

# *The* PENINSULA SHANGHAI

Reliving Old Shanghai in an Ultra-Luxe Setting

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EXPERIENCING  
INDULGENT  
LUXURY  
AT  
THE  
5-STAR  
PENINSULA  
SHANGHAI





**THE FIRST HINT** of the opulence to come arrived in the form of a custom-made, emerald-green Rolls Royce. Sent to transport me to the Peninsula, this magnificent vehicle featured a fine leather interior with complimentary refreshments, Wi-Fi coverage and an attentive white-gloved driver who effortlessly confirms the local weather, our travel route and my musical preferences before embarking on the 30-minute drive.

Upon my arrival, an elegantly-attired doorman opens the car door, signals the bellboys (in charming, retro 1920's white and gold-trimmed attire) to attend to my luggage and offers a wholehearted, "Welcome to the Peninsula Shanghai. We hope you will have a most pleasant stay." Not sure if it was his friendly gaze or my new surroundings, but something told me I was in for something special.

I crossed the grand lobby to the reception area and was quickly escorted to my room, following an easy check-in. Noticing how I curiously handled the sturdy room key – no modern swipe cards here! – I was told that it was one of many details that encouraged guests to feel at home. After a brief explanation of the customizable lighting, temperature and bathroom spa settings, I was beginning to understand what they meant.

#### A LOOK BACK AT A GLORIOUS ERA

Inaugurated in 2009 on an enviable location on the scenic Bund, the Peninsula Shanghai is the ninth in a chain of luxury hotels first created in 1928. It exquisitely breathes the glamorous life inspired by the 1920s - 1930s Art Deco period, a magical time in Shanghai. Imagine palatial mansions, extravagant parties and wealthy patrons all forming part of this 'Golden Age' of the city – aptly nicknamed the 'Paris of the East'.

The hotel's décor and ambience – from the tastefully decorated rooms to the spacious lounges and dining areas and the high-end shopping arcade, boast authentic details of the rich heritage marking this unique period of time. Although there are new Peninsula hotels and related events in the works (most notably the highly anticipated Peninsula Paris), the Peninsula Shanghai has managed to impress all the senses during its relatively short existence, with award-winning dining, spectacular views, classic entertainment and, perhaps most importantly, a high level of client service.

#### A ROOM WITH A VIEW

My room, which was categorized as 'deluxe with river views', was the second lowest category in a selection of five, but you



never would have guessed it. In a space of approximately 600 sq. ft., it featured a king-size bed, a living room area with a desk, a walk-in closet, magnificent views of the Huangpu River skyline, and an indulgent marble bathroom with a spa tub, massage shower, plasma TV and state-of-the-art mood settings.

I particularly enjoyed the decadent spa settings of the luxurious washroom and the inconspicuous dumbwaiter located in the walk-in closet; it provided my morning paper and magically delivered my freshly-pressed laundry. In the evenings I looked forward to another delightful treat: the turning down of the bed. Each night during my stay, I gleefully returned to find the sheets carefully pulled back with my slippers and hand towels set out, while resting on the pillow was one perfect chocolate treat – meticulously created in house.

#### GOURMET SENSATIONS

Continuing my adventures in opulent grandeur, I opted for the afternoon tea menu served daily in the immense lobby area. As I listened to a classical pianist, I wondered how I would finish the three tiers of bite-size delicacies, including salmon, cucumber and roast beef finger sandwiches, plus mini scones and éclairs accompanied by generous servings of tea. There are four other dining and entertainment options equally striking and inviting in their own right. The elegant Yi Long Court Restaurant serves the Cantonese recipes of celebrated Chef Dicky To and includes a strikingly modern chef's table, featuring an open kitchen for an insider's view of the culinary action. Sir Elly's offers both a European cuisine eatery and a mesmerizingly long bar terrace area with a nightly happy hour between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE PENINSULA SHANGHAI



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The Peninsula Suite Lounge





Sir Elly's Terrace



Hotel Pool



Shopping Arcade



Hotel Spa

The Compass Bar – in all its striking purple and navy glory – pays homage to Shanghai's long maritime history, while the evening venue, Salon da Ning, is the epitome of an overindulgent, impossibly glamorous speak-easy of the 1930s, complete with a bold and eclectic décor, made all the more interesting by themed alcoves... its antique caged-elevator and a whimsical King Kong statue greeting guests at the entrance. Of Body, Soul and Discovery

Featuring a spa space of nearly 14,000 sq. ft., a regal 80-ft. indoor pool and an adequate collection of gym equipment, it is safe to say that I felt extraordinarily pampered. Highlights: the incredible distressing massage options that include one or more elements of Chinese, European and Ayurvedic influences, the refreshing cucumber water and the complimentary yoga offered every morning by the pool.

I didn't even have to venture far to shop for gifts or consider spoiling myself with the best in high-end fashions; the hotel is adjacent to a dazzling shopping arcade housing 25 world-renowned luxury brands (Chanel has its city flagship store at this location) and a namesake Peninsula gift shop selling everything from decorations and toiletries to food baskets and souvenirs.

Intimately familiar with Shanghai, I didn't expect that I would need concierge services – until I heard about the re-launch of the Peninsula Academy Program. Started in 1997 as a way to offer once-in-a-lifetime services to loyal customers at the first Peninsula hotel in Hong Kong, the idea soon spread to the other Peninsulas around the globe. The concept is as ambitious as it is a simple one; a select activity, tour or class is personalized to introduce visitors to particular cultural, artistic, gourmet and historic aspects of Shanghai.

THE HOTEL IS ADJACENT TO A DAZZLING SHOPPING ARCADE HOUSING 25 WORLD-RENOUNDED LUXURY BRANDS (CHANEL HAS ITS CITY FLAGSHIP STORE AT THIS LOCATION) AND A NAMESAKE PENINSULA GIFT SHOP.

Remarkable experiences include a private heritage tour of Shanghai's landmark buildings in a Rolls Royce Phantom limousine, a behind-the-scenes visit to the city's exciting contemporary art scene, and an opportunity to take to the stage at a Chinese opera complete with a full costume and make-up ensemble.

On the final day of my stay, it was raining heavily but I urgently needed to get to an ATM. Prior to checking out, I asked for directions at the reception desk and was halfway down the block when a staffer ran after me with an umbrella. Upon my return, another employee was waiting with a cup of tea and an offer to have my sweater dried.

I realized at that moment that 'home' was not just in the pampering but also in the attentive care from beginning to end. ■



Ballroom Foyer

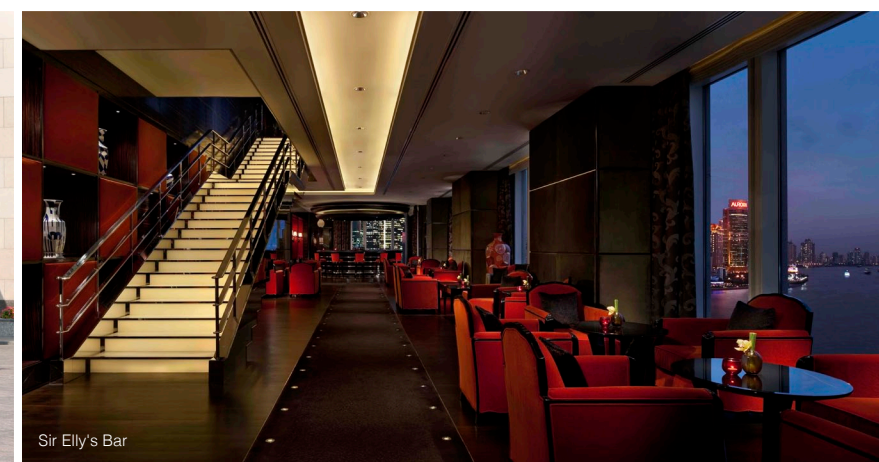


The Compass Bar

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The Peninsula Shanghai



Sir Elly's Bar