

Xinchang

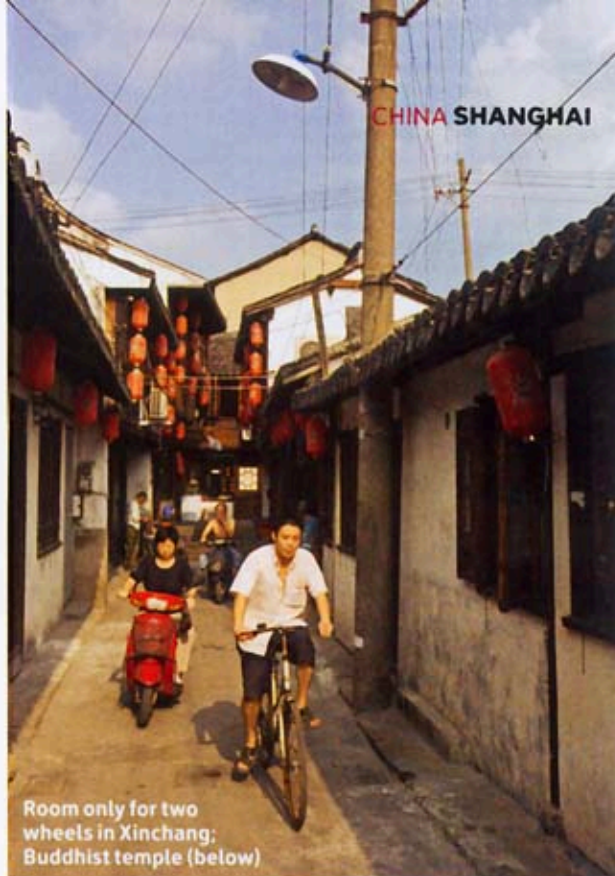
Experience the slower pace of village life at Xinchang, around 30km from Shanghai, in the Nanhui District's south-west. The waterside town has an undeveloped centre of plaster and timber Ming dynasty houses. You can walk along quiet canal paths lined with willow trees and cross humpback stone bridges more than 500 years old.

The lanes here are too narrow for cars, so you can saunter along past the dentist waiting for customers to step up to his treadle drill, tailors gossiping and drinking tea while knocking up a suit, a man welding steel pots and buckets, and elderly women spinning wool on a sunny verandah.

Taiwanese director Ang Lee filmed scenes for his movie *Lust, Caution* at the teahouse overlooking the stone bridge in the centre of town. Photographs from the film are proudly displayed at the front of the nearby grocery shop. Also near the town centre, the Cultural Exhibition Museum depicts Xinchang's salt-panning history – a mainstay of the river flat economy for centuries. Among the antique displays is a 3D model of the town with holograms of villagers in traditional dress, baking bread and playing games, accompanied by the sing-song Shanghaiese dialect.

The Buddhist temple to the south of central Xinchang is new, but the walk there is rewarding. The scent of fresh waffles from shops along Xinchang Lu is irresistible; and try the glutinous pumpkin cakes coated in sesame seeds.

Getting there: Metro line 2 to Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park (last stop), then taxi to Xinchang (30 minutes), about RMB90 (\$20).



Room only for two wheels in Xinchang; Buddhist temple (below)



Shop detail: Xinchang village (below)



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