



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

*The team of HAO Realty welcomes you to Shanghai – a world-famous and exciting metropolis that changes by the minute.*



*Shanghai is home to more than 150,000 non-Chinese, including students, workers, their family members, and married partners of Chinese nationals. Many feel worried facing the challenges of living in a different culture and environment, especially considering that Chinese is one of the hardest foreign languages to learn.*

*However, most find Shanghai to be a very welcoming city, and make it their second home. This guide aims to contribute to this welcoming attitude, and to make it easier for newcomers to feel at home.*



*Drawing on our extensive experience in China, the relocation guide answers in detail many of the questions you might have about daily life in the city. The objective of the guide is not only to inform and assist before your arrival in Shanghai, but also to act as a constant source of reference throughout your time in the city.*



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## Table of Content

- I. What to Expect*
- II. Expat Neighborhoods*
- III. Housing*
- IV. Rent Index*
- V. Leasing Contracts*
- VI. Transportation*
- VII. Education*
- VIII. Phone Apps*
  
- Appendix*
- A. Important Phone Numbers*





# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## I. What to Expect

Understanding and anticipating the challenges of relocating to Shanghai is essential when trying to make the transition as smooth as possible. Your mental preparation is as important as the support that your company, university, or helpful relocation partners can provide.

### An international, ever-changing city



In the past, the international impression of China, especially in the West, has been that of a hardship posting. Mid- and high-level personnel would come for very generous compensation packages. Recently, especially in Shanghai, a modern society has formed and with it an expatriate community that is mature and accessible. While some may argue whether or not Shanghai is still a hardship posting, one thing cannot be argued: Shanghai has become a global metropolis with excellent prospects and an exciting, dynamic rate of positive change. The facilities here in most cases are up to international standards and improving at a rate that is almost impossible to fathom.

Without exaggeration: Imagine the change in your average Western city over a 10-years span. This is the change in Shanghai on an annual basis. Despite these dramatic changes however, the city still remains a foreign culture and exciting environment for most Westerners.

[HAO Realty Shanghai](http://HAO Realty Shanghai) [info@haorealty.com](mailto:info@haorealty.com) +86 134 8285 0617



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## I. What to Expect

### Being a foreigner in China

China is a very friendly place for foreigners. The Chinese people and authorities are actually far more considerate to foreigners, especially Westerners, than they are to their own people.

To avoid the famous culture shock when relocating, it is essential that incoming expatriates do not expect China or Chinese people to act or think the same way that they do, or are used to. People's minds and perspectives and past experiences around the world are different. Remembering this will help you managing surprising and sometimes infuriating situations.



China is a great place to experience an excellent expatriate lifestyle. Yet, it also suffers from many problems of the developing world. The greatest pitfall anyone could fall into is dwelling on negative aspects rather than on the many positive aspects of life in one of the world's most vibrant and progressive cities. If you have read across expat online forums, you might have noticed a loud minority of long-term expats who were not able to avoid this trap. The silent majority is busy enjoying life and working.

There are no particular laws that expatriates must be aware of other than basic legal considerations such as visas and police registration. Expatriates are well looked after by Chinese authorities, especially in Shanghai, and enjoy a rather privileged status.





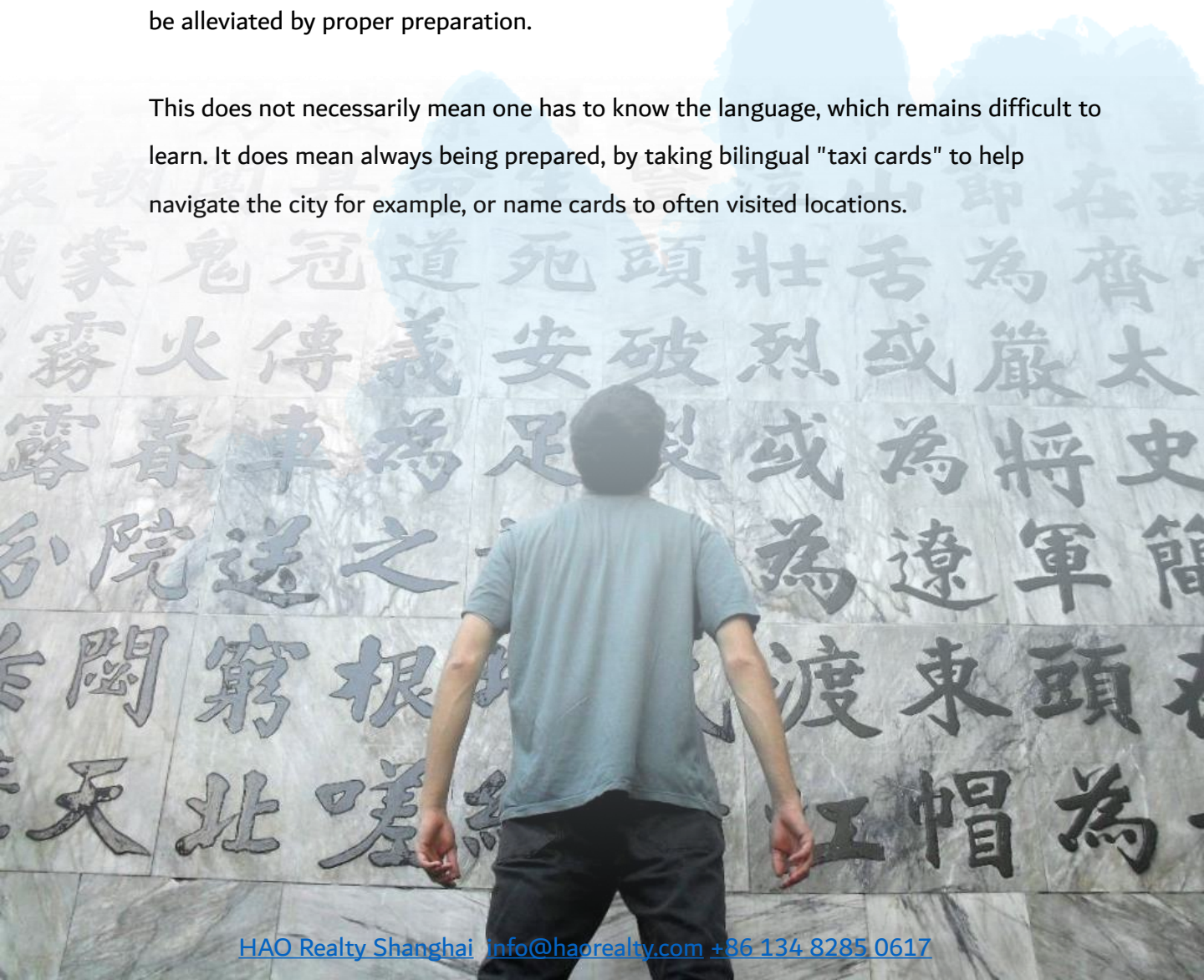
# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## I. What to Expect

### Language Barrier

The language barrier is by far the biggest problem for foreigners living in Shanghai. English, is not widely spoken. Almost no taxi driver or other service personnel will speak any level of English at all. In Downtown Shanghai many signs are in English, but do not expect this outside the city center. Not on purpose, but as a consequence, freedom of movement is highly restricted under these circumstances, although it can be alleviated by proper preparation.

This does not necessarily mean one has to know the language, which remains difficult to learn. It does mean always being prepared, by taking bilingual "taxi cards" to help navigate the city for example, or name cards to often visited locations.





# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## II. Expat Neighborhoods

Shanghai is divided into two major areas: Puxi and Pudong. The Huangpu River separates Shanghai such that Puxi ("xi" meaning west) is to the west of the river and Pudong ("dong" meaning east) is to the east.



Shanghai's expat community is mostly gathered in those areas that provide high quality housing and proximity to relevant facilities, these being Downtown (Xuhui,, Huangpu and Jing'an Districts), Hongqiao and Qingpu, and Pudong (Jinqiao, Kangqiao and Lujiazui), depending on requirements for education, nightlife, culture, dining, etc.







# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## II. Expat Neighborhoods

### Downtown Shanghai

Downtown is a great choice for couples and singles who want to experience the distinct lifestyle, flair and energy of Shanghai. Apartments (many luxury/high standard buildings) are plentiful. Some situate in quiet, tree-lined streets, others in bustling shopping districts. For small but well fitted apartment, prices start typically around 8,000 to 10,000 RMB/month., while a family apartment in the nicest projects ranges between 50 and 100,000 RMB monthly.



Neighborhoods in the old French and International Settlements provide the flair and charm that many people enjoy about living internationally as expatriates. It is also here where restored villas and apartments dot the housing .



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## II. Expat Neighborhoods

### Puxi Suburbs

The Hongqiao area of Shanghai strikes a balance between suburban feeling and downtown living. The roads, for example, while not as quiet and broad as those of suburban expat areas, are certainly not as busy as those inside the Inner Ring Road. International schools are present and villa compounds abound. The density of people and traffic, while still high compared to most Western cities, is a notable degree less than Downtown.



Many who choose to live in the area want to be within striking distance of all that downtown Shanghai has to offer but don't want to deal with the density or the distance to international schools that comes with living inside the ring. Others simply want a house with a yard in which their children can play and don't care for the cultural sterility of suburban life. Hongqiao is one of the main expat areas of the city with a broad range of services and accommodation aimed at the expat community.







# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## II. Expat Neighborhoods

### Pudong

Lujiazui at the east side of Huangpu River is Shanghai's glitzy financial district, known for futuristic skyscrapers like the Shanghai Tower, with its lofty observation deck, and the needle-like Oriental Pearl TV Tower, home to the Shanghai Municipal History Museum. The area is also noted for its luxe-hotel nightlife, with European fine dining, stylish bars and posh dance clubs offering panoramic views.



Green City is a perfect choice for Europeans, Americans and their families: Green City (Biyun in Chinese) International Community accommodates more than 20,000 residential expats from different countries, winning the honor of "mini united nations". Outstanding international high schools, a healthy environment, top facilities, and luxury housing constitute the main features of this model area, designed to help expat families feel at home in Shanghai.



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## III. Housing Types

### Accommodation for all Tastes and Situations

As a city that attracts many people from China and the world for all kinds of purposes, Shanghai offers housing forms, almost guaranteeing that there is something that can match your taste and situation.

Apartments are situated in the many high-rise towers, with the oldest constructed in the 1990s. Many are part of high-end developments, so called compounds that come with a whole range of onsite facilities and compounds focused service including 24/7 security.

Service apartments are a subset of apartments. Their distinguishing feature is the offer of professional services such as housekeeping, laundry, concierge, etc. They also often accept short-term stays of few months, which makes it a very suitable option for expats on short assignments.

Villas can be found in the various suburban areas of Shanghai. While “Villa” is used in Western countries to emphasize the high quality and generous space of a house, in Shanghai the term refers to any single-family house with garden, not only high-end properties.

Townhouses are units within smaller multi-family buildings, that often come with a duplex layout and a house-like feeling, but at a more affordable price than villas.

Shanghai Downtown is also dotted with many old properties from pre-1949 and show strong European architectural influence. During the last 10 years so called lane houses (terraced housing from the 1920 & 30s) and units in Art Deco apartment buildings have gained significant popularity. Renovated and modernized old properties can be very charming – and expensive, often ranging in the same price class as luxury apartments in the city’s best locations.





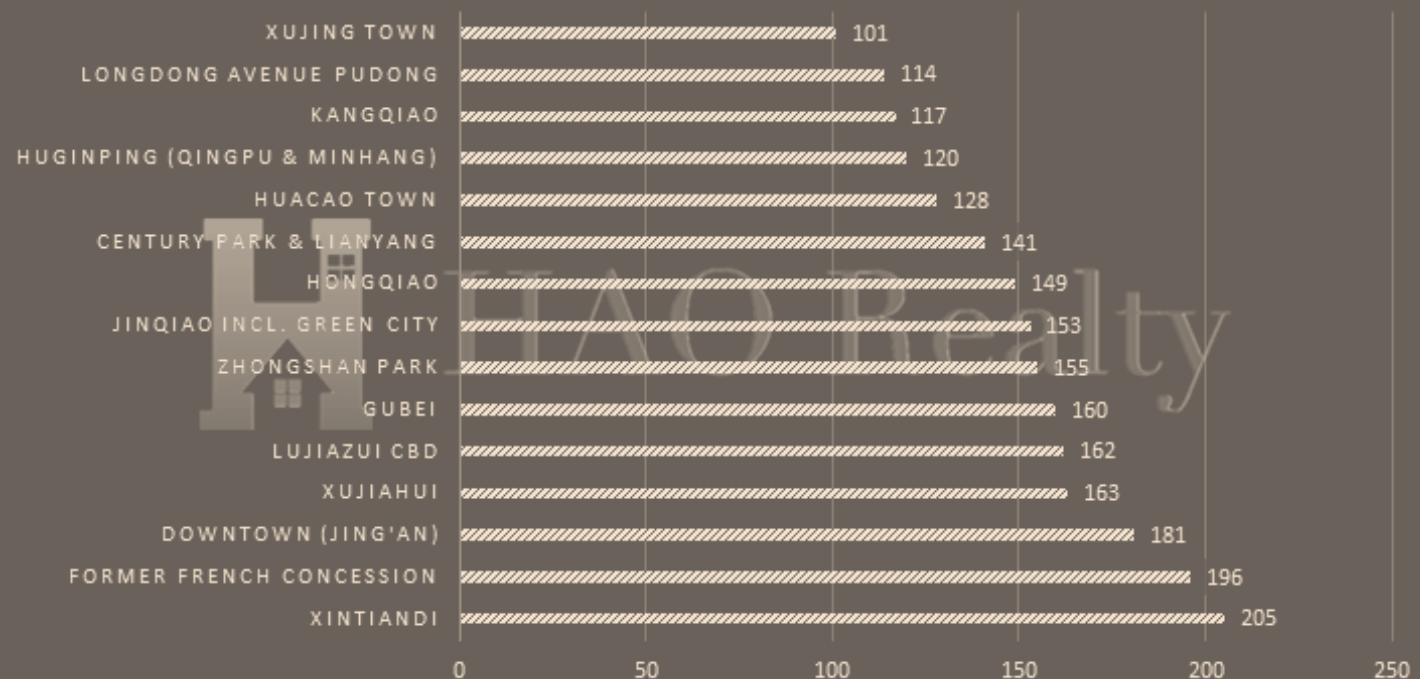
# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## IV. Rent Index

Different areas, properties, and layouts are available at different rental rates.

Based on all our property data from last year (please note that we focus on expat-popular areas and mid- to high-end properties), we had a look which areas offer the best value for expats, and where you can find the most expensive (because sought-after) homes:

### AVERAGE RENT PER SQM PER MONTH



Non-surprisingly Shanghai's suburbs are significantly lower priced than its highly sought-after Downtown areas. Xintiandi is Shanghai's trendy and glitzy high-end shopping, entertainment, and fine-dining district, home to the city's affluent and internationally minded elite. Excellently connected to CBDs in Lujiazui, Xujiahui, and West Nanjing Road, locals and expats alike are drawn to Xintiandi.

On the other end of the spectrum we find Xujing Town, close to Hongqiao Airport. Although the most affordable area in our ranking, Xujing Town is by no means a poor choice for expat families. A vibrant international community has formed, that apparently favors a green, healthy, low-density environment with spacious suburb villas and big private gardens over posh high-rises and the hustle and bustle in the city's center.



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## V. Leasing Contracts

### Lease term

Most of the time leasing contracts in China have a fixed lease term, and most landlords will not agree to a shorter duration than 12 months. Some bargains may be achieved for longer contracts. For shorter durations, you will often have to turn to serviced apartments (where you pay a premium for short-terms). Some individual landlords may accept a shorter contract, but be prepared that the requirement of a short-term contract significantly limits the selection of available properties. Most property listings have to be discarded if you need a contract for a few months only.

### Deposits & upfront cost

Most commonly, tenants pay the rent every 1, 2, or 3 months in advance, and a security deposit of 1 or 2 months at the beginning of the lease. Most times the first payment, covering both the deposit and the first rental payment, amounts to 3 or 4 months in total, which can be a very hefty sum for a newcomer who first needs to transfer funds into China. Please make sure you will have sufficient funds available in China, or communicate well in advance if you need more time. The first payment is normally due at the date the lease starts. If you work with a real estate agency, there might also be a commission payment of 35% (of the first month's rent). Please refer to the next point for HAO Realty's service fee conditions.

### Contracts

Shanghai has an official standard contract (in Chinese language only), but it is not very far reaching when it comes to protecting tenants' rights. Individual contracts are legal and common. Many property managements and MNCs have their own standard contract (and insist on using it). Realty offers a bi-lingual, lawyer-approved contract which allows for flexible adjustments on a case-by-case basis.





# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## VI. Transportation

### Getting Around

Generally, transportation in Shanghai is considered both convenient and affordable. As an international metropolis with the largest population in China, the city will inevitably face the problem of overpopulation and traffic congestion. However the situation is currently overall satisfactory. To relieve the transportation pressure, the government has done a lot of work including constructing a large number of roads, subways, and opening more new bus routes. Now, the city has the world's largest public transportation system handling the largest daily volume of passengers.

#### **Metro**

Sixteen shanghai subway lines have connections all over Shanghai, with stops at or nearby the main attractions and commercial areas. If you are just sightseeing and in no hurry, the metro will provide you with fast and comfortable service (though you may want to avoid rush hour of 07:00 to 09:30 and 16:30 to 19:30).

Metro fares are low, starting at 3 RMB.

#### **Bus Lines**

After being in Shanghai for a while, expats who are able to read and speak Chinese may start using popular bus routes as a means to get from A to B.

This can be particularly useful in farther-flung places that do not have many, or any, Metro stations. Fares are as low as 1rmb depending on whether the bus has comfortable seats and air conditioning.

#### **Taxis**

Probably the most contact you will have with local Shanghainese for the first few months will be with taxi drivers.

Taxi fares are very low compared to other world cities, starting at only 14 RMB. A 10km drive will cost you around 40 RMB, and from Downtown to one of the airport will result in a fare of 170-250 RMB.

With the rise of DiDi (Chinese uber) and other apps it has become more difficult to catch a taxi in the streets without the use of an app, as many taxis are already reserved by app users. It is highly recommended to setup DiDi if you want to use taxis/car sharing frequently. DiDi has an English interface option.

Stored value cards that are valid for buses, metro and taxis may be purchased at subway stations, convenience stores, hotel bookshops, and the airport. Those living in compounds and serviced apartments can request them from the management office or concierge.



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## VII. Education

### Top Education for Expat Children

The city has an extensive range of international schools for expatriate families to choose from. These include everything from Montessori kindergartens to secondary schools following American or European curricula and the International Baccalaureate (IB).



Most expats who can afford it send their children to one of the international schools in Shanghai. Affordability however can be a problem if you are not on a comfortable expat package where your employer pays tuition fees for your children. Education at international schools in Shanghai is top-notch, but expensive: Schools take fees of 100,000-250,000 RMB/year/child.

Homeschooling however is a legal option for expat children, and there are several groups of parents who coordinate their efforts to provide a competitive alternative to their children.



International high schools are located in the suburbs of Shanghai, such as Qingpu (Huacao Town), Hongqiao & Gubei, Green City and Kangqiao. There are only 3 international high schools in Downtown Shanghai.

Most international high schools also have kindergarten divisions. Kindergartens are also plentiful in Downtown.





# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## VIII. Phone Apps

### Apps for Everything

In a world that is becoming more technology-reliant by the day, Shanghai is leading the march towards total smartphone domination. Getting a taxi? There's an app for that. Ordering food? There's an app for that. Hiring a housemaid? Right—there's an app for that too.

We have compiled a list of apps that we highly recommended in order to make the most out of your time in Shanghai.



On top of our list is **WeChat**, an all-in-one app for social media and communication. Bosses use it to update employees, local publications use it to keep the public apprised of the latest city happenings, social media starlets show off their endless vacations.

It also features its own micropayment wallet and a bunch of 3<sup>rd</sup> party mini apps that extend its functionality, from ordering movie tickets to selling second hand articles.



**Alipay** overtook PayPal as the world's largest mobile payment platform in 2013. As of March 31, 2018, the number of Alipay users reached 870 million. It is the world's number one mobile payment service organization and the second largest mobile payment service organization in the world.



Apple Maps works in Shanghai, as does Google Maps (VPN enabled), but **Baidu Maps** is the most reliable, accurate, and up-to-date of the three.



**DiDi Dache** – Chinese Uber with English interface option



**Bon App!** – Restaurant Guide for English-speaking users



**Mobike** – Leading Shared Bicycle Company



**Ayi Bang!** – Hire a housemaid conveniently through your phone



**Ele.me** – Fast and cheap food delivery



**Explore Shanghai Metro** – Until you know the Metro map and schedule by heart



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## Appendix: Phone numbers

Police (Calling)	110
Police (Text message)	12110
First-aid Ambulance	120
Fire	119
Traffic Accidents	122
SOS in Water	12395

Complaints about Goods' Qualities	12315
Complaints about Prices	12358
Post Code Information	184
Weather Forecast	12121
Phone Directory	114
Comprehensive Information	12580/ 118114
Railway Information	12306
Civil Aviation	950137

Bank of China	95566
Agricultural Bank of China	95599
China Construction Bank	95533
Industrial and Commercial Bank of China	95588
Bank of Communications	95559
Standard Chartered Bank	800-820-8088
Citibank	800-830-1880
HSBC	800-820-8828





# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## Appendix: Phone numbers

Air China	95583
China Eastern Airline	95530
Hainan Airlines	950718
Southern Airlines	400-669-5539
Beijing Capital International Airport	96158
Shanghai Pudong International Airport	96990

China Mobile	10086
China Unicom	10010
China Telecom	10000

EMS	11183
SF Express	400-811-1111
Yuantong Express	021-69777888
Shentong Express	400-889-5543

FREE translation help: 962288- This number is every foreigner's favorite! You call this number and speak to a Chinese that speaks fluent English, tell them what you want, and then pass the phone to the nearest Chinese person and they explain to them what you want. It's very useful for getting directions, ordering food etc.



# SHANGHAI EXPAT *relocation guide*

## Contact Information

HAO Realty Shanghai Co.Ltd.

Shanghai, Xuhui District  
Middle Huaihai Road 1670, Building 12, 1/F

Phone: +86 134 8285 0617  
Email: [info@haorealty.com](mailto:info@haorealty.com)  
Website: <http://haorealty.com>