

# FOREWORD

This yin-and-yang guide to Beijing & Shanghai informally celebrates the 25th anniversary of Odyssey Guide's China Series. Our first guide to "Peking" was published in 1979 followed by Shanghai in 1980. Though only a quarter of a century has passed, both Beijing and Shanghai have become the old gentlemen of a pubescent nation. Regardless of their wildly different claims on history, both cities now present a face of youth and ambition in a manner that would have been thought inconceivable in 1979.



Back then, Beijing was fraught with frustration for many travelers—though it was more than compensated for by the endearing local population. Shanghai, at that time, was redolent with acrid smells and disrepair—but yet again its addictive charm and character was ever-present in one's senses.

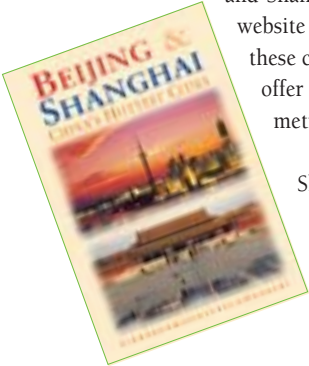
Naturally, the China Series has grown up with these cities. Our first guide to Peking by Shann Davies was just 64 pages long. The most recent edition of that guide, by William Lindesay and Wu Qi, suggested the framework for portions of this two-city guide and credit must be given to them, as much of their historical descriptions remain valid today. Paul Mooney's considerable knowledge of China's capital, as well as his vast experience in reportage and travel guides, were indispensable to the Beijing section. A special note of thanks must be made to all the contributors for providing an insider's view of the capital and also to Maja Boyd for her extensive research in bringing the practical information up to date.

Our original guide to Shanghai was largely written by Lynn Pan, a renowned author who lives in Shanghai. For many years the core material of the Shanghai guide was based on her work along with that of Jill Trew and May Holdsworth. My first contributions appeared in a more recent edition (1995). Since then, the changes in Shanghai have been so great that the Shanghai section of this now-combined guide has been started from scratch and we offer this final result as a brand new title.

In addition to the expanded, useful Facts for the Traveler found in the individual Beijing and Shanghai guides, the "Chineasy" language section and the extensive website directory add a further dimension to understanding modern life in these cities. Janet Carmosky's ingenious and idiosyncratic contributions offer an amusing and even somewhat controversial view of life in these metropolises.

In deference to the collective authors' wishes, the Beijing and Shanghai sections use American and British spelling conventions respectively. Also, we've included some of the original 1979 guides' photos; their juxtaposition to today's pictures provides a unique insight into the incredible changes these cities have experienced in record time.

—Peter Hibbard, Shanghai, summer 2004



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## INTRODUCTION

—Janet Carmosky

Visitors to China tend to be a curious bunch. A few weeks of time off, and an adequate stack of hard earned money to spend could fly us off to luxurious indulgence, exuberant celebration, or serene retreat. China is none of these. We go to China because we want to be surprised, to access the inaccessible, to ponder the opposite, to observe the alternate, and to go home perhaps understanding more about where all we've seen fits in the larger scheme of things. We come to China to observe our reactions to China. Will its otherness perplex, irritate, or humble us? Will the variances delight or frustrate us? Will it be the subtleties or the extremes that touch us most memorably?

Most of all, a trip to China is a romp for our powers of observation: are we seeing what we think we're seeing? How close can we come in guessing?

The truth is a bit shocking, and stay with me here. I graduated with my undergraduate degree in Chinese history, came to China in 1985, married a Chinese man and never really left. I speak Mandarin like a native, pretty solid Cantonese, and I read and write Chinese easily. I have done business in China—and absolutely nothing else—since 1986. So please, do not be offended when I say we who come from the affluent, relatively young and idealistic West are only remotely qualified to make sense of what is happening.

China is not a tourist attraction per se, created, Club Med-like, in response to our need for leisure. It is more than a fossil of past glories or an intriguing showpiece. China is an ancient, powerful, living nation that, while obsessed with whether the outside world *respects* it or not, is at the same time utterly unconcerned whether outsiders *appreciate* it or not. After 5,000 years, China is still getting on with being China. If we want to come along for the ride, we must find ourselves a seat and work to keep it.

In visiting China, if we watch and listen, we begin to sense how very profound culture really is. Culture is thicker than money, for some Chinese have quite a lot, some have a fair amount, and most Chinese have quite little: this describes almost anywhere. Yet, the meaning of money in Chinese culture is so unique, the culture so thoroughly shot through with its significance, that most newcomers find it hard to believe. (Think for a moment: where else do you find the coin as a ubiquitous decorative motif?)

Culture is much deeper than technology, for China has automobiles and telephones and computers, laboratories and chemicals, the Internet and ATM

*Back to the future.*



*Photographer in Imperial Court attire.*

machines. Yet all are used differently by, and mean different things to the Chinese, than they do to us. The standard of “modern” or “backward” is difficult to apply. If modern means convenience and comfort, urban prosperity, commercially produced food, and anonymity in urban life, then China is modern and has been—with the exception of periods of severe domestic and international unrest—since the Tang Dynasty. If modern is measured by the usage of personal electronic and communications devices, then there are at least five cities in China more modern than New York. If modern means that anonymity and prosperity are guaranteed not only by the needs of commerce, but also by concepts of public life, civil society, and legal institutions, then there are fishing villages in Greece that are more modern.

We read about China in the business press, stunned by the economy’s rise. Our local bookstore is also stocked no doubt with autobiography and fiction, often meditations of damage done to individuals at some point in history. These typical literary experiences of China raise more questions than they answer: Why is this happening? What is this place: hopeful and increasingly prosperous, or ineffably given over to experiences of tragedy? If everyone in China, on some special night, shared the very same dream, what would that dream be like?

The delight of China is its endless complexity and depth. We can only skim the surface of a nation that is vast, ancient, very loud yet extremely private. Newly arrived, our senses telegraph frantically: What colors! What sounds! What smells! What rhythm is driving the throng? Is someone reading my newspaper? Tapping my shoulder? Is that polite language or an argument? Scanning the dozens, even hundreds, of faces and postures surrounding us, we wonder, where are they going? What are they thinking? Is this ruckus normal or is something afoot?

I am speaking, of course, of China’s cities. The fact is, three-fourths of China’s population is considered rural, and the roots of Chinese culture are earlier than the transition from agriculture to cities. In fact, its tap roots go back to humanity’s transition from hunter-gatherers to agricultural settlers. So, while the most profound information lies in the agricultural countryside, that doesn’t mean the most interesting or accessible information is there.

Dropped from a plane into rural China, we’d be challenged to define how daily life is organized. We don’t expect luxury, and of course there isn’t any. We don’t expect much automation, and we find only cameo roles: a lone desktop computer that isn’t linked to the cash register, perhaps an elevator out of service because the operator is off duty. It’s subtle: one structure uses slightly paler tile than its neighbor does, a sign is printed while most are hand painted. One intersection appears to be more significant than another is. The pace is slow, though conversations begin and

end so abruptly. No public transportation, dwellings behind walls, guarded by dogs. How much can we explore here?

In other words, if you’re looking for a clue to comparative culture, feel free to focus on the cities. There are 30-some major Chinese cities. All are moderately user-friendly, stocked with taxi cabs and sidewalks, banks, hotels, and local attractions. To name a very few: Xi’an’s terracotta warriors, arguably the world’s finest group sculpture; Harbin’s ultimate winter carnival; the misty riverside rockscapes of Guilin; the Qing imperial hunting grounds in Shenyang; Chengdu’s greenery. Each has its train station, river port, pagodas showing layers of hundreds of years of Ming and Qing history; architecture of Russian, French, German, or Buddhist influence.

Still, hour by hour, dollar for dollar, if you want to really figure out China, consider spending most or all of your time in Beijing and Shanghai. They are accessible, redolent, energetic, larger than life. They are centers of tremendous power, and still rising on the world stage. They gather and collect wealth and influence, spread it, standing tall and arrogant, over every other city.

Beijing and Shanghai are also like rival sisters who secretly wish the other would fall and break her nose, if not both her legs. Twin juggernauts, they are fueled by pride openly and often declared, and an almost taboo, very deep dislike of the other. One has been the capital for 1,000 years, and has come to expect tribute. Even the guy selling baked sweet potatoes from a street-side barrel probably descended from scholars smart enough to memorize thousands of pages of archaic text, and survive palace intrigue that might perplex Machiavelli. Yes, Beijingers are confident, friendly and open. You would be too, if your family was the 13th generation of high level, central government administrators, if money fell from the provinces in the form of taxes, if you experienced the pride of knowing that your town was world capital of the great Chinese race, heir to and carrier of the banner of Chinese nationalism.

Catch a whiff of politics. Everyone is important in Beijing, and also knows someone more important. Here’s the game in Beijing, in this particular situation: are my important friends more important than your important friends are? Beijing is the city of ambiguous but ultimately, unquestionably sufficient power. It is huge, built on the scale of the car by a megalomaniac (Kublai Khan, the founding Yuan Dynasty emperor) in the time of horses, indeed in the time when the Yuan Dynasty ruled from Korea to Vietnam, Beijing to nearly Vienna. Do not be fooled by the map. If your hotel is only two blocks from the subway stop, it is not walkable. One block may be nearly a long full mile, straight as an arrow, built for the unimpeded speed of imperial chariots.

Shanghai, by contrast, crinkles densely over and over itself in narrow spidery streets strode by the fishermen, craftsmen, factory workers, and financiers that came from the countryside to seek their fortune in traffic with the foreigners. No domain of poet-scholars and diplomats, Shanghai prospered along with shrewd merchants from ingloriously commercial places like Ningbo and Canton; played host to the cunning of barbarian robber barons hailing from London, Baghdad, Marseilles and Vladivostock.

The city sprang to life late in China's long history: it was in the years after 1840, when Shanghai's river port was ceded to foreign colonial powers. Rich commissions went to the local compradors that assisted the colonials in their trades of textiles, opium, and manufactured goods. The rest of Shanghai—think huddled masses yearning to breathe free, but not getting anywhere close—made do with whatever scraps they could grab. The Japanese occupation in 1937 dammed the river of cash flowing into the pockets of the British, French, Americans and others whose governments held most of the land, so Shanghai's own capitalists grew stronger. The 1949 revolution set off to nationalize industry, so most of Shanghai's capitalists fled, with their equipment, to go build what was then a nasty backwater: Hong Kong. For the Shanghaiese who stayed, on they hustled, becoming the industrial engine for the huge segments of the economy. Between 1949 and 1991, perhaps 40 percent of China's industrial output originated from this one city. Obedient as ever, Shanghai shipped 70-some percent of its money made to Beijing as tax revenue.

The Shanghaiese have eked out their prosperity by collecting the margin left over when the lion's share of the wealth went elsewhere. Unlike Beijingers, the Shanghaiese don't collect tribute, they pay it; and they don't make the rules, they just obey them, carefully, exploiting every shred of common sense or commercial logic they embody.

Deng Xiaoping's last appearance as official head of state was in 1991, in Shanghai. He lowered its rate of tax contribution to Beijing to something like 20 percent of revenue. Shanghai, keeping its own money at last, prospered. It now positions as the most international city in China, Asia's coming financial center. Meanwhile, it is the capital, Beijing, which presents itself as the most important city in China.

Note on culture: the West is organized around public institutions that grow out of and overlay culture. In Asia, institutions are relatively weaker, so culture matters much more. Now then, in simple terms, culture expresses collective values, which center on how to define a reasonable distribution of money and power. So, where Shanghai is money, and Beijing is power, there is endless learning about Chinese culture in these two cities alone.

*Girl in minority head gear.*



The two of them go at it viciously and in secret, ever hoping to grasp an upper hand, humiliate the other for a very nasty, very private split second of historical time. They position against each other endlessly, calculating, who needs who more?

As outsiders, we merely observe. Beijing digs in: rectangular, squat, and grounded, all stone; all hierarchy, tradition and commitment. The highways are elevated, nesting rectangles of brown concrete. Shanghai strives up and out: vertical, soaring, steel and glass; all ambition, innovation, and experiment, highways flying in outrageous neon-lit curves.

Beijing studies, reads, writes angry rock songs and houses unselfconscious artist colonies. Shanghai engineers, dances, opens commercial art studios, and sells gratuitously slick fashions and furnishings. Beijing is a big loud restaurant under the open stars, with your best mates and draft beer by the pitcher. Shanghai is a den of smoky silence with women who are so accessible, so enticing it just can't be true; cognac and cigars that, while quite good, really should not cost that much. Beijing is proud to be Chinese, while Shanghai is proud to be international.

Most visitors develop an immediate preference for one or the other. Besides, visitors are foreigners, and being a foreigner can be a very different experience, depending on where you do it. Not only do we create and refer to stereotypes, we are also seen as stereotypes. Here they are: Beijingers think you must be ready for an adventure. Shanghainese think you must have some money. Beijingers think you might be fun to go on a hike in the mountains with, and take to meet their uncle. Shanghainese think you might really enjoy meeting a lovely young relative of theirs in a slinky dress, while you discuss investing in an exciting new business. Beijingers will tell you you're stupid, insult your nationality, and throw crockery at your head when you owe them money. Shanghainese will tell you that you are the sun, the moon, and the stars, and that the only way you could possibly be better is if you were part Shanghainese, and that it doesn't matter when you pay them back. Then they will assign someone to trail you until you do.

Beijing taxi drivers want you to explain international politics, but are not always keen on going where you want to go. Shanghai taxi drivers just take you wherever you say, even if it's next door, thank you most effusively, and practice their English. When you stay in Shanghai, you will meet foreigners who hate Beijing. Too rigid, too angry. When you stay in Beijing, you will meet foreigners who hate Shanghai. Too slick, too docile.

But if culture is real, and both cities are Chinese, how are they the same? Money mad, boisterous and showy. Private, secretive, oblique. Grounded in relationships,

*Magic balls.*



*Shanghainese will tell you that you are the sun, the moon, and the stars*



*What would Mao think?*

contextual in all things, never absolute or final. A bit didactic, incurably pragmatic, secretly romantic. Thirty-some women have teddy bears, 30-some men think they are too old to play sports. Everyone in every city in China is addicted to karaoke, ridiculously adept at card games. Note: Do not ever play cards for

money anywhere in China, unless you wish to test your limits of wealth and humility.

Finally, if you talk to locals in either city, they will dispense fully convergent points of view as they uphold their city as a paragon of all things important and really useful, degrade The Other City as self-deluded also-ran, blame all evils on the migrants from the countryside, dismiss Guangzhou as a factory, and describe Hong Kong as a hill of bean counters, staffed by mediocre, self-impressed technocrats utterly lacking in learning, culture, humor or creativity.

Here is China: love of food and drink, unrestrained doting on children, reluctance to reach conclusions, insatiable appetite for gamesmanship, flawlessly ambiguous speech; capacity to be obedient whenever necessary—which is often—anarchic whenever possible—which is not enough for most Chinese people's taste, and inclined to trust...practically nobody, ever.

Few things fit easily into a nutshell, and certainly not China. Come see for yourself. Just a plane ride away lies another world—you can find your ATM's, your soft beds and fluffy towels, your familiar cuisine among the expat-drenched districts in Beijing and Shanghai. Just remember, should you tire of local cuisine and find yourself enjoying a fine steak or roast leg of lamb, don't get too complacent. It may be comfy enough in the restaurant, but if you think these powerhouse cities run on the same fuel as "back home", go take a walk outside for a minute. Think again.

You're in China. Isn't it amazing?

*Janet Carmosky, known during her marriage to Mr. Zhang as Janet Zhang, is now, after 18 wild years of doing business in China, recovering in the gentle hills of upstate New York. She writes and advises on marketing, technology, investment, and the art of communicating in China.*

## MATTERS OF PHILOSOPHY

### TRANSFORMATION OF THE OLD

*The powerful light that has been banished returns  
There is movement, but it is not brought about by force  
For this reason the transformation of the old becomes easy  
The old is discarded and the new is introduced  
Both measures accord with the time; therefore  
No harm results.*

—I Ching

### BUSINESS MEN

*Business men boast of their skill and cunning  
But in matters of philosophy are like little children.  
Bragging to each other of successful depredations  
They neglect to consider the ultimate fate of the body.  
What should they know of the Master of Dark Truth  
Who saw the wide world in a jade cup,  
By illumined conception got clear of Heaven and Earth,  
On the chariot of Mutation entered the Gate of Immutability?*

—Chen Tzu-ang as translated by Arthur Waley

*The I Ching; or, Book of Changes. The Richard Wilhelm translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes, (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1951). The I Ching, written by Fu Hsi, King Wen and the Duke of Chou, represents one of the first efforts of the human mind to place itself in the universe. It has exerted a living influence in China for 3,000 years.*

The translation of Chen Tzu-ang's "Business Men" is from *Madly Singing in the Mountains: An Appreciation and Anthology of Arthur Waley* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970) Edited by Ivan Morris © 1970. Chen Tzu-ang (656–698) was a Tang dynasty poet. Considered to be an innovator, his verse is oft-described by Chinese as "Ying" and is not easily translated into English. Arthur Waley (1889–1966) translated both Chinese and Japanese poetry, yet never came to Asia, and was somewhat of an innovator himself. See page 469 for more of his translation work.