



Host with the Most

Got visitors coming this summer? Don't stress! Here's a handy guide to entertaining elderly guests, family with teenagers and family with young children visiting Shanghai. *By Jennifer Stevens*

As an expat, there's nothing more exciting than having friends and family visit. You get the opportunity to show off your new home, introduce them to a new culture, and hopefully convince them that you're not completely insane for living abroad. However, there is a flipside: it can be quite stressful having guests, especially in a non-English-speaking city like Shanghai.

My parents flew over from Florida a few months ago. I was extremely nervous about the visit, even though they're seasoned travelers. It seems the older they get, the more concerned I become. But my anxiety wasn't related to their safety; I wanted them to enjoy themselves.

China wasn't a place my parents had a desire to see. They had visited me in Seoul a few years back and toured Thailand but didn't see themselves returning to Asia, mostly because of the long flight and time change. China, in particular, seemed overwhelming, with fears of pollution, overpopulation and food safety. But just one month after my arrival, they booked their tickets.

There's a pressure I've placed on myself as an expatriate. I feel like I should be a travel expert and that I should know my adopted city inside-out. But the truth is, work and personal commitments take up just as much time as they do back home, and playing tour guide isn't easy.

Fortunately, before my parents arrived, I was able to schedule a meeting with Community Center Shanghai (CCS)'s Linda Ellis, who teaches a class entitled "I'm Having Visitors! What Should I Do?" in order to plan and calm my nerves.

Linda has been teaching the class for the last three years as a way to help fellow foreigners prepare for guests, but also to get them excited to explore their new city. "Most people tend to get nervous about having visitors," she says. "Shanghai is so different from most of our home cities, and there are so many aspects of Chinese culture to show our guests."

Linda shared a document with me that was full of itinerary suggestions, restaurant rec-

ommendations and names of several tour outfitters. She walked me through the information but warned me not to get too hung up on details. "Show them a few of the landmarks, but I find that most people just want to know what life is like here. Don't over-plan; just let them experience it," she said. She also encouraged me to go on a few tours myself to get to know the city better and become a version of the expert I pressured myself to be.

So that's what I did. I went through Linda's list, joined several tour groups, and ate entirely too much food. By the time my family arrived, I felt confident they would have a great time and fall in love with Shanghai the way that I did - and I was right.

But just in case you don't have the time to take the class or spend your weekends gallivanting through the streets of Shanghai, I've put together a list of the best things to do when you have visitors - whether they're coming with teenagers, little ones or if they're older, like my parents. There's something here for everyone.



Elderly Family

Shanghai can be overwhelming for elderly visitors. There are motorbikes whizzing by in all directions, cramped subway cars and high pollution days. There's the occasional public squat toilet to watch out for, and the task of navigating the extensive food scene. According to Val Grub, author of the blog *Travel with Aging Parents*, "Many studies indicate that people become less adaptable to change as they get older. For many people, breaking schedules, even for fun activities, can be challenging. And when you're traveling, particularly to a foreign country, the differences can be more jarring." To make Shanghai a more enjoyable experience, here are some suggestions:

► Ease them into the culture. An easy way to do this is by taking them to the more Western areas first, like **Kerry Parkside** mall in Pudong or the **Jing An Kerry Centre** in Puxi. Other suggestions would be to avoid the subway the first day or two, and to make sure not to hop on during peak hours.

► **Fuxing Park** is a good way for elderly visitors to experience local life. Make sure they visit before 10am to really see the park come to life. They will see people practicing tai chi, ballroom dancing, singing and playing games. This was actually my parents' favorite part of their time in Shanghai, as it allowed them to engage with locals and gain an understanding of the culture. My mother even tried ballroom dancing!

► Of course, every guest wants to see the **Bund**, but this usually requires a lot of walking. To make sightseeing more enjoyable, take them on a one-hour river cruise from the Ship Terminal at the south end of the Bund (127 Zhongshan Dong Lu). Cruises run from 10am to 9pm, and tickets can be purchased right before departure.

► **Newman Tours** is a great company to use for a variety of guests, but particularly for the elderly, as they offer a wide range of well-researched historical tours. Their most popular takes place in Xuhui District, taking guests down idyllic tree-lined streets to see sights like the building where Richard Nixon signed the Sino-US Communiqué and a Russian Orthodox church run by a man known to have had magical powers.

► Keeping in mind that it's important to ease your elderly guests into the culture, and that many have dietary restrictions, they can still enjoy local flavor at Western-style Chinese restaurants like **Lost Heaven** and **Sichuan Citizen**. If they are more adventurous but fear the street stalls, **UnTour Shanghai** food tours might be an option for them. Their most popular among the elderly is the Street Eats Breakfast tour.

Good to Know

Lost Heaven: www.lostheaven.com.cn

Sichuan Citizen: www.citizenshanghai.com

Newman Tours: www.newmantours.com

UnTour Shanghai: www.untourshanghai.com

Family with **Young Kids**

There is no shortage of things to do for families in Shanghai, especially those with young kids. But besides the surplus of activities, it's important for visitors with small children to know that their children will be safe and cared for. Jennifer Marshall, an expat and mother to a one-and-a-half-year-old, says, "People in Shanghai are crazy about little kids. They smile, they allow you to cut in line ... the way they interact with foreign kids is really special." With that in mind, here are some activities to keep families with young children happy and entertained:

► **Shanghai Wild Animal Park**, out in Pudong New Area, is a great way for families to spend a day getting up close and personal with over 200 species of exotic animals. You'll need to take a taxi, so get there early to enjoy the expansive space.

► For a thrilling evening on the town, see an acrobatic show at **Shanghai Circus World**. The venue feels like a true circus, with no bad seat in the house. There are about 15 different acts, each one more exciting and unbelievable than the last. It's a great night out for the whole family.

► Spend a day in **Lujiazui**, taking in the sights at the **Jin Mao Tower** observation deck, walking along the promenade and checking out the sea life at the **Shanghai Ocean Aquarium**. For meals, **Super Brand Mall** has enough restaurants to please everyone.

► **Century Park**, off Metro Line 2, is a great place for the kids to run around and get away from the bustling city. It's the largest park in Shanghai and is beautifully landscaped, with biking trails and a lake where you can ride paddleboats.

► **Newman Tours** has a Shanghai Family Tour, where kids and parents get to play traditional Chinese street games, as well as an Ancient Shanghai Tour, where families can feed carp and learn how to make money bracelets. If the kids are a little older and interested in food, **UnTour's** Hands-On Dumpling Delights Tour will allow them to taste various types of dumplings and learn how to make their own.

Good to Know

Shanghai Wild Animal Park: en.expopanda.com
Shanghai Circus World: era-shanghai.com
Shanghai Ocean Aquarium: www.sh-aquarium.com





Family with **Teenagers**

Traveling with teenagers can be tricky. They're at the age where they want to go off on their own and be treated like adults, and they're craving independence. Usually this is a problem when traveling abroad; however, visitors will be happy to know that Shanghai is extremely safe, with enough activities and public transportation to let their kids roam free. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

► Give teens some freedom to explore, but give them the tools to do so while keeping their parents sane. Get them a **transportation card** (available for purchase at every station). Inexpensive **cell phones** can be purchased all around the city, even at Carrefour, and are a big stress reliever when hosting guests of any age.

► The **fake market** next to the Science & Technology Museum is a big hit with teens and is accessible from inside the metro station on Line 2. Girls love looking at the fake bags, boys love the fake jerseys and everyone loves the technology options, including Beats headphones and cordless speakers.

► Walking along **Nanjing Lu Pedestrian Street**, with stores like Forever 21 and H&M,



is a nice reminder of home without the dangers of cars or motorbikes.

► **China Cycle Tours** offers full- and half-day excursions around the city. They stick to paths with bike lanes, provide helmets and are led by knowledgeable guides. Additionally, **Newman Tours** has a Shanghai Gangster tour and a Shanghai Kung Fu Tour that are big hits with the teenage crowd.

► KTV singing rooms all over Shanghai boast the latest international hits and can be a fun nighttime activity for teens and families alike.

► As for restaurants, this largely depends on how adventurous the teenagers in question are. Hot pot places are great for sharing, with **Hai Di Lao** being a favorite among families. **Jia Jia Tang Bao** at People's Square is a fun place to try soup dumplings, as is **Yang's Fried Dumplings** directly across the street. If your visitors prefer Western-style Chinese food, **Fortune Cookie** on Changshu Lu is always a good option. **51**

Good to Know

China Cycle Tours: www.chinacycletours.com

Hai Di Lao Hot Pot: www.haidilao.com/sg

Fortune Cookie: www.fortunecookieshanghai.com