

# Ringling the changes

Shanghai has developed, but its historic churches and cathedrals have survived despite some major renovations, **Xu Junqian** reports.

Shanghai may rank as China's largest city, but its history is relatively brief. It took only a few centuries for the populous urban center that we know and love to develop from a small fishing village and textile trading port into China's financial hub.

In terms of landmarks, Shanghai is more famous for its Bund waterfront and City God Temple landmark, the last of which commemorates the neighboring commercial area as much as the Buddhist temple itself, but it also has its share of historic churches and cathedrals. These pay testament to the impression left on its residents over the years by Christian and Catholic missionaries. Here we list the best of the best for history buffs, believers and day-trippers.

It was built in the mid-19th century. As a prototype of churches designed by architects from Europe or the United States who were prone to combining Chinese elements with their own traditions, it incorporates a number of Chinese patterns. These include the blossom lotus and swords decorating its upper walls. Since the church is now undergoing renovation, there may be some changes to its Mass schedule, especially on weekdays. Calling in advance is recommended.

**Address:** 157 Dongjiadu Road  
**Tel:** 021-6378-7214  
**Service schedule:** Saturday 5 pm, Sunday 10:30 am and 12:30 pm  
**Transport:** Bus No's 910, 928, 736

## 1. Sheshan Catholic Church

Perched on the top of the most famous mountain in Shanghai, Sheshan Catholic Church was established by a French missionary back in the 1870s. As the largest church in East Asia, it has a capacity of more than 4,000 people, and once stood as the most popular destination for pilgrims in Asia, attracting both Catholics and non-Catholics. In 1942, Pope Pius XII ordained the church a minor Basilica, making it a de facto Holy Land for Chinese Catholics. Despite the damage wrought on it during the "cultural revolution" (1966-76), the church has since been restored to its former glory.

**Address:** Top of West Sheshan Mt, Songjiang  
**Tel:** 021-5765-1521  
**Opening hours:** Daily 8:30 am-6 pm  
**Transport:** Metro Line 9

## 2. St Ignatius Cathedral

More commonly known as Xujiahui Cathedral due to its location in one of the city's busiest commercial areas, St Ignatius was designed by English architect William Doyle and built by French Jesuits in 1904. Following the Gothic style typical of the Middle Ages, the cathedral consists of two 60-meter towers linking a lower central section. In 1989, the first Chinese-language Mass was celebrated here. After a five-year restoration project that began in 2005, the cathedral was fitted with new stained glass windows incorporating Chinese characters.

**Address:** 158 Puxi Road  
**Tel:** 021-6438-2595  
**Opening hours:** Saturday and Sunday 1 pm-4:30 pm  
**Transport:** Metro Line 1

## 3. Shanghai International Church (Guoji Libai Tang)

Nestled in the center of the former French Concession, Shanghai International Church was founded by American immigrants in the 1920s. It is built in a modern style with red bricks and has a foundation shaped like the letter "L". Also called Hengshan Community Church, it is now the best-known protestant church in the city. It can accommodate up to 700 people and boasts an excellent chorus. It is closed to the public on weekdays but has Chinese and foreign services on Sundays.

**Address:** 53 Hengshan Road  
**Telephone:** 021-6437-6576  
**Service schedule:** Sunday 7:30 am, 10 am and 7 pm  
**Transport:** Metro Line 1

## 4. St Francis Xavier Church

A replica of the Chiesa del Gesù (Church of the Holy Name of Jesus) in Rome, this Baroque-style church is believed to be the first foreign church built in Shanghai.

## 5. Moore Memorial Church (Mu'en Tang)

The church is named after JM Moore, a Texan who donated money for its construction, but in Chinese it goes by the name Mu'en Tang. It was built in 1929 and was completely renovated two years later by Hungarian architect Ladislau Hudec. Hudec transformed the building into a landmark that can compete with today's skyscrapers in People's Square, where it is located. It features a sparkling, rotating cross at its peak, while the interior boasts elegant galleries and stone arches. It is not open to the public except for during services on Sundays.

**Address:** 316 Xizang Road M  
**Tel:** 021-6322-5069  
**Service schedule:** Sunday 7 am, 9:30 am, 2 pm and 7 pm  
**Transport:** Metro Lines 1, 2, 8

## 6. Holy Trinity Church

You may have passed the "big red cathedral", as locals affectionately dub it, and appreciated the cultural and architectural relic that has been standing in place for almost 150 years. Finished in 1869, the church has a magnificent look, showing the tendencies of English architects during the Victorian era. Its nearly 50-meter-high bell tower, added afterwards, made it one of Shanghai's highest structures at the time.

**Address:** 219 Jiujiang Road  
**Transport:** Metro Lines 2, 10; Bus No 65

## 7. Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church

Situated in the Jinqiao International Community in Pudong New Area, the church was first built in the middle of the 18th century. It was then removed to other parts of the city several times before settling in Jinqiao. The Sacred Heart provides regular Mass services in English and Chinese and is open to the public.

**Address:** 151 Hongfeng Road, Jinqiao  
**Tel:** 021-5765-2912  
**Service schedule:** Saturday 5 pm; Sunday 10:30 am  
**Transport:** Bus No's 995, 987, 984

## 8. Jingling Church

The church gains most of its fame for having served as the wedding venue of former KMT strongman Chiang Kai-Shek and Soong Mei-Ling in 1927. Originally built as an exclusive religious structure for a school, the church has been taken over by several institutions and experienced some expansion. It also boasts a well-trained chorus and puts on regular performances every Sunday.

**Address:** 135 Kunshan Road  
**Tel:** 021-6324-3021  
**Opening hours:** Daily 9 am-5 pm  
**Transport:** Bus No's 910, 145, 848

