

APRIL 2026

Shanghai | China

Julie Zhou, a Shanghai native and hospitality insider, unveiled the city's food, culture and energy to Timo Albiez (SHL) during the SHL-CieCAS Open Day.



Julie Zhou grew up in Shanghai and has watched it evolve without ever losing its essential character. «Shanghai is a city of opportunities,» she says, «but also a city of surprises. You can live here for years and still find something new around a corner you've walked a hundred times.»

Shanghai has a nickname that locals use: 魔都 – Mó Dū – the Magic City. Spend a few days here and you understand why. This is a city that holds contradictions together without effort. European-colonial facades on the Bund face a Pudong skyline that looks engineered by the future. Ancient laneway culture sits beside concept stores, Michelin-starred kitchens and some of the most forward-thinking nightlife in Asia. And underneath all of it runs a current of genuine openness, a willingness to absorb, reinvent and welcome.

Where to Go

Begin with the Bund and Pudong – as a tourist obligation, but as orientation. From west bank, the contrast between colonial architecture and Pudong's

towers captures Shanghai's identity: a city holding past and future in one frame.

Slow down. Yu Garden and its surrounding lanes reward an unhurried morning. 豫园南翔小笼 – Yuyuan Nanxiang Xiaolongbao – is iconic for soup dumplings: fresh, juicy, worth every minute of queue. Nearby, 绿波廊 Green Wave Corridor offers Shanghai-style dim sum in a traditional, and 沈大成, founded in 1875, remains one most authentic expressions of culinary heritage, with osmanthus cake and red bean buns.

For contemporary side, Anfu Road is where locals gather – cosy bars, independent shops, low-key energy doesn't perform for visitors. Tianzifang offers a more curated version of same spirit: a maze of lanes, galleries and concept stores where tradition meets creativity.

For a day outside city, Zhujiajiao Water Town offers canals, bridges and Jiangnan architecture – a tranquil escape, sometimes called Venice of East. Qibao Old Street is a closer alternative.

SHL IN CHINA

Since 2025, CieCAS has been SHL's Regional Hub in China, providing hospitality educational consulting to Chinese education partners and developing training courses. On 20 April 2026, the SHL-CieCAS Open Day showcased the partnership, fostering discussion and collaboration in this dynamic market.

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The Bars

Shanghai's evening offer spans a century of styles, and both ends are worth exploring. For old Shanghai romance, Paramount Hall – 百乐门, Bǎilèmén – is a legendary venue with glamour: drinks, entertainment and performances in a setting that evokes the city's golden era. The Peace Hotel – 和平饭店 – offers something equally atmospheric: a senior orchestra playing nostalgic melodies in a room that has barely changed in decades. These are the places that give Night Shanghai – 夜上海, Yè Shànghǎi – its meaning. Huaihai Road – 淮海路, Huáihǎi Lù – is where the avant-garde side of Shanghai comes out after dark: stylish interiors and a crowd focused on design.

The Food

Shanghai's culinary identity is built around 本帮菜 – Ben Bang Cai – home-style Shanghainese cooking: rich, mellow sweetness running through its most beloved dishes. A morning starts with the 四大金刚 – Si Da Jin Gang, the Four Great Kings: youtiao, soy milk, shaobing and doujiang funao. Simple, deeply local, and the best introduction to how Shanghai eats. For lunch, 葱油拌面 – Cong You Ban Mian – noodles tossed in scallion oil – is a staple. 排骨年糕 – pork ribs with nian gao – is another. For dinner, 葱烧大排, 熏鱼, or 生煎包 – crispy on the bottom, soft inside – with rice wine.

Where to Unwind

Qushui Lanting – 曲水兰亭 – in Hongqiao blends Jiangnan garden aesthetics with a modern spa: hot springs, a water corridor and an all-day buffet. A place that rewards a slow afternoon.

Shopping

Tianzifang is the best starting point for browsing – souvenirs, independent designers and artistic lanes. Chenghuang Temple – 城隍庙 – offers local snacks like Wuxiang Dou, a taste of old Shanghai. Shanghai-style embroidery and hand-painted silk scarves are distinctive souvenirs.

Where to Stay

W Shanghai – The Bund sits on the North Bund near the historic riverfront. Views of Pudong dominate both day and night as the skyline lights up.

If You Only Have 24 Hours

Start with Si Da Jin Gang at a breakfast stall, then walk Yu Garden. In the afternoon explore Tianzifang, then the Bund at sunset. Cross to Pudong for the skyline, enjoy Ben Bang Cai with rice wine, and end the night at Paramount Hall or a rooftop bar.