

CITY GUIDE: SHANGHAI



After finishing your summer placement you'll definitely deserve a break, and a chance to let your hair down. There's no better city to do this in than Shanghai, the international social and commercial hub of China since the 19th century.

Located on the affluent east coast of China, Shanghai is famed for its melting-pot society which blends the cultures of diverse Chinese identities with Western culinary, travel and nightlife influences.

Getting there

Shanghai is a very accessible city. Below are the details of trains from Haining and Huzhou. The school may also provide a minibus service to a Shanghai airport after your placement, make sure you know where you'll be dropped off and make use of the excellent (and cheap!) [Shanghai metro](#) to get to the centre.



Shanghai South Railway Station is on Line 1, Hongqiao Airport is on Line 2 and Line 10, and Pudong Airport is on Line 2.

From Haining:

There are trains from Haining Railway Station to Shanghai South Railway Station every 10-20 minutes. The journey takes around an hour and a half, tickets cost about £2. There is usually no need to book in advance and tickets can be bought from the ticket office at the station.

One person can buy multiple tickets, but will need the passport of everyone who's travelling (this is the same for booking all train, coach and plane tickets in China).

Tips:

- To buy a ticket, simply say the name of where you're going, in this case *shàng hǎi*. They will show you options on a screen where you can double check departure and arrival times, and make sure you buy the correct number of tickets.
- If you check [online](#) for trains from Haining to Shanghai it will also show trains from Haining West railway station. This takes half the time, but don't be deceived! Haining West is a half hour taxi journey from the city centre.
- The train from Haining arrives at Shanghai South railway station which is on Line 1 of the [Shanghai metro](#), about 45 minutes from the centre.

From Huzhou:

There are 3 trains a day from Huzhou railway station to Shanghai Hongqiao railway station, at 8:45, 14:52 and 19:25. The journey takes around 2 hours and tickets cost about £13.

It is a good idea to buy tickets a few days in advance due to the relative infrequency of the trains. Tickets can be bought from the railway station, or online if you can find a Chinese person to help.

One person can buy multiple tickets, but will need the passport of everyone who's travelling (this is the same for booking all train, coach and plane tickets in China).

Tips:

- To buy a ticket, simply say the name of where you're going, in this case *shàng hǎi*. They will show you options on a screen where you can double check departure and arrival times, and make sure you buy the correct number of tickets.
- The train from Huzhou arrives at Shanghai Hongqiao railway station which is on Lines 2 and 10 of the [Shanghai metro](#), about 50 minutes from the centre.

Accommodation

There is a large and growing youth hostel culture in China, and any major city has a lot of options. In most hostels, the other guests will be foreign travellers, although increasingly younger Chinese are also using them as cheap alternatives when travelling.

The staff will be almost universally bilingual, and most have bars where you can meet other people and have a few cheap drinks. Below are a few of my favourite places to stay in Shanghai:

- [Blue Mountain Bund youth hostel](#)- Fantastic location down a side street off East Nanjing Road, with shopping to rival London's Oxford Street. It's only a 15-minute walk to [the Bund](#) and 5 minutes from East Nanjing metro station on Line 2. There is a bar and an open-air roof terrace for guests. The central location makes it an excellent base for exploring all of Shanghai and most cab drivers know the area well, making it easy to get back after the metro shuts at night.
- [Shanghai City Central youth hostel](#)- In terms of the hostel itself this is the best place to stay in Shanghai. There are excellent options on rooms, the deluxe 3 bed private room is like a studio suite! The hostel has a bar downstairs which serves cocktails, shisha and pizza. Despite its name City Central is quite a way from the centre of Shanghai and you'll have to travel to get to most places worth visiting. This isn't a huge problem in the day when you can get the metro, but taxis back at night can get expensive.
- [Rock and Wood International youth hostel](#)- Rock and Wood is a fantastic choice if you want a slightly quieter location and vibe. It has big social spaces and a nice outdoor area. It's not as well located as Blue Mountain Bund, but has good links to the metro Line 2 for an easy journey to central Shanghai.

Things to see

There are lots of things to see and do in Shanghai, and websites like TripAdvisor and [Smart Shanghai](#) will be invaluable during your time there. Here's a short list of some of the must-see attractions in Shanghai:

- [Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Centre](#)- In my opinion the most fascinating place in Shanghai, I haven't found anything in China to rival this unique museum. Just getting there transports the visitor to the underground scene of Shanghai under Mao. Finding the museum itself can be quite a daunting experience, but don't give up! On arriving at the housing estate where the museum's located, you'll be directed by a security



guard at the front gate to the basement of one of the buildings. The museum houses hundreds of salvaged propaganda posters, giving a technicolour lesson in the history and politics of China's 20th century. There's also an excellent shop where you can buy postcards, books or prints for family and friends.

Closest metro station: Jiangsu Road (Lines 2 & 11).

- [The Bund](#) (*Wàitān*)- The famous Shanghai skyline is a stunning demonstration of China's rapid development. Standing on the Bund, you can simultaneously see the Western-inspired buildings lining the Bund and look over to the skyscrapers of the Pudong business district across the river. If you're after the weirder experiences in China then the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel might be for you (if you'd rather save your money though, it's really not worth it!)

Closest metro station: East Nanjing Road (Line 2).

- [Jing'an Temple](#)- There are many Buddhist temples to explore in China. Jing'an is particularly striking, as its location in the centre of Shanghai demonstrates the blend of the traditional and the modern that so many people love about the country. The nearby Jing'an park is also well worth a visit.



Closest metro station: Jing'an Temple (Lines 2 & 7).

Nightlife

Shanghai's reputation as a party city is well deserved and you'll find bars and clubs catering to all tastes. [Smart Shanghai](#) is a useful website where you can get taxi printouts with the address in Chinese of all Shanghai's bars. Be careful of clubs offering free drinks, as spirits will occasionally be fake and leave you regretting the choice in the morning! Here's a couple of my favourite Shanghai nightlife spots:

- [Captain's Bar](#)- Most of the bars with views across the Bund charge extortionate prices to cash in on their location. The Captain's Bar is a great choice if you want to watch your wallet whilst enjoying the incredible view. Located on the top floor of the Captain's youth hostel, the drinks are much more reasonably priced and the comfortable roof terrace is great in the summer.

Closest metro station: East Nanjing Road (Line 2).

- [Dada](#)- Located in a basement covered with graffiti and a dive bar in every sense of the word, Dada is reasonably priced and great fun. Early in the evening it can be quite quiet, and a good spot for a few drinks and a chat. As the night goes on it will fill up and get lively. Great for dancing, they have a range of nights playing hip hop, electronic and dancehall.

Closest metro station: Jiaotong University (Lines 10 & 11).

Travelling on from Shanghai

I'm often asked how many places people should try and see in a couple of weeks after the summer camp. The answer is always that it depends on how people like to travel, some prefer to spend a few days really getting to know a place whilst others want to see everywhere and don't mind rushing around to do it.

After a few days in Shanghai you might want to head north to Beijing, west to Sichuan or south towards Hong Kong, depending on what you want to see. I will write more about Beijing and Sichuan in the next week, there is plenty of good information about Hong Kong in English online. Here are some of the travel options out of Shanghai.

To Beijing:

[Beijing](#) is the capital of China and quite far to the north of the country. There are 3 options for getting from Shanghai to Beijing (*Běijīng*):

1. Overnight sleeper train- There are 2 overnight trains every night from Shanghai station to Beijing South station. The train takes 12 hours and you can choose either a seat (£35), a bed (£70) or a luxury bed (£163). I don't recommend this train unless you're on a very tight budget or want the experience.
2. Bullet train- There are 36 bullet trains per day between Shanghai Hongqiao station and Beijing South station. The train takes between 5 and 6 hours. Second class tickets are £63 and are very comfortable in comparison to standard Chinese trains. This is the best value way to travel to Beijing.
3. Aeroplane- Flying from Shanghai Hongqiao airport to Beijing Capital airport takes about 2 hours. Tickets vary hugely in price but can sometimes be picked up for about £130 return if booked early. However, once you've checked in and boarded at one end and retrieved your luggage at the other it takes almost as long as the quicker bullet trains.

To Chengdu

[Chengdu](#) is famous for its pandas and spicy food, it's in Sichuan province far to the west of China and has some stunning natural scenery. You have the same 3 travel options to get to Chengdu (*Chéngdū*):

1. Overnight sleeper train- There are 4 standard speed trains per day from Shanghai station to Chengdu station. They are cost effective to travel on, with tickets from £30. However, the journey takes a staggering 36 hours and I don't advise this way of travelling.
2. Bullet train- There are 2 bullet trains per day from Shanghai Hongqiao station to Chengdu East station, and another to Chengdu Central station. Tickets are from £70 and the journey takes 15 hours. All of the trains leave between 6 and 7 in the morning which gives a full day travelling, but means you'll arrive in the evening in time to check-in to accommodation. I personally haven't done this journey, but you'll get to see a lot of China and the scenery is supposed to be stunning.
3. Aeroplane- You can fly from either Shanghai Hongqiao airport or Shanghai Pudong airport to Chengdu in 3 to 4 hours. Ticket prices are quite expensive in the summer because of school holidays, costing upwards of £250 return