

# Shanghai

Contributed by  
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Shanghai, home to almost 12-million people, is China's largest city and is situated in the centre of the coastline where the Yangtze River flows through its delta into the East China Sea. The name of the city means 'on the sea', and most of the city (including Chongming Island) is only a few metres above sea level, criss-crossed by a maze of natural waterways of the Taihu drainage basin.

Shanghai is China's industrial and commercial capital. It is a busy seaport, and a science and technology centre, and has a vibrant business community. Visitors come to Shanghai not for its scenic beauty or history (the city is too young to have cultivated a classical heritage), but those who arrive on business can find plenty of off-duty entertainment and relaxation. Just walking the busy streets and soaking up the vibrant atmosphere is worthwhile, and there are some temples and gardens to visit along with an excellent museum.

This great cosmopolitan metropolis has a colourful colonial background which had the edge rubbed off of it during half a century of Communist rule. It was the first Chinese coastal port to be opened to Western trade in 1843, resulting in an influx of British, French and American diplomats and business interests, each of which established their own independent enclaves. In the 1920s and 30s Shanghai was regarded as a glamorous and rather decadent 'in' place to visit. It all ended with World War II and the coming to power of the Communist party, but now, since the early 1990s a dramatic re-building programme has been underway which is aimed at putting Shanghai back on the map as a major international finance and trade centre - the planned World Financial Centre will be the world's tallest building when it is completed in 2008.