

AMERICAN AIRLINES - AMERICAN EAGLE

AMERICAN WAY

SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

First Time I Met the Blues

For **Buddy Guy**, it was
1957 in **Chicago**

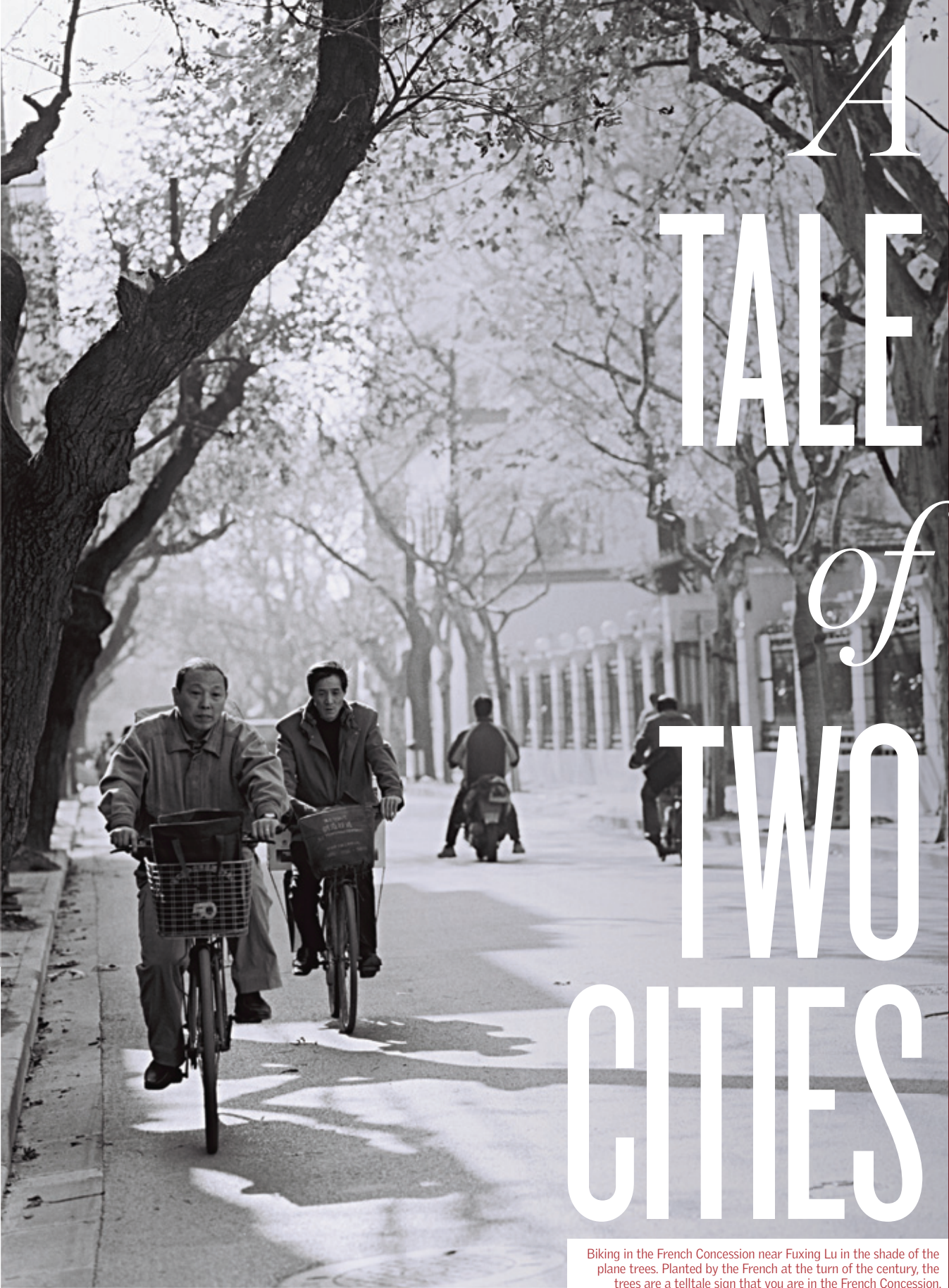
JUST A MODERN GUY

This business executive
traded in board meetings
for tight pants

UNLIKELY HOCKEY TOWN

Down in Turks and Caicos,
surfing is for softies

INSIDE:
See what surprises
await you in Shanghai



A TALE *of* TWO CITIES

Biking in the French Concession near Fuxing Lu in the shade of the plane trees. Planted by the French at the turn of the century, the trees are a telltale sign that you are in the French Concession.

Explore the best of times in old and new **Shanghai.**

BY KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI / PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW ROWAT



Looking northwest from Xintiandi at the tangled intersection of the elevated highways that run north and south and the east-west highway that bisects the city.

W

White strobe lights flicker all around me. Gold fiber-optic rings spiral off into the distance. As a blow-up wind-sock figure — the sort often seen at used-car dealerships — pops up next to the glass capsule I’m riding in, I can’t help but think that Shanghai’s Bund Tourist Tunnel looks exactly how an 8-year-old boy would build a time machine.

This five-minute psychedelic ride under the Huangpu River may not be a real time machine, but it is an entertaining trip between Shanghai’s past and future. For on the west side of the river, in Puxi, lies the Bund, Shanghai’s famous historic riverside promenade. This row of stunning neoclassical buildings was the heart of old Shanghai, the infamous port city ruled by Western colonial powers and a destination synonymous with pleasure, power and money.

On the east side of the river, in Pudong, stand the futuristic skyscrapers of new Shanghai, China’s economic powerhouse. These modern architectural marvels stand as bold exclamation points on the skyline, declaring the intentions of this megacity of 19 million people to reach even greater heights on the international scene.

Shanghai is wrapping up a successful six-month run as the host city of World Expo 2010. The Chinese government spent \$45 billion — a few billion more than the tab for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics — on infrastructure and preparations for Expo 2010 and to make good on Expo’s theme of “Better City, Better Life.” The investment paid off. World Expo 2010 — the 53rd such event officially recognized by the Bureau International des Expositions — has been the largest ever, with 191 countries participating and an estimated 70 million visitors clicking through the turnstiles.

The sprawling 3-square-mile Expo grounds showcase a beautified but sanitized section of Shanghai — interesting, but in many ways as surreal as the Bund Tourist Tunnel. (It’s a fleeting vision, too, for after Nov. 1, all but five of the pavilions will be consigned to the scrap heap, as Expo rules dictate, and the grounds left for purposes unknown.) If visitors venture beyond the Expo gates, there awaits a far more rewarding and insightful view of this fascinating

city. For Shanghai is two places in one, really. By exploring both old Shanghai and new Shanghai, visitors can better appreciate how different generations of Chinese and foreign adventurers have shaped this remarkable place into the dynamic, complex and captivating world city it is today.

Ladies and gentlemen, start your time machines.

SOMETHING OLD / THE VOICE OF Chinese opera star Mei Lanfang warbles on the Victrola. A drink cart has been rolled out for cocktail hour. From my spot on the plush velvet settee in the Art Deco lobby of the Mansion Hotel, I half expect gangster “Big Eared” Du Yue-Sheng to stroll through the front door, as this stunning five-story villa, built in 1932, was once the personal clubhouse of Shanghai’s most notorious mobster. With vintage visual aids aplenty throughout the lobby — bank certificates hanging on the wall, family photos on the mantel, golf clubs in a display case — the Mansion Hotel also serves as an ideal setting for a quick lesson in old Shanghai history.

In 1842, after Great Britain defeated China in the Opium War, Shanghai was opened up to the world as a treaty port. The British and French divided up the city, leaving a tiny Chinese-controlled portion while claiming their own large concessions: self-governing territories in which their own countries’ sovereign rule was law.

As the rise of Big Eared Du attests, lawlessness was often the order of the day during the century of colonial rule, and particularly during the 1930s. Foreigners poured into Shanghai, creating a rich cultural mix that earned the city the sobriquet “the Paris of the East” and fueling an anything-goes environment wherein wealthy businessmen





This page, clockwise from left: The URBN Hotel
Shanghai's facade, Pudong and the Bund Tourist Tunnel
Opposite page: Bund neighborhood

conducted affairs not only in the stately buildings along the Bund, but also in the shadowy establishments lining nearby Fuzhou Lu. At the end of the day, the men returned home to their elaborate villas in the French Concession — villas like the Mansion Hotel.

Wm Patrick Cranley knows these buildings well. One of the founders of **Historic Shanghai**, the American entrepreneur is helping lead the charge to preserve old Shanghai's architectural treasures. Shanghai is believed to have more Art Deco buildings than any other city in the world, including Miami. But as the World Monuments Fund declared in 2007, these buildings are among the top 100 endangered cultural and historic sites in the world, due to Shanghai's "rapid urbanization and development" and a "lack of awareness of the importance and richness of recent architecture from the 1920s, '30s and '40s."

And so you'll often find Cranley on foot, leading walking tours of the French Concession, the Bund and elsewhere around town. "I hope visitors will look at Shanghai with inquisitive minds," he says. "Why do its buildings look the way they do? What do these historic structures tell us about how Shanghai developed and why the city's culture is so special?"

The white wedding cake of a mansion that's now home to the **Arts and Crafts Research Institute** on Fen Yang Lu in the

"SHANGHAI HAS THE ENERGY OF AN IMMATURE CITY THAT'S DEFINING ITSELF AS IT GROWS."

French citizens; and "acquired" in 1949 by Chen Yi, Shanghai's first communist mayor. As I cross the parquet floors in the former dining room, I imagine the power dinner parties of old: glasses clinking, smoke curling up toward the coffered ceiling, children peeking over the rail of the graceful, curved marble staircase. The upstairs bedrooms now serve as studios for artists creating traditional Chinese handicrafts, which seems

fitting — the artistry of yesteryear inspires the creativity of today.

Cranley finds his inspiration a few blocks farther southwest, on Gao'An Lu: the **Xuhui District Children's Palace**. Long before Houston Rockets superstar Yao Ming played computer games here after school as a child, this graceful, streamlined mansion was the home of the wealthy Rong family, whose rise-and-fall, bust-and-boom fortunes over the past 90 years mirrored those of China. "These people (the Rongs and others) lived the Shanghai high life," Cranley says, "and left behind physical evidence of that incredibly innovative and exciting era of the city's history."

Little wonder old Shanghai has long captivated Hollywood. Stars from Marlene Dietrich to Madonna have brought the spirit of the city to life on the silver screen, some more successfully than others. The films capture the Shanghai times that came to an end — first with the Japanese



Below: Park Hyatt Shanghai
Right: URBN lobby



invasion in December 1941, then firmly with the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949.

Time to rest my feet with a cup of tea — after all, this *is* China. The **Old China Hand Reading Room**, nestled on quiet Shaoxing Lu in the French Concession, is owned by photographer Deke Erh, who, like Cranley, has crusaded to preserve Shanghai's architectural legacy. Erh designed the laid-back café/library/bookstore as a personal study circa the 1930s, with soft jazz playing in the background and period furniture for curling up with a good book, of which there are hundreds on the shelves.

My day ends at the Bund, where old Shanghai began. I stop in at the former **Hong Kong Shanghai Bank** building, where the worldly ambitions of Shanghaianders of the 1920s are still on vivid display in the dome's beautiful Italian-tile mosaic. Its main panels depict the eight cities where HSBC had branches at the time: London, Paris, New York, Bangkok, Tokyo, Calcutta, Hong Kong and Shanghai. And at the center lies Ceres, the Roman goddess of abundance.

Abundance, wealth, ambition — perhaps old Shanghai and new Shanghai aren't so different after all.

SOMETHING NEW / TRANQUILITY. It's nearly impossible to find among the car horns, construction noise and general din of modern Shanghai. But from my window seat in the 87th-floor lobby of the **Park Hyatt Shanghai** in Pudong, the sound is on mute, and the city far below looks like the 1,000-square-foot model of 2020 Shanghai on display in the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center.



IF YOU GO

MANSION HOTEL

82 Xin Le Lu
Xuhui District
(8621) 5403-9888
www.chinamansionhotel.com

ARTS AND CRAFTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

79 Fen Yang Lu
Xuhui District
(8621) 6437-2509

XUHUI DISTRICT CHILDREN'S PALACE

Gao'An Lu, Lane 18,
Building 20
Xuhui District
(8621) 6415-7512

OLD CHINA HAND READING ROOM

27 Shaoxing Lu
Luwang District
(8621) 6473-2526

PARK HYATT SHANGHAI

100 Century Avenue
Pudong New Area
(8621) 6888-1234
www.parkhyattshanghai.com

ULTRAVIOLET

www.uvbypp.cc

ART LABOR GALLERY

570 Yongjia Lu,
Building 4
Xuhui District
(8621) 3460-5331
www.artlaborgallery.com

URBN HOTELS SHANGHAI

183 Jiaozhou Lu
Changning District
(8621) 5153-4600
www.urbnhotels.com

As the world's highest hotel — occupying the 79th to 93rd floors of the Shanghai World Finance Center — the Park Hyatt Shanghai is one of many superlatives to which new Shanghai proudly lays claim. Largest: Expo 2010. Fastest: The mag-lev train from Pudong International Airport reaches top speeds of 268 miles per hour. Busiest: Shanghai's port has held that title for the past five years. The city reverberates with a restless, almost reckless energy.

"Shanghai has the energy of an immature city that's defining itself as it grows," says Paul Pairet, one of Shanghai's most celebrated chefs. Since his arrival in 2005, this French culinary master of surprise has redefined Shanghai's dining scene with his wildly inventive, cutting-edge cuisine, first at Jade on 36 in the Pudong Shangri-La, then with a subtler hand at his own Mr and Mrs Bund. In Pairet's hands, even the simplest ingredients — lemons, oranges, tuna — are never what they seem.

Pairet's newest venue, **Ultraviolet**, will continue to keep Shanghai guessing. The location itself is secret, disclosed only upon booking a reservation. Pairet considers Ultraviolet not so much a restaurant but a "sensory play" orchestrated by the chef and his team. Once the evening's 10 guests arrive for the one and only sitting, playtime begins, as Pairet adjusts the lighting, sound, scents and atmosphere of the interactive room to enhance each of the 20 courses of his avant-garde set menu. "It's

the first of its kind in the world," Pairet says.

At approximately \$295 a person, it's also one of Shanghai's priciest meals. But in spite of the worldwide economic downturn, China is still minting more new millionaires than any other country on the planet, and disposable incomes even for the average Shanghai-

nese continue to rise. That explains where the crowds come from as I stroll along **Nanjing Lu** — Shanghai's version of Fifth Avenue, which is packed with hundreds of stores and more than a million shoppers daily, according to global consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Chanel, Prada, Louis Vuitton — the roll call of luxury brands is as large as the number of vendors selling cheap knockoff versions at the market just around the corner.

New Shanghai's growing fondness for conspicuous consumption serves as rich source material for the city's thriving modern art scene, particularly in the Moganshan Lu Arts District north of downtown. But it's at the hip **Art Labor Gallery** on Yongjia Lu in the French Concession where I discover the "Logomania" series by Shanghai native and rising star Chen Hangfeng. On the surface, Chen's works appear to be traditional Chinese paper cutting. But as I look closer at the intricate snips, I find not the traditional bird and fish images but a bevy of corporate logos: Nike, McDonald's, Shell.

"Shanghai is still a nouveau-riche culture," says Martin Kemble, the Canadian owner of Art Labor. "It takes time for that acceptance and comfort with wealth and [for people] to spend it on things that expose your tastes to the public, like art. A BMW is considered safer to put money into; everyone knows the 'value' of a BMW." Chen's "Logomania" makes it possible for buyers to have both; the series has been a runaway success, expanding from paper works into carpets, wallpaper — even temporary tattoos.

Canadian architect Raefer Wallis intends for his artistic contribution to new Shanghai to leave a similarly indelible impression. His **URBN Hotels Shanghai** in the heart of downtown is the first carbon-neutral hotel in China. "Setting a precedent here in Shanghai is almost more important than anywhere else, given the influence the city has on the rest of China," Wallis says.

URBN is no stark minimalist space; the chic, 26-room boutique hotel uses 100 percent recycled and locally sourced materials to create interiors that capture the essence of Shanghai. Timber and stamped bricks

from demolished houses line the subdued hallways. Bamboo louvers, usually used by locals for hanging laundry, cover the building's facade.

My first impression of URBN turns out to be the most enduring one of my trip. For in the lobby of URBN is a wall made entirely of suitcases — dozens of brown leather suitcases from the 1930s. Plucked from markets and

dusted off from attics around the city, these remnants of yesteryear have found a new life here in Shanghai's most forward-looking lodging. They're time travelers themselves, reminding us of where Shanghai has been — and where it's going. **AW**

Freelance writer **KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI**, a frequent contributor to *American Way*, lived in Shanghai for five years and frequently writes about the city for this and other travel magazines.

Heading to New York? Going to Broadway?

The show starts here.


PLATAFORMA
CHURRASCARIA
RODIZIO

Enjoy a trip to Brazil
without leaving
New York.

The steakhouse even
vegetarians would love.



Theater District
316 West 49th Street

Bet. 8th & 9th Avenues

212.245.0505

plataformaonline.com

"Golden
Apple
Awards"
for Food
Safety and
Cleanliness.

Wine
Spectator's
"Best of Award of
Excellence"
Since 2001



TriBeCa

Riodizio Churrascaria
221 West Broadway

Bet. White & Franklin Streets

212.925.6969

ChurrascariaTribeca.com