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Image Alt Text: A married couple taking a selfie on a bridge in Shanghai

Shanghai is a fascinating city in China that blends history, culture, classic architecture, modern shopping centers, and world class entertainment. From The Bund, Shanghai Tower, Yu Garden, to Zhujiajiao, there are many experiences that can be tailored to your travel style. This article discusses 10 must visit tourist attractions in Shanghai complete with their key highlights, activities, best times to visit, and travel tips.

Why Shanghai Is a Popular Tourist Destination in China

Shanghai is a city that reveals two faces of China in a single trip. On one hand, you can find historic buildings, traditional gardens, old town areas, and streets that hold long stories of Shanghai's development. On the other hand, the city is filled with skyscrapers, modern shopping centers, business districts, and various entertainment destinations.

This combination makes Shanghai tourism appealing to all types of travelers. You can spend the morning soaking up the classic atmosphere at Yu Garden, take an afternoon walk along The Bund, and then spend the evening marveling at the glowing skyscrapers in Pudong.

Shanghai's popularity as a tourist destination is also evident in recent data. Throughout 2025, Shanghai recorded around 425 million tourist visits with total tourism revenue reaching approximately RMB 672.37 billion. During the same period, the city welcomed 9.36 million international tourists as well as visitors from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, representing a 39.6% increase compared to the previous year. The number of foreign tourists alone reached around 7.23 million, growing 45.3% year on year. This data was released by the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism in its [2025 Shanghai tourism statistics report](#).

These numbers show that Shanghai is not only a metropolis and business hub, but also an increasingly attractive international tourist destination. In fact, in the first quarter of 2026, Shanghai recorded another 2.23 million inbound tourist visits, up 28.04% compared to the same period in the previous year, according to [the Shanghai Q1 2026 inbound tourism report](#).

It is no surprise that iconic landmarks like The Bund, Yu Garden, Nanjing Road, Shanghai Disney Resort, Wukang Road, and the Oriental Pearl Tower continue to be recommended highlights in this city. However, Shanghai has far more to offer than just popular landmarks.

Before drafting your itinerary, it is helpful to know which tourist attractions in Shanghai are most worth adding to your trip. That way, you can select destinations based on your time, interests, and vacation style, whether for a brief three day trip or a longer exploration of Shanghai.

At a Glance: Tourist Attractions in Shanghai

Shanghai offers a diverse range of tourist options. You do not have to spend your entire trip at just one type of destination. Rather, one of the city's main charms is how easily you can combine history, culture, architecture, shopping, culinary experiences, and entertainment into a single itinerary.

Here is a quick overview of 10 tourist attractions in Shanghai to consider:

Tourist Attraction	Main Attraction	Best Suited For
The Bund	Historic architecture and Huangpu River views	All travelers
Yu Garden	Traditional Chinese garden	History and culture lovers
Shanghai Tower	Panoramic city views from above	Photography and skyline enthusiasts

<u>Oriental Pearl Tower</u>	Icon of the Shanghai skyline	Families and first time visitors
<u>Nanjing Road</u>	Shopping and vibrant downtown vibe	Shoppers and urban travelers
<u>Former French Concession</u>	City walk and classic architecture	Solo travelers and couples
<u>Shanghai Museum</u>	Chinese art and history collection	Culture enthusiasts
<u>Shanghai Disneyland</u>	Entertainment and theme park rides	Families and Disney fans
<u>Zhujiqiao Ancient Town</u>	Canals and water town atmosphere	Travelers seeking a different ambiance
<u>Xintiandi</u>	Heritage district, dining, and lifestyle	Urban travelers

Disclaimer. Information regarding operational hours, access, reservations, and ticketing for each destination is subject to change. Always check the latest details

on official destination channels before visiting, especially during holiday seasons and peak travel periods.

To get a complete look at what makes Shanghai such a captivating place to visit, let's break down each destination you can add to your itinerary.

The Bund



Image alt text: Reference photo at The Bund, China

If this is your first time visiting Shanghai, The Bund is almost always a destination worth including in your itinerary. This waterfront stretch extends about 1.5 kilometers along the Huangpu River and is known as one of Shanghai's most iconic historical areas.

What makes The Bund so appealing is the striking contrast between the past and present. On one side stands a row of historic buildings featuring diverse architectural styles, while across the Huangpu River rise the modern skyscrapers of the Pudong district.

This area was once the heart of Shanghai's financial and commercial activity. Today, it is one of the most popular places to take a stroll, enjoy city views, and snap photos.

What to do at The Bund?

The simplest activity is walking along the promenade while admiring the views of the Huangpu River. If you visit during the day, you can observe the intricate details of the historic buildings much more clearly.

However, the atmosphere transforms completely once night falls. The buildings along The Bund light up, while the Pudong skyline across the river creates a breathtaking backdrop for photography. The Shanghai government also highlights evening as one of the best times to see the buildings along The Bund look truly spectacular.

For a richer experience, you can pair a trip to The Bund with a stroll down Nanjing Road or a cruise along the Huangpu River.

Tips from Oona: Arrive in the late afternoon so you can enjoy two distinct atmospheres, watching the views in daylight before witnessing Shanghai light up at night.

2. Yu Garden



Image alt text: Reference photo at Yu Garden, China

While The Bund showcases Shanghai's modern, cosmopolitan side, Yu Garden offers a completely different perspective. This classical Chinese garden is one of the best places to experience Shanghai's traditional heritage.

Yu Garden is often visited alongside the surrounding Yuyuan Bazaar. You can walk along garden pathways, view traditional pavilions, ponds, rockeries, and various classic architectural elements typical of Chinese gardens.

Yu Garden also boasts a long history. Shanghai travel guides note that the garden was completed in 1577 and remains one of the surviving classical gardens in central Shanghai.

Why is Yu Garden a must visit?

One of the primary reasons is its unique atmosphere, which feels worlds away from Shanghai's skyscraper districts. You can experience the charm of the old city without ever leaving the city center.

The area around Yu Garden is also great for travelers who want to sample local foods, buy souvenirs, or simply enjoy a relaxing walk. For a more enjoyable visit, take your time inside the garden. Pay attention to the details in the windows, pavilions, bridges, and mini gardens designed to offer scenic views from every angle.

Tips from Oona: Yu Garden can easily be paired with The Bund on the same day, as both are conveniently located for exploring central Shanghai.

3. Shanghai Tower



Image alt text: Reference photo at Shanghai Tower, China

For those who want to see Shanghai from high above, Shanghai Tower is a top choice. Located in the Lujiazui area of Pudong, this building stands at an impressive height of 632 meters.

According to official Shanghai government information, Shanghai Tower features 127 floors above ground and 5 floors underground. The observation deck is located on the 118th floor at a height of roughly 546 meters, offering a full 360 degree view.

From up top, you can admire Shanghai's urban sprawling landscape from an entirely new vantage point. The Huangpu River, Pudong's mega skyscrapers, and the downtown core all fit into a single panorama.

Best time to visit Shanghai Tower

If you want to watch the city transform, going in the late afternoon is a great option. You can view Shanghai while it is still bright out, then watch the city lights switch on.

However, keep weather conditions in mind. Heavy fog or thick clouds can significantly reduce visibility from the observation deck.

Shanghai Tower can also be combined with other attractions in Lujiazui. This area is home to several of Shanghai's most iconic structures, making it perfect for lovers of modern architecture.

Tips from Oona: If the observation deck is a top priority for you, check ticket availability and reservation requirements before setting off.

4. Oriental Pearl Tower



Image alt text: Reference photo at Oriental Pearl Tower, China

Alongside Shanghai Tower, the Oriental Pearl Tower is another unmistakable icon of the Shanghai skyline. Its unique sphere design makes it instantly recognizable and a true landmark of the city.

It is located in Lujiazui, directly across the Huangpu River from The Bund. Because of this, it fits seamlessly into any itinerary focused on city panoramas.

The Oriental Pearl Tower offers a high altitude experience with a different character than Shanghai Tower. Beyond enjoying the views, visitors can explore the observation areas and other features within the complex.

Who is it suitable for?

This destination is great for first time visitors to Shanghai who want to cross off famous landmarks. Families will also enjoy it, as viewing the city from above is an exciting activity for all ages.

If you are short on time, you do not need to go up every observation deck in Shanghai. Pick the one that aligns best with the experience you want.

Tips from Oona: Compare the location, height, view type, and visit timing before deciding between Shanghai Tower and the Oriental Pearl Tower.

5. Nanjing Road



Image alt text: Reference photo at Nanjing Road, China

If you enjoy vibrant city energy, shopping, dining, and bustling crowds, Nanjing Road is one of the most exciting places to visit in Shanghai.

Nanjing Road is one of the city's premier commercial streets. The pedestrian zone allows visitors to stroll past a vast array of shops, restaurants, shopping malls, and glowing billboards that decorate the avenue.

Location is another major advantage. Nanjing Road can easily be combined with The Bund since both are situated in the same central area.

What makes Nanjing Road attractive?

You do not need to visit solely to shop. Just walking down the boulevard is an experience in itself, offering a glimpse into everyday urban life in Shanghai.

At night, the street comes alive even more with vivid lights from surrounding stores and buildings.

If you want to buy souvenirs, this area is a great place to browse a variety of items. However, remember to compare prices and ensure you buy from reputable stores.

Tips from Oona: Wear comfortable walking shoes, as combining Nanjing Road with The Bund will cover quite a lot of ground.

6. Former French Concession and Wukang Road



Image alt text: Reference photo at Former French Concession & Wukang Road, China

Shanghai is about more than just skyscrapers. To experience a more relaxed side of the city, add the Former French Concession to your itinerary.

This district is famous for its leafy, tree lined streets, historic buildings, cafes, boutiques, restaurants, and a calmer ambiance compared to the financial center. One popular spot for a city walk here is Wukang Road. Strolling under plane trees and past vintage architecture provides a totally different feeling than visiting spots like The Bund.

Shanghai travel guides consistently rate the Former French Concession as a key area for first time visitors, as the cosmopolitan charm of old Shanghai remains palpable here.

What activities can you do?

There is no need to rush through a long checklist here. In fact, this neighborhood is best enjoyed at a slow, leisurely pace.

You can:

- Walk around and admire the architecture
- Visit local cafes
- Take photos around Wukang Road
- Explore boutiques and small shops
- Observe the everyday life of Shanghai residents

Tips from Oona: Set aside at least a few hours if you want to soak up this neighborhood peacefully. A city walk is much more pleasant when not rushed by a tight schedule.

7. Shanghai Museum



Image alt text: Reference photo at Shanghai Museum, China

If your trip aims to go beyond photo spots and truly dive into Chinese history and culture, the Shanghai Museum is well worth considering.

This museum holds an extraordinary collection spanning various Chinese art forms and historical eras, including bronzes, ceramics, paintings, calligraphy, and jade. Shanghai travel guides regard this museum as an essential collection of Chinese artifacts, featuring diverse galleries that showcase rich cultural heritage.

Visiting a museum is also an ideal alternative when the weather is not ideal for outdoor exploration.

Why is a museum important in an itinerary?

Shanghai is known as a modern metropolis, but its growth is inseparable from China's deep history. A museum offers valuable context on culture and artistic achievements that might be hard to grasp just by looking at modern city buildings.

If traveling with family, visiting the museum can serve as a fun, educational activity.

Tips from Oona: Double check reservation rules before arriving, as entry and visitation schedules may follow specific guidelines.

8. Shanghai Disneyland



Image alt text: Reference photo at Shanghai Disneyland

For families or Disney fans, a trip to Shanghai feels incomplete without considering Shanghai Disneyland. Shanghai Disneyland is a world class theme park featuring thrilling rides, live entertainment, Disney character meet and greets, immersive themed lands, and fun dining experiences. It consistently ranks as one of Shanghai's top tourist attractions.

Unlike destinations like The Bund or Yu Garden that can be visited in a few hours, Disneyland ideal requires a full day.

How to organize your visit?

Since the park is vast, set your priorities before you arrive. Decide which rides or shows you want to experience first.

If traveling with kids, budget time for rest. Do not try to rush through every single area, as that can make the day exhausting. Keep the event calendar in mind as well. Weekends, school holidays, and special event periods will bring bigger crowds.

Tips from Oona: Check the official Shanghai Disney Resort app or website for the latest updates on park hours, tickets, rides, showtimes, and visitor guidelines.

9. Zhujiajiao Ancient Town



Image alt text: Reference photo at Zhujiajiao Ancient Town

If you want to experience a significantly quieter side of Shanghai, consider taking a day trip to Zhujiajiao Ancient Town.

Zhujiajiao is a historic water town that offers an ambiance completely distinct from downtown Shanghai. Canals, stone bridges, classic buildings, and wooden boats are the key elements that give this area its charm.

This destination frequently appears in official Shanghai travel itineraries that combine traditional, modern, and city walk experiences.

What to do in Zhujiajiao?

You can wander down narrow old alleys, admire the canals, sample local street food, and take a relaxing boat ride through the waterways.

The peaceful atmosphere is perfect for travelers looking to take a breather from the fast pace of the metropolis. Zhujiajiao can serve as a half day or full day trip, depending on how deeply you wish to explore.

Tips from Oona: Account for transit time from central Shanghai when planning your itinerary. Avoid packing too many downtown spots into the same day if you want to explore Zhujiajiao without rushing.

10. Xintiandi



Image alt text: Reference photo at Xintiandi, China

The final spot on this list is Xintiandi, an exciting area for travelers who want to experience a seamless fusion of heritage architecture and modern lifestyle.

Xintiandi is famous for its restored traditional Shikumen buildings, which now house trendy restaurants, cafes, shops, and modern entertainment venues. This neighborhood is a prime example of how Shanghai successfully integrates its architectural legacy with contemporary urban living.

Why is Xintiandi appealing?

Xintiandi is a wonderful place to spend late afternoon through evening. You can stroll around, enjoy a great meal, unwind at a cafe, or people watch.

It is an ideal choice for travelers who prefer to savor Shanghai without a jam packed schedule.

If you have already visited The Bund and Yu Garden, Xintiandi nicely completes your view of Shanghai's urban history.

Tips from Oona: Xintiandi pairs wonderfully with the Former French Concession, as both areas share a walk friendly vibe perfect for enjoying Shanghai's urban culture.

Tips for Choosing Shanghai Attractions Based on Travel Style

The ten destinations above each offer something unique. Therefore, you do not need to visit all of them if your travel time is limited. To help you select the best spots for your trip, here are recommended Shanghai tourist attractions categorized by travel style.

Travel Style	Recommended Destinations	Reason
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First Time to Shanghai	The Bund, Yu Garden, Shanghai Tower, Nanjing Road, Former French Concession	Provides a comprehensive overview of Shanghai's history, traditional gardens, skyline, city center, and heritage areas.
Traveling with Family	Shanghai Disneyland, The Bund, Shanghai Tower, Oriental Pearl Tower, Yu Garden	Offers a combination of entertainment, landmarks, and experiences suitable for all ages. Shanghai Disneyland should ideally be allocated a full day.
History & Culture Lovers	Yu Garden, Shanghai Museum, The Bund, Former French Concession, Zhujiajiao Ancient Town, Xintiandi	Showcases various aspects of Shanghai's history, culture, architecture, and urban development.
Photography Lovers	The Bund, Shanghai Tower, Wukang Road, Yu Garden, Lujiazui	Offers a wide variety of photography subjects, from modern skylines and traditional architecture to street photography and night cityscapes.

Disclaimer. Destination recommendations can be adjusted according to trip length, interests, weather, and hotel location. Always check for updated information on operating hours and accessibility prior to visiting.

Once you have selected the destinations that fit your style, the next step is prepping for your trip to ensure your exploration of Shanghai goes as smoothly as possible. Details like transport, apps, payments, and internet access are best organized before you depart.

Travel Tips for a Smoother Trip to Shanghai

Beyond choosing attractions, smart prep before leaving home is key to a hassle free trip in Shanghai. The city boasts an extensive public transport network and convenient digital services, but several things should be arranged prior to departure.

1. Avoid Packing Too Many Destinations into One Day

While Shanghai's transit network makes getting around easy, distances and the sheer size of each district should not be underestimated.

Instead of trying to hit eight spots in a single day, aim for three to five locations that are close to one another. This approach gives you plenty of time to enjoy each place without constantly rushing to the next spot.

2. Make Smart Use of Public Transportation

The Metro is one of the best ways to move between districts in Shanghai. Before leaving, look up the route from your hotel to your first destination and note any transfer stations.

For navigation, use Amap ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#)) or Baidu Maps ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#)). These apps help you find metro routes, tourist spots, restaurants, and nearby amenities.

If you typically rely on Google Maps, do not depend on it entirely while in China, as access to international services may vary. Set up alternative navigation apps beforehand.

3. Download Essential Apps Before Departing

In addition to navigation and payment tools, several local apps can make traveling in Shanghai much easier. They can help you hail rides, discover restaurants, find trending spots, and buy attraction tickets.

Consider setting up:

- **DiDi Chuxing** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

A ride hailing app perfect for getting around when you prefer not to take the metro.

- **Meituan** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

Useful for ordering food, finding restaurants, booking local services, and managing everyday needs.

- **Dianping (Da Zhong Dian Ping)** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

A popular local platform for discovering top rated restaurants, cafes, entertainment, and crowd sourced reviews. It helps you spot trending venues nearby.

- **Klook** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

Great for browsing and booking attraction tickets, tours, and travel experiences before or during your trip.

- **Xiaohongshu (RED)** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

A massively popular app for local recommendations, covering everything from food and cafes to photo spots and itineraries.

- **Pleco Chinese Dictionary** ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#))

An invaluable tool for translating text or speech whenever you face language barriers.

For local apps like DiDi, Meituan, Dianping, and Xiaohongshu, much of the content is in Mandarin. Built in translation features on your phone will come in handy when searching or booking.

4. Set Up Your Payment Methods

China operates largely on a digital payment ecosystem. Travelers should establish workable payment methods prior to arriving in Shanghai.

Alipay ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#)) and WeChat Pay ([App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#)) are the two primary digital payment platforms. Before you fly, verify the latest guidelines on linking international bank cards to ensure smooth transactions.

Always keep a physical payment card as a backup rather than relying on just one method. Carrying a small amount of cash as an emergency backup is also wise.

5. Secure Internet Access in Advance

Having reliable internet access is essential. Beyond communication, you will need data for maps, translation tools, ride booking, and travel apps.

Look into travel eSIMs, local SIM cards, or international roaming packages based on your needs. Confirm that your provider covers China and maintains stable connectivity throughout your journey. If you rely on specific international apps or websites, check whether they function seamlessly in China or if extra setup is required prior to departure.

6. Keep an Eye on the Weather

Many of Shanghai's finest attractions are outdoors. The Bund, Nanjing Road, Wukang Road, and Zhujiajiao offer very different experiences during heavy rain or extreme heat.

Check the weather forecast before setting your outdoor plans. If bad weather rolls in, pivot to museums, shopping malls, or indoor attractions.

Dress appropriately for the season. Shanghai experiences distinct seasonal temperature changes, so pack according to the time of year.

7. Book Tickets for Popular Attractions Ahead of Time

High traffic spots like Shanghai Disneyland, Shanghai Tower, and popular observation decks can sell out during peak travel periods.

Before departing, check if your target attractions require advance reservations, dated tickets, or extra identification. Booking early secures your slot and saves time. Always re verify opening hours, as schedules can change during public holidays or special events.

8. Save Destination Names in Mandarin

This simple trick works wonders when taking taxis, using ride hailing apps, or asking locals for directions.

Along with English names, save destination names in Mandarin characters alongside their full addresses on your phone. For instance, having the Mandarin address for The Bund makes communicating with drivers effortless.

Take offline screenshots of your hotel details, attraction names, and key addresses so you can access them even without a cellular signal.

9. Wear Comfortable Shoes

This may sound simple, but it is crucial. City walking is a massive part of the Shanghai travel experience.

Exploring spots like The Bund, Nanjing Road, Yu Garden, and the Former French Concession in a single day adds up to thousands of steps.

Choose supportive walking shoes, and consider packing a spare pair if your itinerary is packed. Build in rest stops to keep your trip enjoyable.

10. Save Hotel Details and Key Documents

Keep your hotel address, booking confirmations, passport copies, travel tickets, and other essential paperwork easily accessible.

It is best to store offline digital copies of these documents on your phone. That way, you maintain access even if your mobile connection drops.

For international trips, ensure your passport validity and travel documents fulfill all entry requirements well before leaving.

11. Learn Basic Mandarin Phrases

You do not need to be fluent in Mandarin to enjoy Shanghai. However, mastering a few basic words can go a long way, especially off the main tourist track.

Useful words to save:

- Nǐ hǎo (你好): Hello
- Xièxie (谢谢): Thank you
- Duōshǎo qián? (多少钱?): How much is this?
- Cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ? (厕所在哪里?): Where is the restroom?
- Bāngzhù (帮助): Help

Translation apps will easily bridge the gap when face to face communication gets tricky.

12. Secure Travel Insurance

Traveling abroad carries unpredictable risks, from lost luggage and flight delays to unexpected medical events. Because of this, [travel insurance](#) is a key step in pre-trip planning.

To learn more about coverage, benefits, and key considerations before purchasing a policy, read the [International Travel Insurance Guide for Indonesian Travelers from Oona](#).

Choose coverage tailored to your travel plans, and review policy benefits, coverage limits, claim procedures, and exclusions before purchasing. For a trip to Shanghai, consider Oona International Travel Insurance, which covers various travel risks such as emergency medical needs, flight delays, and delayed baggage subject to policy terms.

With thorough preparation, you can focus on enjoying Shanghai's incredible attractions with total peace of mind throughout your journey.

FAQ

How many days are ideal for a vacation in Shanghai?

Three days are enough to see top landmarks like The Bund, Yu Garden, Shanghai Tower, and Nanjing Road. However, if you plan to visit Shanghai Disneyland, Zhujiajiao, museums, and heritage districts at a more relaxed pace, four to five days is recommended.

What Shanghai attractions are best for first time visitors?

The Bund, Yu Garden, Shanghai Tower, Nanjing Road, and the Former French Concession are ideal for a first visit. These five spots offer a complete taste of Shanghai's history, culture, architecture, urban life, and modern growth.

When is the best time to visit Shanghai?

The ideal time depends on your travel preferences and weather comfort. Spring and autumn generally feature pleasant weather ideal for city walks and outdoor sightseeing. Always check weather forecasts and public holiday calendars, as peak seasons affect crowd levels and overall comfort.

Is Shanghai good for a family vacation?

Yes. Shanghai features many family friendly attractions, including Shanghai Disneyland, the Oriental Pearl Tower, Shanghai Tower, The Bund, and Yu Garden. When planning your days, avoid overpacking your schedule so the trip remains comfortable for everyone.

What can you do in Shanghai besides visiting tourist attractions?

Beyond sightseeing, you can sample local foods, shop, enjoy city walks, visit museums, explore heritage neighborhoods, discover local cafes via apps like Dianping or Xiaohongshu, or take a day trip to water towns like Zhujiajiao.

Which apps should you download before traveling to Shanghai?

Essential apps include Amap or Baidu Maps for navigation, DiDi for transport, Alipay and WeChat for payments and digital services, Meituan and Dianping for finding

food and local spots, Klook for booking attractions, and Xiaohongshu for local recommendations. Translation apps like Pleco or Waygo are also helpful for managing Chinese text.

Do you need travel insurance for a vacation to Shanghai?

Travel insurance is strongly recommended as part of international travel prep. Coverage protects against various unexpected risks according to policy terms, including medical needs, travel delays, or baggage issues. Always review benefits, limits, claim steps, and exclusions before buying.

Which tourist attractions in Shanghai are best for photography?

The Bund is a top pick for capturing the Pudong skyline, especially from late afternoon into the evening. Shanghai Tower is great for high altitude panoramas, while Wukang Road provides brilliant street photography scenes. For classic architecture, Yu Garden offers fantastic photo opportunities.

Can Zhujiajiao be visited in a single day?

Yes. Zhujiajiao works well as a half day or full day excursion from central Shanghai. You can explore canals, stone bridges, classic buildings, and traditional water town life. Account for transit time to keep your itinerary comfortable.

Does Shanghai Disneyland require a full day?

Yes, it is recommended. Shanghai Disneyland offers vast grounds filled with rides, shows, themed lands, and amenities, so dedicating a full day gives you enough time to explore without rushing. Check operating hours and ticket rules before going.