

HOTEL PROFILE | SHANGHAI

LANDMARK LUXURY

The Westin Bund Center marks 10 years at the forefront of Shanghai's hospitality industry.

Matthew Fulco reports.

Shanghai's historic Bund waterfront has returned to form in the past decade, emerging as a top destination for tourists and hip locals alike. Cutting a graceful arc along the Huangpu River, its austere colonial-era buildings brim with glamorous sky bars, restaurants and boutiques.

Europe's top fashion houses use prime Bund retail space to showcase their wares to China's wealthy. It makes for priceless branding, even if sales remain stronger in tax-free Hong Kong.

Yet, while the illustrious Bund thrives today, a decade ago it laid barren amidst a less-developed Shanghai.

The Westin was the first international hotel brand to capitalize on the historic area's reemergence. In October 2002, it moved into a new 26-story building within walking distance of the celebrated waterfront. The eminent American architect John Portman designed the property, fitting its rooftop with an iconic luminescent crown.

The landmark 570-room property soon established itself as one of the city's premier hotels, creating a guest experience both luxurious and salutary.

General manager Andreas Trauttmansdorff, a 30-year veteran of the hospitality industry, describes a stay at the Westin as "heavenly."

Guest rooms, he says, act as "therapeutic retreats where guests can rebound from the rigors of the road."

"Every traveler who stays with us should leave feeling better than when he or she arrived," Trauttmansdorff says.

Certainly, a trip to the Westin's Banyan Tree Spa should help that cause. The Singapore-based Banyan Tree is known for its traditional Eastern healing therapies — both non-clinical and holistic — that "celebrate the human touch and use of natural herbs and spices."

The Westin outlet of the Banyan Tree adds a Chinese dimension to the experience with treatments based on the five traditional Chinese elements of earth, metal, water, wood and fire incorporating more than 70 herbs and other natural ingredients. Each of the 13 treatment rooms is equipped with a rain mist shower and steam facilities, bathtub with a waterfall feature and private changing area.

The Westin also offers a comprehensive range of athletic facilities, including a 20-meter heated indoor swimming pool, 24-hour fitness center and guestrooms designed for working out. For guests who enjoy jogging, the hotel provides a runner's concierge familiar with the Bund area to accompany them for "a culture run." Acting as a guide during the run, the concierge explains the history of the neighborhood and tells stories along the way.

While the Westin has enjoyed considerable success in Shanghai, an increasingly crowded market



An evening view of the Westin Bund Center Shanghai.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

necessitates change, says Trauttmansdorff.

"The overall cake is getting larger, but the individual slices are shrinking in size," he says. "You have to differentiate to remain competitive."

Over the next six months, the hotel will refurbish its lobby and add two new junior ballrooms to the third floor.

Additionally, Wi-Fi services will be enhanced, Trauttmansdorff says. The Westin will upgrade the cabling in all of its guestrooms and equip each of them with a dedicated transmitter and receiver. Bandwidth will increase, creating "the fastest possible connectivity in China."

The Westin will also launch new personalized weekend packages aimed at domestic guests, many who visit from the nearby provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu.

"Weekend guests have different expectations than business travelers," Trauttmansdorff says. "Since they are paying for the trip themselves, they want a more personalized experience."

Under the new program, the hotel will help guests organize customized itineraries of their leisure activities during their stay, he adds.

Trauttmansdorff recommends weekend travelers take advantage of the Westin's Sunday brunch, which he says is one of Shanghai's best. The brunch features delicacies such as foie gras, beef carpaccio and handmade Italian pastas along with a free flow of fine wines. A 12-piece string orchestra and acrobats entertain guests throughout the meal.

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hotellistings

BEIJING

Mooncake gift boxes

China World Hotel, Beijing, presents a moon cake collection with 12 different moon cake gift boxes and more than 30 flavors. Stuffings range from the traditional varieties with white lotus filling and mixed nuts to red wine and berry paste, healthy pumpkin egg yolk, low sugar green tea, and bacon and truffle paste. The gift sets are available from 138-588 yuan.

010-6505-2266 Ext 5722.

Award-winning Italian food

"Chef of the Year" Gianluca Visani offers his new creations and the taste of traditional Italian home cooking. Examples of his innovative cuisine are scallops with Parma ham and Jerusalem artichokes, porcini mushroom soup with truffle and mascarpone-chives tortellini, as well as squid ink tagliolini with Dungeness crab. Dishes are matched with exquisite regional Italian wines. All of these delicacies will be presented on a brand new menu in a creative design.

010-5908-8151.

Mix the perfect cocktail

Book early to secure your place for the final bartending class in 'The Champagne Bar' at Fairmont Beijing. "Classic cocktails" will be the theme on Aug 4. Anthony, the hotel's cocktail expert, learned his trade at 'The Plaza', a legendary Fairmont Hotel in New York and will teach you techniques that will wow you and your friends. As Anthony will be returning to his home country, this will be his last Beijing Cocktail Class. 150 yuan per person plus 15 percent.

010-8507-3617.

Taste of Tasmania at Grill 79

Experience the unique pleasure of dining on a 21-day, dry-aged, grass-fed Tasmanian beef at Grill 79 in August. Chef de Cuisine Ryan Dadufalza sources from the world's most renowned prime grass-fed beef producers in Cape Grim, Australia, to create the finest steaks cooked to perfection. Offering a choice of your desired cuts — from 220 to 340 grams of strip loin to rib-eye, or, if you are willing to share, the 1,000-gram T-bone or the 1,200-gram Cowboy from the sharing menu.

010-8571-6459.

Chinese Valentine's Day Celebration

Patrons can make it an occasion to remember and impress loved ones on Aug 23, which is Chinese Valentine's Day according to the lunar calendar. To celebrate this special day, Beijing's premier restaurant China Grill at Park Hyatt Beijing will feature three memorable menus, while guests enjoy the magnificence of the Beijing skyline. Highlights on the menu include the grilled Australian beef tenderloin, "rossini" foie gras, butter-poached Boston lobster, fava bean puree and steamed pigeon soup. Starting from 1,988 yuan per couple.

010-8567-1838.



SHANGHAI

Exclusive gift boxes

To celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival, Crowne Plaza Hangzhou Xanadu Resort has prepared exclusive mooncake gift boxes. It includes three styles namely Suzhou, Cantonese and Yunnan — according to the types of mooncakes. Guests can also choose from the various designs of gift boxes such as lucky moon box, wishful moon box, and golden dragon moon box.

0571-8388-0666.

Children's haven

Bring your family down to the Peninsula Shanghai, where there are fun activities, menu and facilities specially designed for the kids. The nourishing Peninsula Kids' Menu composed of chicken wonton soup, barbecued pork bun, seasonal organic fruit and vegetable purees.

021-2327-2888 Ext 6605.

Balinese bites

Hyatt on the Bund is holding a Balinese food festival this August, prepared by Roger Marti, its executive chef. Among the dishes are Balinese skewered items including prawns, lemongrass flavored lobster and grilled fish in banana leaf.

021-6393-1234.

Authentic Aussie "Barbie"

Park Hyatt Shanghai's Chef Benjamin has created a real Australia barbeque this summer. The menu includes the best ribs in town, bar-mundi and exotic dishes such as crocodile meat, to give an international flavor to the BBQ Festival.

021 6888-1234 Ext 4106.

Traditional Italian pizza

Saints International Restaurant in Hongta Hotel is presenting a traditional Italian-style pizza lunch, where patrons can choose from rich ingredients such as pepperoni, salami, mushroom, onion, olives, capers, smoked salmon, ham, anchovies, jalapeno, chicken breast roast, garlic roast, bell pepper chili, pineapple and banana. The hot dish options consist of Italian cheese rice ball, potato mushroom cake and grilled mixed vegetables.

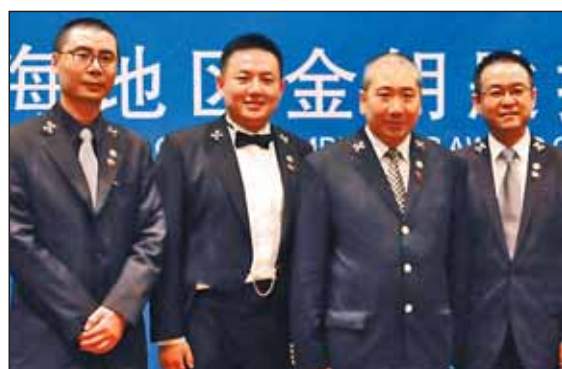
021-5050-4567 Ext 6312.



who's who



Singapore's ambassador to China H.E. Stanley Loh (left) walks with Gino Tan (right), general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing. The hotel held a Singapore Food Festival starting July 30 in celebration of Singapore's 47th National Day.



The Radisson Blu Plaza Xing Guo Hotel Shanghai welcomes new members of Les Clefs d'Or China — Jin Jin of the Howard Johnson Huaihai Hotel Shanghai (left), Hua Jun of the Radisson Blu Plaza Xing Guo (second left), Sun Dong (second right), the president of Les Clefs d'Or China, and Wang Haijiang of Courtyard by Marriott Shanghai Xujiahui (right).



Gerd Knaust (left), the general manager of Hilton Shanghai, together with Rupert Hoogewerf (right), the founder of the Hurun Report at Charity Gala Dinner.



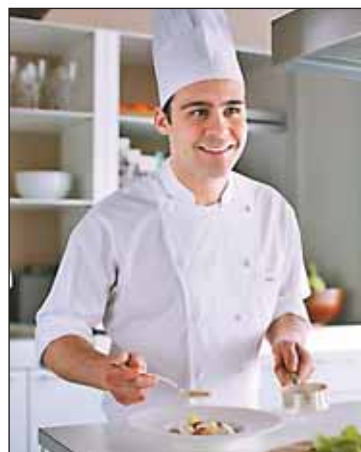
Ramada Beijing North celebrates its first anniversary with Edward Wang (1st left), director of operation APEC Wyndham Hotel; Rebecca Zhang Wei (2nd left), chairwoman of Ramada Beijing North's holding company; John Li (2nd right), the hotel's general manager; and Cynthia Liu (1st right), director of brand marketing APEC Wyndham Hotel.



Jean-Philippe Jacopin (left), general manager of Hilton Chongqing, and Wu Chenghui (right), the property owner's representative, welcome former NBA star Yao Ming.



Lukas Zeseil has been appointed the Chef de Cuisine of Park Hyatt Shanghai Dining Room.



The Hongta Hotel, Shanghai, welcomes Liu Zong as the new General Manager.



InterContinental Beijing Beichen appoints Kurt Lu as the hotel's acting director of sales and marketing.