

I ♥ Shanghai ...

We moved to Shanghai late November 2016. Arriving to the grey and dark cold, to the smog and the strange smells, and to the foreign and uncertain fears. Slightly resistant, and keeping my head down, I was consumed in the unpacking of boxes, settling of kids, finding food (or finding fake UGGs), and of course, treks out to IKEA, that come with home making in a new country. And it was probably only after Chinese New Year, late February 2017, as spring began to unveil itself like a blushing bride, that I slowly began my love affair with the seductress Shanghai ...

The tall clear, blue skies stretched wide across the heavens, pushing out the greys. Fresh new green adorned the branches of the trees lined the avenues and compound lanes. And silky, soft shades of pinks welcomed us on our walks in our neighbourhood, or adventures to parks of Pudong. Spring had come to Shanghai, and the whole city seemed to embrace it, and reawaken!

We took our girls, and their scooters, for our first outing to Century Park. The blossoms were just sensational. They flirted and posed for our (and everyone else's) cameras or phones, like any famous muse or supermodel would... soon becoming profile picture or wall paper to announce the new season... Shanghai spring! We ate cotton candy, waved huge bubble sticks and watched our first flowing Tai Chi Spirit Dance. We opened our hearts, and our love affair with Shanghai began ...

3 years later, writing as a refugee in Singapore, my heart longs for my darling Shanghai; and like so many of us scattered across the world, pining for our home and the familiar. During this cruel separation, I often catch myself daydreaming of the many nuances and glances of Shanghai in spring. I miss my Shanghai life. The Puxi street food jianbing (traditional crepe-style omelette) for breakfast, the home-made jiaozi (dumplings) for lunch, and a night out with my husband at a Michelin star dinner on the Bund ... All lightly peppered with a barista coffee with friends, and a glass or two of playdate Prosecco while the kids rediscover the outdoor playgrounds.

I miss the downtown adventures and the now very welcomed and appreciated routines. I miss the community and the family life, and the amazing household help. But even more so, I miss the smells and sights of the Shanghai spring ... The blooming flowers, the lazy water lilies, the new life and the end of winter. And hopefully, when this surreal world sickness has passed, we will reconnect with greater appreciation...

Like all great love affairs, Shanghai has left her imprint on my heart... I may have missed this year's blossoms, but I have a new found appreciation of this magnificent city, and a magnitude of memories to feed my soul... I ♥ Shanghai ...

Angeline Ruston

Shanghai resident currently in Singapore

