, uncensored media, firm line on corruption and protection of intellectual-property rights could also give it the stamina for the long haul.

As the curtains fall on the 2008 Olympics in Běijīng, all eyes will quickly focus on Shànghǎi's preparations for World Expo 2010. Due to be held from 1 May to 31 October 2010, the fair will take place in the area in between Lupu Bridge and Nanpu Bridge. Set for completion by 2010 and in time for the World Expo, the Shànghǎi–Hángzhōu MagLev will shorten trips between the two cities to a mere 27 minutes (about as long as it takes to queue for a ticket at Shànghǎi train station).

INDUSTRY & FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Saturated with foreign capital, a quarter of all China's foreign investment gushes into Shànghǎi and the neighbouring water-logged provinces of Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng. As the world's economic

polarity continues to swing east, over 500 multinational company headquarters are stationed in Shànghǎi, and more foreign investment is destined for Shànghǎi than any other city on earth. Among industrial leviathan construction projects, the world's largest container port is undergoing construction offshore.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Seen from the river, towering above their couchant guardian warships, the semi-skyscrapers of the Bund present, impressively, the façade of a great city. But it is only a façade.

Christopher Isherwood, 1937

Christopher Isherwood's poignant reflection may mull over the façade of the Bund, but today's Pūdōng skyline generates similar qualms. Behind the deafening hype – in which the Western media plays a significant role – lies the economic reality of a nation ambivalent and divided about its reformist path and fearful of its recent history. Well-to-do citizens of Shànghǎi may be transfixed by the dazzling vapour trail left by the city's meteoric rise, but the 'lost generation' have more mundane concerns. Behind the incessant images of a strident Shànghǎi lies an assortment of more pear-shaped economic scenarios. Many of today's over-50s who endured the horrors of the Cultural Revolution found themselves either too old to benefit from capitalist reforms or saw their iron rice-bowl cradle-to-grave securities smashed.

Shànghǎi is not some kind of Singapore – a city-state divorced from another country. It is not even a Hong Kong operating under a 'One Country, Two Systems' arrangement. It is an intrinsic part of China, and as such it is buffeted by the social and political currents that course the land. Much of the frothy excitement about Shànghǎi bubbles up from its context as a city embedded within a communist state, a contradiction simply too startling for pundits to pass by. But it is the state – the inflexible, crony communist government of China – that needs a full appraisal if we can even begin to guess at Shànghǎi's economic future. Will Shànghǎi continue to spearhead the galvanisation of China to superpower status or will it become a symbol of what-might-have-been in a climate of abrupt economic reversal or stagnation?

They may be bandied around like medals, but shimmering GDP figures only tell part of the story. The eventual political hue of this one-party state has yet to finally set as the spectrum shifts from Marxist-Leninist Utopianism to Marxist-Thatcherism. Communist China is far less socialist than nations like the UK, where a fully functioning welfare state protects the underprivileged. In terms of free housing, education, health care or unemployment benefit, China today is far more coldly capitalist than sympathetically socialist. With Shànghǎi now reckoned to be ten times wealthier than the entire province of Guizhōu, economic disparities constantly haunt optimistic projections.

Běijīng's fondness for coercive governance and excessive control-freakery nurtures festering, unresolved social grievances. Amid all the uncertainty, what is definite is that popular faith in the Communist Party – its mandate to rule – is hardwired to continuing economic growth. This is a fragile symbiosis. The Chinese people cannot simply vote out the government, so faltering economic growth could expose the Communist Party's tenacity to retain power in the event of protests.

Pure economic problems range from sluggish domestic consumption and a high savings rate to an export-led economy, an over-dependence on foreign investment and a banking sector overloaded with bad debts. But the economics is far more knowable than China's idiosyncratic political drama where the wooden nature of Chinese politics acts as a deadweight to development.

The chaos of the Cultural Revolution may be a closed chapter, but the potential for social disorder remains. The authoritarian state buries historical events it would rather not discuss, in the belief they will simply fade away. In this campaign it has been successful: a generation of mobile-phone toting youngsters – inheritors of China, lock, stock and barrel – has grown up with little inking of the self-inflicted traumas of recent history or indeed their relevance. But with the country shaping up to play an instrumental part in the geopolitical drama of the 21st

century, Běijīng needs to confront its political misdeeds head on; otherwise the land could be condemned to repeat its mistakes. The wounds of the Cultural Revolution have not healed; its perpetrators still live and work within society in a variety of professional capacities, rather than languishing in jail.

In a knowledge-based economy, censorship creates mammoth disadvantages. Běijīng's stringent control of information hugely impinges on China's ability to fully involve itself in the world. The net result is the frequent proliferation of mediocrity. China's educational system (p33) effectively sedates truly enquiring minds and stifles inventiveness.

Corruption remains endemic. One of the principle complaints of the Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989, corruption survives as a powerful grievance. The indignant cannot count on a free press or a free and fair legal system to represent their complaints against corrupt activities, nor do they have the option of political activity. A recent sign that Běijīng is trying to deal with high-level corruption (while attempting to curb Shànghǎi's power) was the arrest of city party-secretary Chen Liangyu on corruption charges in October 2006. He was replaced in 2007 with a pro-President Hu Jintao ally.

China, however, remains resilient in the face of pessimistic prognoses. A long list of books has mused on China's coming economic demise, attempting to prick the bubble of expectation hanging over the country. Gordon Chang's six-year-old polemic *The Coming Collapse of China* predicted imminent economic meltdown, but his prophecies have failed to materialise. Will Hutton's incisive *The Writing on the Wall* is the latest well-argued forecast of China's unsustainable growth curve. Try to get a copy of Kerry Brown's excellent *Struggling Giant: China in the 21st Century*, in which the author applies his rich experience living and working in China to determine – in often humorous fashion – the startling incongruities of this land. *Mr China: A Memoir* by Tim Clissold is an hysterically honest account of how to lose money big time in China.

ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

CLIMATE

With a humid subtropical climate, Shànghǎi is often grey and overcast, so don't bank on the clear blue skies of winter Běijīng. With a mean temperature of around 18°C, Shànghǎi starts the year shivering in mid-winter, when temperatures can drop below freezing and vistas are grey and misty. The Shànghǎi cold is not the dry, biting cold of Běijīng, but a clammy chill that seeps into the bones. Few apartments have central heating in winter, and heating will come from air-con, if at all.

Spring brings warming days and lovely blossom to town, making March to mid-May probably one of the best times to visit weather-wise. As the weather warms, Shànghǎi residents take to wandering about town in pyjamas. Autumn (late September to mid-November) is also very pleasant, but it can still be very hot in September.

Summer may be the peak travel season, but the hot and humid weather makes conditions outside uncomfortable, with temperatures sometimes as high as 40°C (104°F) in July and August. The heat, a damp saunlike heat, is draining. June brings 'plum rains', saturating downpours that send pedestrians scrambling for cover as streets turn to rivers. Expect to see umbrellas in profusion on both wet and dry days as Shànghǎi girls shield their fair skin from the sun's rays. Cooling winds blow into town in September and the temperature begins to slide, but watch out for sudden stinging hot days at the tail end of summer, affectionately known as the Autumnal Tiger (*qiūlāohǔ*). By December the thermal underwear is being unpacked. Rain is heaviest between June and September, but falls throughout the year.

In short, you'll need silk long johns and down jackets for winter, an ice block for each armpit in summer and an umbrella wouldn't go astray in either season. See the When to Go section in the Getting Started chapter (p16) for more information on the best time to visit Shànghǎi.

GREEN SHÀNGHǎI

In its ambition to morph into a first-world city in the twinkling of a construction-dust inflamed eye, Shànghǎi is straining the limits of its environmental integrity.

GLOBAL WARMING: THE HEAT IS ON

China's coal-fired growth has coincided with ever more shrill warnings over global warming and China's responsibility in tackling climate change. With China having overtaken the USA as the world's top generator of carbon dioxide, international pressure is being ratcheted up on Běijīng to clean up its act, but the Chinese Communist Party is loathe to allow climate change to slow the frantic development agenda. To assume its place in the developed world, China wants the same opportunities to industrialise as other developed nations, which in the past were the world's chief producers of greenhouse gases.

Yet China's polluted rise is not just raising eyebrows abroad, and Běijīng is keenly aware that the land faces accelerated desertification, growing water shortages, shrinking glaciers, increasingly acidic rain and a progressively polluted environment if left unchecked. According to official estimates, China's pollution woes cost the country US\$200 billion per year, equivalent to 10% of its GDP (gross domestic product). Unless drastic action is taken, by 2032 China's emissions could be double the combined output of the world's industrial nations (including the US, Japan and the EU).

Part of the predicament is energy efficiency – China is developing exponentially, but much of its industrial infrastructure is outmoded and wasteful. Chinese steel-makers use three times as much energy to manufacture a ton of steel as their Japanese equivalents. As a developing nation, China is not bound by the Kyoto Protocol to cut carbon-dioxide emissions before 2012.

But in a bid to flaunt its green credentials and undermine suspicions that China is lax at enforcing ecological initiatives, Shànghǎi is building the world's first ecologically sustainable city – designed to accommodate half a million people – at Dōngtān on Chongming Island at the mouth of the Yangtze River. Engineered to cause minimum damage to the environment, Dōngtān is planning to house an expected 25,000 people by the time of the 2010 World Expo. The city's energy will be totally renewable and if the plan is a success, Dōngtān will be the world's first self-sustaining city.

Dōngtān may be riding on a wave of showcase hype, but Shànghǎi – aiming to become a truly international city – is keenly aware of the importance of ecological regeneration and renewable energy. With four times the number of people per sq km living here than in New York, drains carry more than five million tons of industrial waste and untreated sewage into the mouth of the Yangtze each day. Shànghǎi's restaurants throw away 673 million polystyrene boxes and 1300 million bamboo chopsticks a year.

China as a whole still uses energy at an extraordinarily inefficient rate – 10 times that of the developed world. In industrial production, it is estimated that China uses three times the world energy average to generate US\$1 of GDP. To produce US\$10,000 worth of goods, China uses seven times the amount of resources as Japan. Ten percent of China's GDP is frittered away by pollution and environmental degradation. China has also become a climate-change heavyweight (see boxed text, above) and has overtaken the USA as the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide.

Shànghǎi has one of the worst air qualities in China, although the air is not as sulphurous as in Běijīng. Windy days are much clearer than still days, however. Cars generate 70% to 80% of air pollution, and vehicle numbers continue to multiply, as over two million cars cruise along the streets of Shànghǎi. Any attempts to clean up the city's air will have an uphill struggle against mushrooming car ownership. And since 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China (according to the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute) and the realisation that China's environmental problems are both national and international (acid rain and dust from China falls on Japan, and up to 25% of atmospheric pollution in Los Angeles originates in China, according to figures), Shànghǎi has its work cut out trying to stay clean. For daily updates on Shànghǎi's air quality, click on www.envir.online.sh.cn/eng/airep/index.asp.

Shànghǎi aims to provide tap water that is up to European Standards by 2010, although at present most residents would only neck the stuff straight from the tap at gunpoint. What flows from the mains has a yellow tinge and an unpleasant odour, so locals tend to either boil their H2O or stick to bottled mineral and distilled water, making slaking a thirst an expensive activity.

A major hindrance is the absence of a grassroots, proactive green movement. Shànghǎi is being effectively prettified, with green cover increasing towards a target of 35%, and slowly cleaned

TONING DOWN SHÀNGHǎIHUÀ

One hundred years ago, the Shànghǎi dialect was spoken with eight tones, but these days locals in the city proper get by with firing off a mere five. This is no economy measure along the lines of simplified written Chinese: the Shànghǎi dialect is enduring a combined assault from the rapid influx of workers from outside town and the increased promotion of the Mandarin dialect. The lingo is under attack and old-timers are in a huff.

Prior to the Communist ascendancy, China was a fragmented linguistic mosaic of dialect areas with no lingua franca to bind the whole together. These dialect areas – such as Shànghǎi – still exist, but Mandarin (*Pǔtōnghuà*) has been peddled throughout the land as a utilitarian common tongue. In Shànghǎi – as in the rest of the land – Mandarin is everywhere: it's the official language in schools, TV and radio transmissions and it's the language of choice for locals chatting to out-of-towners.

The Shànghǎi dialect has consequently been adulterated with the slang and pronunciation of Mandarin. Fewer and fewer young Shanghainese are now able to yak away in the pure Shànghǎi dialect. Instead, most youths in Shànghǎi gabble in *Shànghǎihuà* heavily seasoned with Mandarin pronunciation – much to the horror of the old guard. The most perfectly preserved forms of *Shànghǎihuà* survive in rural areas around Shànghǎi, where Mandarin has less of a toehold.

Few foreigners who live in Shànghǎi speak the dialect properly, although a much larger number can understand it. The dialect has yet to be properly Romanised – unlike Cantonese – which makes learning an arduous task for outsiders. And with the increasing number of immigrant Chinese from all over China arriving in Shànghǎi and the growing dominance of Mandarin, learning *Shànghǎihuà* is perhaps for the specialist.

up, with large fleets of buses running on natural gas and considerably less airborne construction dust compared to recent years, but it will still take years to clean everything up.

See the Getting Started chapter for more info on sustainability, p19.

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Over the past two decades, Shànghǎi has grown faster than any other world city and now houses over 21 million people (a third of the population of the UK) and more skyscrapers than the Big Apple. To accommodate the vast influx of economic migrants, the city's size has expanded sixfold since the early 1990s. A constellation of themed satellite towns – nine in total and aimed at the more moneyed classes – have been drawn up to each house half a million people. With the state owning all land, urban development in Shànghǎi moves at a famously rapid rate compared to the snail's pace of similar projects in the West.

Fuelled by the gushing enthusiasm of both foreign and local propaganda, Shànghǎi sometimes loses sight of the sheer reality of managing a city of this size and complexity. Despite the huge construction of flyovers and new roads, transport planners are fretting over the increasing gridlock on Shànghǎi's streets as the number of cars rapidly multiplies. The huge road-expansion plan conceived in the 1980s predicted that Shànghǎi would top two million cars in 2020, a figure surpassed in 2004. The sheer amount of time it takes to get about town is having an increasingly detrimental effect on business efficiency.

The new deep-water container port at Yangshan, linked to the mainland by a 32.5km bridge, has made Shànghǎi the world's busiest port city in terms of cargo volume. Completed in 2007, the colossal 36km-long Hangzhou Bay Bridge links Ningbō in Zhèjiāng province with Jiāxing, south of Shànghǎi. It is the world's longest cross-bay bridge. Taking shape in the North Bund area north of Suzhou Creek, the new 130,000-sq-metre Shanghai Port International Cruise Terminal is a major new undertaking, due for completion in 2008. The project – with its stand-out glass-hemisphere terminal building and tower – will be capable of accommodating a large range of international cruise ships and will contain hotels, restaurants and other facilities.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Shànghǎi has long courted extremism in politics and has served as a barometer for the mood of the nation. The Chinese Communist Party was formed here back in 1921 (p79). Mao Zedong cast the first stone of the Cultural Revolution in Shànghǎi by publishing in the city's newspapers a piece of political rhetoric he had been unable to get published in Běijīng. The Gang

of Four had its power base here while the Shanghai People's Commune, modelled along the lines of the Paris Commune and established in February 1967, lasted a mere month before being closed down.

Things are different these days, and in its sixth decade of communist rule, Shànghǎi has become politically apathetic. With no forum for open political debate and strict taboos on questioning government policy, most Shànghǎi Chinese instead get their heads down and work, exceptionally hard, to forge an economic future for themselves and security for their families. There are few ways of dealing with political realities, and demonstrations tend to occur only if they dovetail with the government's agenda (eg anti-Japanese riots).

As one of China's four municipalities (the others being Běijīng, Tiānjīn and Chóngqīng), Shànghǎi is headed by the mayor of Shànghǎi. The former CCP Shanghai Committee Secretary Chen Liangyu was sacked for corruption in 2006, raising international eyebrows. He was replaced by an ally of Hu Jintao. The city government has a mildly useful website at www.shanghai.gov.cn.

MEDIA

Despite all its urban sophistication, Shànghǎi (along with the rest of China) has a problem with its media. Outside of Hong Kong, the largely sterile Chinese media experiences harsh censorship. The CCP brooks absolutely no criticism, and it employs the media as a tool for promoting its own political achievements and dismissing bad news. Propaganda is crudely channelled into the full variety of media, from war films on TV to newspaper commentaries, radio news programmes and internet sites. It all gets very numbing even after only a very brief exposure.

Journalism in Shànghǎi is dumbed-down and distorted. Foreign news is reported warts and all and, when necessary, with a mandatory pro-China slant (eg in the case of Sino-US relations). Newspaper editors lack the courage (understandably) to publish articles that question Chinese foreign policy, so news analysis is unanimously one-sided. Even Shànghǎi's with-it expat magazines conduct rigorous self-censorship (there are plenty of no-go subjects) to avoid being closed down or having its editors sacked.

Every year, China finds itself near the bottom of the Reporters Without Borders annual World Press Freedom index. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, China tops the world league for jailing reporters. The social impact of this cannot be underestimated: in the absence of hard facts and balanced analysis, even intelligent and cynical Shànghǎi readers find themselves repeating pro-China mantras at the drop of a hat. Constant propaganda has created a marked absence of independent thinking among the Chinese – the Shànghǎi Chinese included.

Taboo subjects, such as the bloody conclusion to the democracy protests of 4 June 1989 in Běijīng's Tiananmen Square, remain undebated and shunned by the media. In 2007, a Chéngdū newspaper inadvertently ran a private advertisement that read 'Saluting the strong mothers of the victims of 64'. Such is the blanket ban on mention of *liùsì* (the Chinese name for the incident, literally meaning 'six, four' or '4 June', the Chinese name for the events of 3 and 4 June 1989 when hundreds and possibly thousands of civilians were killed by the army in Běijīng), the oversight led to copies of the newspaper being pulled, and the sacking of the deputy editor-in-chief and two other employees. The mere fact that the advertisement's momentousness escaped detection before publication (the staff member responsible claimed ignorance of its significance) highlights Běijīng's success at obliterating the event from public awareness.

With such limitations on what can be reported, many newspapers opt for tabloid-style content, where celebrity gossip shares the page with graphic accounts of homicides and UFO abductions.

A major lifeline is the blogosphere, where the Chinese get to grips with the issues that affect them. As China shapes up to become the world's most populous internet nation, the internet – and mobile-phone technology – has emerged as the principle tool for circumventing media restrictions despite the impressive filtering system known as the Great Firewall of China (p19) that blocks websites deemed hostile to Běijīng's interests.

See p247 for more information on newspapers and magazines.

FASHION

The Shanghainese have the reputation of being the most fashionable people in China. ‘There’s nothing the Cantonese won’t eat,’ so one version of a popular Chinese saying goes, ‘and nothing the Shanghainese won’t wear’. Shànghǎi has breathtaking, vogueish pockets and the petite figures of Shànghǎi *xiǎojiě* (young women) ooze glamour in the cheapest and trashiest of skirts and blouses.

The city government has optimistically declared its goal to make Shànghǎi a fashion centre to rank alongside Tokyo, London, New York and Paris. In reality, though, the city still has a long way to go just to catch up with its own 1930s fashion scene, when images of Chinese women clad in figure-hugging *qípáo* (cheongsams) gave rise to its epithet as the ‘Paris of the East’. The city-sponsored International Fashion Festival week in March or April showcases local collections and international designers such as Givenchy and Vivienne Westwood.

On the street, Chinese-language lifestyle magazines such as *Shanghai Tatler*, *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Marie Claire* crowd every corner newsstand, the latest mobile phone has taken on almost religious importance, and Christian Dior, Gucci and Louis Vuitton shops glut Shànghǎi’s top-end malls.

See the Shopping chapter for more information, [p132](#).

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