

Shanghai

Five days, four nights.

Disneyland, garden courtyards and time by the river.

How I would spend the time

My Shanghai trip split into two nights near Disney and two in the city. Disneyland got its own day, with Yu Garden, the Bund and Shanghai Museum making up the city part. If I were doing it again, I would give the garden and waterfront a little more room. They are the places I would keep time for when everything else starts getting crowded.

This is how I would put those five days together. The first and last are for arriving and leaving, so there are three proper sightseeing days in between. It is enough for a good mix without trying to fit all of Shanghai into one visit.

Day	The plan	Stay
1	Arrive and settle in	Near Disney
2	Shanghai Disneyland	Near Disney
3	Move hotels, Yu Garden and the Bund	Central Shanghai
4	Museum, then a walk or shopping	Central Shanghai
5	Checkout and onward travel	-

Inside: choosing your base p2 / arrival and Disney p3 / Yu Garden and the Bund p4 / museum and neighbourhoods p5 / departure and transport p6 / food and photography p7 / adjusting the trip p8 / real costs p9 / China basics p10 / checklist and links p11.

Two bases that make sense.

I would choose the hotels around the days they need to make easier. Near Disney, the useful question is how you will get to the park and back. In the city, it is how easily you can head out for the day, find dinner and get home again.

The first two nights: near Disney

Look past the hotel name and check its actual location. “Disney area” can still mean a separate journey to the entrance. Ask where the shuttle leaves, whether you need to reserve a seat and when the last return runs. If you plan to stay late, know what your alternative is before booking.

Breakfast is worth checking too. An early start is easier when you know whether you can eat at the hotel or need to pick something up. For a late arrival, confirm reception hours and how to get in if your flight is delayed.

The next two nights: central Shanghai

People’s Square, East Nanjing Road and the Bund area are useful places to start looking. I would compare the address, the walk from the nearest station exit and the places to eat nearby. A hotel can look close on the map but still be awkward with a suitcase.

Ask whether you can leave your bags before check-in on Day 3. That lets you head out to the garden without waiting for the room. If you are arriving tired after Disney, an easy hotel move matters more than squeezing in an extra stop.

What I would book first

Start with flights or trains, then choose your Disney date and museum building. Fit the hotel nights around those. Leave some flexibility in the city days so you can work around the weather and opening days.

If you are skipping Disney

I would stay centrally for the whole trip. There is no need to move hotels just to follow this route.

Settle in, then Disney.

Day 1: keep the arrival simple

My planner had a late flight from Zhangjiajie into Pudong. After that, I would only plan for the transfer, something to eat if needed and bed. The Bund can wait until there is time to enjoy it.

Save the hotel address in Chinese and English before travelling. If you have arranged a pickup, keep the meeting point and contact number with your booking. Once you are checked in, charge your phone and put tomorrow's tickets and identification somewhere easy to find.

If you arrive earlier, take a short walk near the hotel or have a longer meal. I would leave it open rather than commit to another attraction on a day that depends on the flight.

Day 2: give Disneyland the whole day

I went to Shanghai Disneyland, and I would keep it as a full day. Pick a few attractions you really want to do, then work the rest around queues and how you feel. There is no need to chase every change in waiting time from one side of the park to the other.

Plan to eat in the park and take a proper seated break. After lunch, have another look at your priorities. Some things may be worth waiting for; others can come off the list. I would rather enjoy the day than spend it worrying about what is still left.

Use the programme for your actual date when deciding whether to stay into the evening. Keep the hotel return in mind, especially if you are relying on its last shuttle. The second night nearby means you can finish the day and go straight back to your room.

Before the park day

Check dated admission, required identification, what you can bring and any extras you are considering. Make sure a ticket is for park entry, rather than just an add-on.

[Shanghai Disney Resort: tickets and visitor information](#)

Yu Garden, then the Bund.

Yu Garden began as a Ming-dynasty retreat for the Pan family. Look through its doorways: the ponds, rockeries and pavilions form a succession of framed views.

The Bund was old Shanghai's financial heart. Its grand historic buildings facing the modern Pudong skyline make the river walk worth seeing in both directions.

Move to your central hotel and leave your bags first. I would make Yu Garden the main visit before lunch, then let the afternoon lead towards the river.

Take your time inside the garden

Slow down around the rockwork, courtyards and views through the doorways. The garden feels different from the shopping streets outside, so do not judge it by how busy the surrounding bazaar is. Give yourself time to notice the smaller details.

Leave a generous morning for the garden and old-city streets, then have lunch at Nanxiang Mantou Dian near Yu Garden. My restaurant notes and map link are on page 7. If lunch runs long, shorten the shopping rather than the waterfront time.

Walk towards the waterfront

From the old-city area, head towards the Huangpu River and follow the Bund north towards East Nanjing Road. Allow about half an hour for the connection before photo stops, depending on where you leave the garden. Check the map from your actual exit.

If it is hot or your legs have had enough, take a taxi for that part. There is still plenty of walking to enjoy once you reach the waterfront.

Leave the afternoon open

Look across the river towards Pudong, then turn around and take in the buildings along the Bund. I would leave this part of the day free of another timed booking. Sit down, take photographs and see whether you feel like staying into the evening.

East Nanjing Road gives you a way back towards the central shopping district. Browse if you have the energy, then have dinner near your hotel. After a day mostly on foot, I would keep the evening easy.

If the hotel move takes longer

Check Yu Garden's last entry before heading out. Shorten the browsing or move the garden to another suitable day if needed; do not try to recover the time by rushing every stop.

A museum and a smaller outing.

Shanghai Museum was part of my trip. For this day, I would choose the building for what I want to see, then plan the afternoon around that location. The People's Square site and the East Museum in Pudong are separate destinations.

Choose the collection before the address

Look at the current exhibitions and admission notice before choosing a branch. People's Square can have a different programme from the East Museum, so picking the familiar address alone may not give you the visit you had in mind. Check opening days, tickets and any reservations for the exhibition or space you want.

[Shanghai Museum: current admission and exhibition arrangements](#)

Leave two to three hours for a focused visit

Choose the rooms or exhibits you are most interested in instead of trying to cover everything. Have lunch afterwards before deciding how much more you want to do. I would keep the second half of the day smaller than the first.

After People's Square

Have lunch at Jia Jia Tang Bao on Huanghe Road; see page 7 for the map link. Then the Wukang Road and Anfu Road area works as a separate neighbourhood outing. Allow around two hours for a few connected streets, photographs and a café stop.

After the East Museum

Keep the afternoon lighter, with the journey back from Pudong included in your plans. If you feel like shopping, AP Plaza was another stop on my trip. Check current access and choose it in place of the neighbourhood walk.

Choose one afternoon

I would do the street walk or the shopping after the museum. Trying to add both makes the day more about getting between places than enjoying them.

Make the journeys easy.

Day 5: leave for the right airport

My route departed through Hongqiao. With a morning flight, keep Day 5 for checkout and the transfer; it is a travel day, not a missing sightseeing day. Confirm the terminal and work backwards from the airline's required arrival time.

With an afternoon or evening flight, leave your bags at the hotel, have breakfast nearby and allow a 45-60 minute walk in the same neighbourhood. If you are staying near the Bund, this can be your quieter second look at the river; otherwise stay near your base. Have an early lunch only if it fits before the firm luggage-collection time.

I would not add a new museum, cross-city shopping trip or timed attraction here. Save the hotel-to-terminal route the night before and keep a transport buffer; optional sightseeing is the first thing to drop if the morning runs late.

For city journeys

The metro can work well when the connection is straightforward. Check the changes and the exit nearest your destination. With luggage, stairs and the walk from the station matter as much as the time on the train.

I would consider a taxi or arranged car for the hotel move, heavy rain or a late arrival. Keep the destination address available to show the driver and check how you will pay. For a pickup, save the exact meeting point rather than just the name of the station or hotel.

Have a backup on your phone

Save your hotel addresses, booking references and important contact numbers offline. Check that your maps, data connection and payment setup work before relying on them for a timed visit. Keep another practical way to pay in case your usual option is unavailable.

Departure details	Your notes
Airport or railway station / terminal	_____
Flight or train / departure time	_____
Required arrival time	_____
Leave hotel / collect stored bags	_____
Transfer or pickup details	_____

If continuing by train, use the exact railway station on the booking. Allow time for entry checks and finding the departure area.

Food and photographs.

Restaurants I recommend

Nanxiang-style xiaolongbao took shape in the 19th century. The soup starts as meat jelly, which melts during steaming. Rest a dumpling on your spoon, open the wrapper a little and let the steam escape before tasting.

I've eaten at both of these and loved the food. They fit neatly into the two city days.

Nanxiang Mantou Dian - Yu Garden

Shanghai soup dumplings, with a convenient stop for lunch around Yu Garden before continuing to the Bund.

[Find on map](#)

Jia Jia Tang Bao - Huanghe Road

A casual soup-dumpling stop near People's Square. I'd fit this around the central Shanghai Museum visit; the East Museum is on a different route.

[Find on map](#)

Choose morning or evening for different pictures

For fewer people, try an early weekday morning; the promenade still has walkers and runners. From the Bund you face roughly east towards Pudong, so sunrise can put the skyline into silhouette. In the last hour before sunset, the light comes from behind or beside you and can illuminate the towers. Stay into blue hour for a balance of sky and city lights. Check that day's sunrise, sunset and weather rather than using one year-round time.

Two positions along the river

Start near the East Nanjing Road end of the promenade for the classic Pudong view. Walk north towards Huangpu Park and Waibaidu Bridge for the river bend and Suzhou Creek junction. Use a little railing or river in the foreground, then try a tighter frame to separate the towers. Keep bridge walkways clear; a viewpoint is not a reason to stand in traffic.

Yu Garden: use the doorway as a frame

Try the first available entry slot for a better chance of clear paths. Doorways, rooflines and pond reflections work well in softer light. Move a few steps before reaching for a wider lens; one clean composition is often stronger than fitting everything in. Wait briefly for a gap rather than blocking the narrow walkways.

[See my packing list](#)

Make room for your own trip.

If it rains

Swap the museum and garden days if opening days and reservations allow. Keep dated bookings in mind before moving anything. With lighter rain, take a longer lunch and use a clearer gap for a shorter waterfront walk. There is no need to stick to the full walking route if the weather makes it unpleasant.

If it is hot or you are tired

Take a seated break and use a car for the connection between the old city and the river. Choose a comfortable stretch of the Bund rather than feeling you need to walk all of it. East Nanjing Road browsing is an easy thing to leave out.

With one extra night

I would add the night in central Shanghai and separate the museum from the neighbourhood walk. It also gives you another chance at the waterfront if the weather was poor the first time. Leave some of the extra day open for somewhere you want to return to.

With three nights

Without Disney, use one central hotel: arrive, spend a day around the garden and river, have a museum day, then leave. If Disney is essential, look carefully at your flight times and choose which city stops matter most to you. Arrival and departure time can make a short trip feel much shorter.

If you want less walking

Check step-free access and the distance from transport to each entrance. Arrange more breaks and shorten the garden-and-waterfront day if needed. Ask the hotel or attraction about the facilities you need before making the plan around them.

What I would keep

Yu Garden and time by the river. I would shorten shopping or another trip across the city before cutting those two.

What to budget.

Prices in RMB, checked 30 September 2026. These published reference figures are separate from the planning allowances below.

Disneyland adult entry / RMB 475-799

Published date-based range; optional Premier Access, food and transport are extra. Check the calendar for your visit.

[Price source](#)

Yu Garden adult entry / RMB 30-40

40 in April-June and September-November; 30 in the other months. Regular garden admission, not lantern festivals or night tours.

[Price source](#)

People's Square museum exhibition / RMB 148

Full-price ticket for Ancient Civilizations of the Americas, running 9 July 2026-14 November 2027. A restricted-date 135 ticket is also offered; this is not the East Museum.

[Price source](#)

Pudong Airport → People's Square / Metro ~RMB 7 / taxi ~RMB 180

Official reference figures, one way; taxi cost is per car and changes with traffic, route and night charges. Not a quote to a Disney-area hotel.

[Price source](#)

Hongqiao Airport ↔ city centre / Taxi RMB 100-150

Airport Authority reference range per car. Price your actual hotel and terminal before leaving.

[Price source](#)

Nanxiang meal / ~RMB 93 per person

Shanghai's official food guide lists this average spend; your order and seating choice change the bill.

[Price source](#)

For planning, I'd set aside RMB 120-200 per person for meals and drinks on a city day, plus RMB 15-25 for metro trips. Those are spending allowances, not restaurant quotes. Add the chosen admission and any taxi: a garden day comes to roughly RMB 165-265 before hotels and shopping. Keep Disney as a separate budget.

Before your first city journey.

Set up payments before flying

Register Alipay with your mobile number, then add an eligible overseas card under Me → Bank Cards. In WeChat, look under Me → Services → Wallet → Bank Cards for Weixin Pay. Follow any identity-check prompts and keep access to SMS verification. Card eligibility varies, so keep a second card and some RMB as backup.

[Official guidance](#)

At the counter

You can scan the merchant's QR code or show your payment code to the cashier. An eligible overseas card can be linked without a mainland bank account. For payments above RMB 200, a 3% platform fee may apply to the whole amount; check the confirmation screen and your bank's currency-conversion fees.

[Official guidance](#)

Choose a simple metro option

For occasional rides, buy a single ticket; station service centres accept supported international bank cards. For repeat journeys, consider a stored-value Shanghai Public Transportation Card or Shanghai Pass. A Shanghai Metro ride code is another option through Alipay or WeChat: activate the transport service first, rather than scanning your ordinary shopping payment code at the gate.

[Official guidance](#)

Save names in Chinese

Save screenshots of your hotel's Chinese name, full address and nearest station exit. Keep a translation app with an offline Chinese language pack, and use short sentences when asking for help. Show the destination address to a driver; an English hotel name alone can be ambiguous.

A last look before leaving.

The essentials

Check entry requirements for your passport and journey, passport validity, insurance and the conditions on your bookings. Save copies of the important documents somewhere you can reach offline.

Booking	One last check
Hotels	Correct nights, late check-in, luggage storage and shuttle arrangements
Disney	Visit date, identification, entry ticket and any extras
Yu Garden	Opening day, admission and last entry
Museum	Branch, exhibition, closure day and reservation requirements
Transport	Arrival and departure points, meeting places and payment

Before heading out each day

Identification, tickets, hotel address, charged phone, water, comfortable shoes and whatever the weather calls for. Keep essential medicines with you. Check attraction restrictions and your airline's current power-bank rules when packing.

A quick budget

Four nights of accommodation: _____

Attractions and chosen extras: _____

Airport and hotel transfers: _____

City transport: _____

Meals and drinks: _____

Shopping and a little spare: _____

Keep these links handy

[Full Shanghai itinerary](#)

[Shanghai Disney Resort](#)

[Shanghai Museum admission information](#)

Updated 30 September 2026. Check opening times and booking details for your travel dates.