



Above: Yu Garden is an oasis of tranquility in the heart of cosmopolitan Shanghai.



Above: Modern art is on full display at the Jing'an Sculpture Park, only a 10 minute walk from West Nanjing Road.

Below: The majestic Jinshanling portion of the Great Wall of China at sunset, only viewed with Leo Kui and Beijing Walking Tours.

One perfect week in China

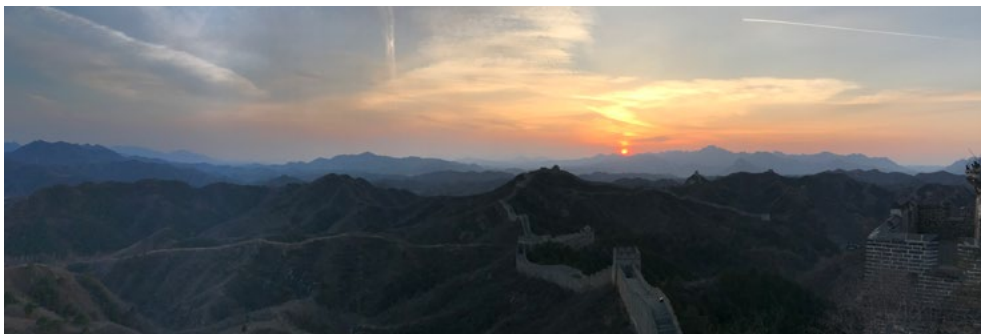
By *Daniel Smajovits*

For millennia, China has captured the hearts and minds of the world. Since opening up her doors to tourists in the late 1970's, more than one billion people have flocked to explore its unique culture and history.

With non-stop flights from Montreal to both Beijing (Air China) and Shanghai (Air Canada), the heart and soul of this country is well within reach. Recently, I spent one incredible week exploring both cities, tapping into the pulse of one of the world's most exciting countries.

Any first-time traveler to China should start in **Beijing**, where the country's rich history and politics is on full display. To fully appreciate the city and take in its most famous sights such as the **Forbidden City**, **Tian'amen Square** and the **Temple of Heaven**, we suggest **Leo Kui's** Heritage Walking Tour (www.beijingwalking.com). While Beijing is best explored by foot, should accessibility be an issue, Leo will work with you to ensure accessible transportation is available either via private car or the city's vast public transit system.

In his mid 30's, Leo Kui's passion is ensuring that visitors leave China with a new love for



his country. We spent two full days with Leo, hearing stories ranging from his youth to life in one of the world's most complex societies. Unlike on larger group tours, Leo limits the number of guests to ensure that he builds a relationship with each and every person, allowing for candid and open conversations that allow you to truly appreciate life in China.

After a wonderful tour of Beijing, your afternoon should be spent walking through the city's **hutongs**, or alleyways, some of which remain unchanged since the Ming Dynasty. The city has a number of nightlife options, but we suggest that you get plenty of time to rest before the next day's trip to the Great Wall of China.

It only takes a few minutes of climbing to realize the massive engineering marvel that is the **Great Wall of China**. Built over the course of many dynasties, Leo's full-day tour provides two unique perspectives on the wall: the ancient and the restored. Starting at the Gubeikou portion of the wall, visitors can gaze and climb through the ancient fortifications. Following a delicious and traditional lunch comes the highlight of the day: the restored Jinshanling section of the wall. Timing it perfectly, Leo ensures to arrive

just before sunset, and with a glass of wine or traditional Chinese liquor in hand, your group is alone, basking in the sunset and the serenity of this wonder of the world. If accessibility is an issue, a cable car can provide access to the wall.

After breakfast on day three, it is time to make your way down to **Shanghai**. The most efficient option is the Maglev high-speed train. With 36 daily departures, the ride lasts just under five hours and allows you to avoid the stress of traveling by plane.

With over 24 million people, Shanghai is the most populous city in the world. After the quick trip from Beijing, settle into your hotel and then head to **The Bund** to take in one of the world's most famous waterfront views. The Bund must be visited both by day and night to truly grasp its beauty; make sure to time your evening visit to include the light show that runs continuously until 10 pm.

As a premiere tourist and business destination, Shanghai boasts a perfect mix of shopping and culture, so fill your next two days with both. Spend half a day strolling down **Nanjing Road**, the city's most famous shopping street. Ensure to include visits to the **Shanghai**

Museum, traditional **Yu Garden** and the **Jewish Refugee's Museum**, which tells the incredible story of the Jewish refugees during World War II. If time allows, the off-the-beaten-path **Propaganda Poster Art Centre**, offers a history lesson in Chinese politics through a privately owned collection.

As with most cities, no trip to Shanghai would be complete without indulging in its incredible food scene. While famous for its buns: both the steamed and soup versions, those delicacies only scratch the surface of the city's culinary exploits.

The **UnTour Food Tour** (www.untourfoodtours.com) will take your palate along a culinary journey unique to Shanghai. We opted for the Night Eats tour, which included five restaurants and two street stops, allowing us to sample dozens of dishes and drinks, while mingling with locals and tourists alike. UnTour's experienced guides provided the ideal evening activity, leaving you wanting seconds and thirds. The group operates multiple food tours in Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong and we will definitely try another tour on a future trip.

If your itinerary allows for more time in Shanghai, a great day-trip for families is **Shanghai Disneyland**. The theme park is very similar to its North American counterparts, but with a unique Chinese flair. For the business traveler, stop by the **South Bund Soft Spinning Market** on day one to get fitted for a new wardrobe. All shops have similar materials, but we chose Joyce and Rita (#129) for their customer service and hotel delivery.