Visiting Shanghai can be an exhilarating, fascinating, and sometimes exhausting experience. The very traits that make Shanghai so interesting also can conspire to make it rather overwhelming. Bearing this consideration in mind, here are some tips for visitors to the “Pearl of the Orient”:

**Adjusting:** Flights from the United States arrive in Shanghai the day after you set out, typically in the late afternoon or early evening. This makes adjusting to the time difference (at least the first night in Shanghai) relatively easy. If possible, schedule your arrival to allow for a day to rest before your meetings start. This will give you a chance to get over the tendency in the early afternoon (middle of the night in the United States) to feel an overpowering urge to doze off (behavior that probably would not endear you to your clients and hosts).

**Office hours:** Reception desks and switchboards typically are open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Lawyers often work much later.

**Attire:** Lawyers typically wear suits (men) and dresses or separates (women). Nonlawyers may dress more casually. On the weekends, casual dress is dressier than in many parts of the United States. Even though the weather is often warm, resist the urge to wear shorts—stick with slacks or skirts. Jeans, if worn, are paired with dressy accessories. When in doubt, dress up rather than down.

**Niceties:** Bring lots of business cards—twice as many as you think you will need. You will be giving them to everyone. Present them with two hands and, when receiving someone else’s, be sure to take a moment to read it and try to ask a question or two (such as, “Oh, where in the United States did you get your LLM? How long has your law firm been established?”). If a Chinese person tells you his/her English name, feel free to use it. If the person uses a Chinese name, call the person by Mr. or Ms. _____, not by their given name, which is used only by close friends and family.

**Meals:** Dinner is usually eaten around 6 or 6:30 p.m. At meals with Chinese hosts, wait until the host indicates it is time to begin before eating.

**Toasts:** If you are a man, it will be difficult to escape drinking China’s “white lightning” spirits, which are served in small glasses and drunk in one gulp after toasting or being toasted. As the visitor, you will be the one being toasted, and your local hosts may gang up on you so that you are taking many more shots than they are. I am not sure how to avoid this, but do try to drink lots of water while this is going on (and afterward) and be kind to your liver in the future. This is one area where distinctions between the sexes are to be celebrated. If you are a woman, when asked if you will partake, my recommendation is to smile demurely, put your hand over your glass, and say with a straight face that you never drink alcohol. This means you will not get to drink Chinese beer with the meal, which is a loss, but trust me, the alternative is far worse. And the next day, be extra nice to any male colleagues accompanying you on the trip because they are likely to be in sad straits.

**Technology:** Power is 220V. Even with an adapter, your appliances can be fried by a power surge. So, do not bother bringing your electric razor or other personal appliances unless you bring a surge suppressor along as well. Most business-oriented hotels will have a supply of adapters, but it doesn’t hurt to bring your own. Your phone will work in China only if it uses GSM technology. It is easy enough to buy a cheap mobile phone and a SIM card at the “Cyber Mart” on Huaihai Road (four stories of technology gadgets), so you will be able to communicate when you are on the go. In Shanghai (and Beijing) your Blackberry will be able to get reception.

**Nitty-Gritty:** Except in the fancy hotels like those described above, with attendants who scour and wipe incessantly, toilets in China are gritty even in a modern metropolis such as Shanghai. One must be prepared for all contingencies: toilet types (squat versus seated), toilet paper supplied versus not (assume it will not be and invest in those little packets of tissues, which you should **always**, **always** carry with you). And except in the fancy hotels, **never, ever** sit on a toilet seat. You will not like what you see if you look closely (such as footprints . . . or worse), so just trust me on this one.
And wash your hands frequently. With these precautions in mind, you should be fine. Do not worry about getting sick from the food (my theory is that sanitary conditions have been so poor for so long in China that those preparing food tend to be quite careful about cooking it thoroughly and not touching it with their hands after it is cooked).

Things to do: Favorite avocations include eating, shopping, more eating, some drinking (cocktails and wine by the glass are reliable only in Western-oriented establishments; otherwise they tend to be watery or corked, respectively), more eating, and massage (yes, there are shady places but most massage places are legitimate, and foot massages, in particular, are marvelous in China). The best guide for the fun things to do, see, eat, and buy in Shanghai is the Luxe City Guide to Shanghai (www.luxecityguides.com). Follow its recommendations and admonitions and you will not go wrong.

Biggest risk: Crossing the street. Seriously. Walk alone late at night, carry large sums of cash in your wallet, and never fear. But bear in mind that you take your life in your hands (or, rather, your feet) each time you cross the road. Cars, motor scooters, and bikes will be taking free right turns and free left turns. So, be on the lookout in both directions. A foreign friend who is a longtime Shanghai resident says he tells his parents when they visit to think of the traffic as three-dimensional and proceed accordingly! When possible, position yourself to the right of a local and walk and stop across the intersection as this person does. This is particularly helpful when the local is an elderly lady. Having survived the longest, they are the savviest folks around, so you can count on being able to get safely to the other side if you follow their lead.

After you return, write me to let me know what you liked the best about Shanghai and what surprised you the most. You’re sure to have strong impressions with respect to both questions!

Survival Guides on the Web
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