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48 hours in Shanghai: What to see and do



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With a population of nearly 25 million people, Shanghai is China's largest city. Boasting a rich ancient and contemporary history, modern architecture and river cities, Shanghai will have you wondering where to begin.

Travelling to this legendary city has never been easier, with Air Canada now offering daily direct flights from Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Here Victor Pereira, service director with Air Canada who's been flying there for over 22 years, shares his highlights and tips for making the most of your visit.

Getting into the city. Ride the world's fastest commercial high-speed electric train, the Shanghai Maglev, which runs every 15 minutes from Pudong International Airport. Or save by boarding the metro, which takes you deeper into the city centre for a mere 7.50 Yuan (around \$1.50).

Start with affordable luxury. Check into your hotel and book a relatively cheap massage by consulting the hotel concierge. Appointments are recommended to avoid wait times and confirm availability.

Save on sightseeing. Surround yourself in Chinese ceramics, sculptures and calligraphy at the Shanghai Museum, with free year-round admission. Then stroll along the Bund, a popular waterfront walkway on the west side of the Huangpu River. Here you can marvel at the city skyline, Shanghai Tower and the iconic Oriental Pearl Tower.

Eat and shop here. Pereira says that you can also find many trendy, and upscale restaurants in the Bund. "The French concession area is one of the most chic and European areas of Shanghai, you'd swear you were in Europe!" he explains. Shop for some local market souvenirs around the alleys of Tianzifang, which has transformed from legacy residential architecture and factories to an artsy area filled with bars, cafes, craft shops and boutiques.

Plan a day trip. Visit the two picturesque water villages of Suzhou and Zhouzhuang, which are sometimes known as the Venice of Asia. Or ask your hotel front desk to arrange a driver for the day and venture out on your own to the many ancient water towns surrounding the city. Here you'll take some of the most breathtaking pictures of your entire trip, so bring your battery charger and save memory space on your camera. Take a gondola cruise through the beautiful waterways of Zhouzhuang; see Chinese silk being produced at the silk-spinning factory; and explore Net Master Garden, a great example of a typical Ming dynasty garden.

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