

Time Out

Shanghai

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Get out of town

*with our guide to the best short breaks
near Shanghai*

*Meet China's hottest
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*Spring time
walks to try*

*Shanghai's most
epic desserts*



Head to Moganshan this month for tea picking season



XINCHANG ANCIENT TOWN

Pudong covers a vast area, but thankfully so does the Shanghai metro, and when considering day trips out of the city, you needn't always look to the *gaotie*. In fact, before you even reach the end of Line 16, you'll find Xinchang Ancient Town, a vibrant tangle of alleys, bridges and teahouses twirling around the town's four rivers.

Although we may not be the first to discover this charming water town – you may recognise the backdrop from scenes in Ang Lee's film *Lust, Caution* – we felt a world away from the hordes of tourists that often overrun the likes of Zhujiajiao and Zhouzhuang.

The few visitors who do venture here enter the water town via Hongxi Lu. From here, you can stroll the interlacing lanes, carved stone-arch bridges and old wooden architecture of around 100 conserved courtyard-style houses from the Ming and Qing dynasties that provide glimpses of a time when Pudong was merely a string of individual villages.

If you're peckish, sample offerings from street vendors, touting the likes of fried tofu, sticky red bean cakes, and huge baskets of steaming *shaomai*. Those with tired legs might prefer a stop at 14 Hongxi Lu, a quaint little store run by an affable Dongbei lady, for a plate of fresh-boiled dumplings and a seat.

In the centre of the town, you'll find the No. 1 Teahouse (look out for pictures of *Lust, Caution* in the window). A plaque outside this iconic spot states that the shop, originally built as a bungalow, dates back to the years of Emperor Tongzhi in the Qing dynasty, and was rebuilt during the reign of Emperor Xuantong. Now beautifully renovated, it's a peaceful and pleasant place to recharge over a pot of tea.

Towards the end of June, Xinchang is brimming with beautifully fresh and ripe peaches. In the



meantime, from early April and throughout most of May, the town hosts a Peach Blossom Festival (that runs from 9am-4pm at 30RMB per ticket – exact dates not yet confirmed at time of print).

Tourism is obviously doing good things for this area, but it doesn't yet feel too commercialised (except for perhaps one store selling crêpes, and the growing number of coffee shops popping up around town). If you go during the week, you'll experience quieter streets while participating in the daily life of Xinchang's locals. Enjoy it while you can.

GET THERE Take Line 16 to Xinchang (a pleasant 45-minute, mostly above ground metro ride from Century Avenue via Longyang Lu). Heading out of the second exit, grab a cab (a five-minute ride) or jump on the bus that goes to Xinchang Ancient Town for 1RMB (have the town's name in Chinese characters handy and check with the bus conductor if you're unsure). Hop off after three stops (again, the conductor can help you here), cross the road and before arriving at the bridge, head through the stone gate and down Hongxi Lu.



LE PASSAGE MOHKAN SHAN

Moganshan may be an obvious choice for a Shanghai escape, but that doesn't mean that it's any less relaxing. Head to the Zhejiang mountain retreat this month and you'll also experience tea picking season.

While you'll find a range of cheap Moganshan guesthouses on our website, if you're looking for a luxe getaway Le Passage Mohkan Shan fits the bill. You'll feel a world away from the city's constant and luring buzz at this gorgeously restored French-style country house set among an eight-hectare organic tea plantation.

When you arrive, reception can advise you on available activities, including the likes of bike riding, bird watching, golfing and hiking. However, for the month of April, tea picking is the go-to favourite. For an additional 280RMB per person, you'll get a private session with a skilled tea hand where you can wander through green and yellow tea plantations, participate in the annual harvest and learn how to pick Moganshan's indigenous *Camellia Sinensis* plant.

When you get back to the hotel, don't skip a dip in the spring water pool, before hitting the bar for a cocktail and sliding into dinner in the Armand

David Restaurant. In 2015, Toyo Koda (formerly at Franck in Shanghai) took over as head chef, and has since been crafting French and organic cuisine that has seen Le Passage earn a reputation as a culinary hub.

Spend any remaining time you have at this peaceful and natural retreat walking the hills of Moganshan or sinking into the leather sofas in the fireside salon with a book. If you're lucky, the resident dog Tiger might even drop by for some companionship.

Those visiting Moganshan but not staying at Le Passage can also stop by their off-site eatery, The Old Cinema Restaurant Bar & Terrace (369 Moganshan, Yinshan Lu, Moganshan Town). Serving French bistro classics and light snacks such as pizza, rotisserie chicken and homemade sausages and terrines, it's worth a visit just to sample Chef Toyo's creations and check out the beautiful restoration of the 1970s stone building.

GET THERE Le Passage is located at the Xianrenkeng Tea Plantation, Ziling village in Deqing county. Take one of the numerous *gaotie* trains from Hongqiao to Hangzhou (from 73RMB) and ask the hotel to arrange a pick up.

BOOK Rooms start at 2,680RMB per night including a traditional French Country Breakfast (plus 15 percent tax and service).