

A Podcast Guided Tour Oriental Holiday Pastoral Garden

Leave the traditional guided walks behind and strike out at your own pace with an audio guide. This bilingual podcast is presented by Shanghai Daily and supervised by the Shanghai Science and Technology Committee.

Introduction

Are you looking for an escape from the hectic metropolis? Do you want your own Xanadu, and one that's real and not very far away? One with an educational component? You have come to the right place.

Oriental Holiday Pastoral Garden, covering 40 hectares, is a perfect place to enjoy a day in the country, savor the beauty of nature, and learn about agriculture, horticulture, and geology. You can ramble about, see rare and beautiful flowers, special pumpkins grown here and the very special rex rabbit.

You can see what life was like in an ancient rural village. There's even a fishing pond for children, a mini-zoo and home for little rabbits, hamsters and chinchillas.

The garden is in Zhangshu Village, southwest of Luodian County in Baoshan District.

Now, we can begin our tour.

There are four exhibition halls in the garden, connected by Qishi Avenue.

The Agriculture Exhibition Hall

Walk along Qishi Avenue, and the first one you' ll see on the left side is the Agriculture Exhibition Hall. It displays farm implements over the ages and the advancement of agricultural technologies.

Entering the lobby, you see an array of odd-shaped pumpkins and gourds of many sizes and colors grown here by agricultural specialists. The garden has developed as many as 40 varieties of pumpkins.

Walking into the exhibition hall, you will see pictures on your right of the great names in the history of Chinese agriculture. There is Da Yu who first tamed the floods plaguing the villagers living alongside the Yellow River – that was around 2235 BC. And there was Li Bin who built the Dujiang Weir or dam during the Warring States Period (403-221 BC). It is

still used today in the city of Dujiangyan in Sichuan Province.

At the end of the hall more pictures show modern agricultural technology and recent scientific accomplishments. A highlight is China's development of the Rex Rabbit, prized for its thick, beaver-like fur and its hormone-free nutritious meat. Renowned basketball star Yao Ming is said sometimes to order one and a half Rex Rabbit for his dinner in China because its meat is so tasty and healthful.

Walk out of the exhibition hall, and you will see a display board about Luodian Dragon Boat Rowing Competition. It is held at this garden every year on Meilan Lake during the Dragon Boat Festival in May. Visitors are welcome to take part in the races and learn about Chinese culture and folk festivals. A giant dragon boat is decorated for the event.

Dragon boat racing dates back more than 400 years to the Ming Dynasty and though the practice was halted during war and upheavals, it has been revived here since 1994. The festival is celebrated in memory of the great Chinese patriotic statesman and poet Qu Yuan of the Warring States Period (403-221 BC). Libeled and expelled from his country, he took his own life by throwing himself into a river. The festival celebrates his honor and integrity.

So check your lunar calendar. Remember, early May is a great time to visit.

Now let's take a short break, then move on to the second floor.

Walk into the hall, you'll be fascinated by the ancient farm implements and artifacts of rural life. You can see a plow pulled by oxen, the *li*, the *laokao* bamboo container for corn storage and the *kangshai*, the bamboo sieve used to separate grain from chaff. Some sieves still are used in the countryside, but most have been replaced by more efficient sifters.

Just a little bit further is an old loom. Touch the coarse cotton cloth laid on the loom. The cloth was preferred, and in some places it still is, for its high quality and durability. The natural cloth is cool and resists odor, and was often used as bed linen – ideal for those who don't like machine-made synthetic weaves and printed cloth.

Also on show is an antique gig – a large two-wheeled one-horse cart.

It dates back to the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It was used to convey women of wealth, while men usually rode horses or were conveyed by

sedan chair, *jiaози*. The antique gig, with its elaborate ornamentation and embroidery, is so precious that it will be exhibited in the China Pavilion during the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

Walk onto a green platform, you' ll see the final exhibit, a model of a waterwheel used for irrigation. Models of two men pedal the waterwheel on the bank, so that its vanes in a river or pond can draw up the water for irrigating, drinking and other uses. The waterwheel was in use in China since around 80 BC – one of the great inventions that made it possible for civilization to advance.

Geology Exhibition Hall

Walk out of the agriculture exhibition hall and turn left. Here is the geology exhibition hall. Hundreds of stones and rare minerals are displayed.

Once entering the hall, you will see a dramatic, man-sized example of famous Lingbi Rock. Traditionally, it is considered the most important of four well-known rocks in China. The others are Taihu Lake Rock, Kun Rock and Quartz Rock.

Lingbi Rock is found in Lingbi County, Anhui Province. This kind of stone is renowned for its clear, melodious and lingering sound – when it is struck -- like the music produced by the *qing*, a traditional musical instrument. Therefore it is also known as *qing* rock. Because of its unusual shapes, it is much sought-after for bonsai and for placement in traditional gardens.

As you see, the rock' s natural shape is that of an old man who is bowing and making an inquiry. This particular stone is called “Kongzi Wendao” or Confucius Searching For the Truth. An old man seeking is a common theme in traditional Chinese art. Not only is this specimen' s shape is life-like, but also its dark color and detailed veins appear to be that of the pleats in a gray robe.

Yet this was not made by a human hand, but by the hand of nature. This famous specimen is one of eight “stone appreciation stamps” issued by the All-China Philatelic Federation in 2005.

A few steps away is an amber rock, another kind of Lingbi rock, called colored Lingbi. The stone has been given a beautiful name: “Richu Jiangshan Hong” (or Mountain Bathed in Red Sunrise).

Walk forward and you' ll see a glass case containing a fossil of a Brazilian sturgeon. It is said to be one of only two of its kind in the world. Another belongs to a Brazilian fossil collector. Observe it carefully – its teeth and eyes still recognizable and lifelike.

Don' t overlook the stone-like wood beside the fossil case. It is called chenxiang wood. Bend over and take a deep breath -- you' ll be enchanted by its fragrance. Chenxiang wood is used in traditional Chinese medicine: its fragrance is said to reduce the heart rate and calm nervousness.

Look to your left. There on the lowest shelf is spectacular a piece of brown jade petrified wood – petrified into real jade. It is an ancient tree stump from Myanmar; over time the tree stump became mineralized, petrified. It feels and looks like jade with a mild luster. But because of its grain and shape, we can see it is tree stump, an arboreal fossil. After a complicated series of chemical changes, the organic part has been replaced by inorganic elements such as iron, calcium and silicon, which accounts for its sheen.

Walking along, you will see six more shelves with hundreds of stones, each having a fascinating story.

But the stones on the other side of the corridor are even more special and curious. For instance, the stone opposite the fifth shelf is called “Caiyun Zhui Yue” or the Moon Chased by Colorful Clouds. It was quarried at the headwaters of the Yellow River, where the stone had been tumbled and smoothed by hundreds of thousands of years, maybe more. The round red spot on the stone looks exactly like the moon while the strips below it seem like the clouds.

Another special stone is opposite the third shelf. It comes from Antarctica and is valued at tens of thousands yuan.

Further along, another fossil is the head of a rhinoceros dating to the Jurassic period.

If you are tired of stones, it's time for a change to living things.

Let's go to the children's fishing area.

Children's Fishing Area

Leave the geology hall and walk left about 50 meters. On the left is a

fishing area specially designed for children. It is designed like a labyrinth, with intriguing rock formations and bamboo bridges. The pond itself covers around 400 square meters and is divided into portions for different kinds of fish and shrimp. Here you can go fishing and take your catch home.

Just next to the fishing area is the Pastoral Restaurant, where you can enjoy fresh vegetables and fruits picked from the garden -- as well as other delicious Chinese food.

Agricultural Garden

Leaving the fishing area and walking ahead, the agricultural garden is on the right. It covers 8,000 square meters and includes seven greenhouses. There is a great variety of vegetables, plants, fruit and corn, with an especially large area devoted to pumpkins and gourds.

When you enter the first greenhouse, you will find it's scorching hot. But the many different kinds of cacti love it. Walking along the path, on your left you will see a cactus wrapped in a layer of white fuzz. It has a very vivid name, "*baitouweng*," literally translated as "white-haired old man." It is also the name of a bird that has white feathers all over its

head, the Chinese bulbul. The *baitouweng* secretes this fuzz to absorb the water from the atmosphere because the sizzling temperature makes ground water scarce.

In the second greenhouse, you will see drum-like green gourds dangling above your head. The plant's Chinese name is *tian' e shou*, literally translated as "swan head" for its delicate shape, like a swan's head and long neck. Nearby are golden pumpkins with twining tendrils. But remember that the plants will be ripe and harvested in June and October. Therefore the best visiting time would be May, June, September and October before they are picked.

Now let's go to the next greenhouse. Some people are startled to see the 1.5-meter-long "snake loofah" (*Trichosanthes anguina*) – they are bright orange, some are green, and they coil like snakes. Bugs avoid it because it doesn't look like a plant – but a snake. This snake loofah is a pesticide-free plant that is used in traditional Chinese medicine. It reduces internal heat, increases metabolism, moistens the lungs and relieves coughing. Moreover, it also contains many beneficial vitamins and minerals. But only the green ones are edible – the orange ones are hollow.

In the next, the fourth shed, you can see many typical Chinese vegetables. There are gourds hanging from the trellis above, *cigu* or Chinese arrowhead on the left side, lotus roots, chufas, and many other plants.

The fifth and sixth sheds are filled with loofahs, squashes, *ku gua* (bitter cucumber) and *changdiao gua* (long hanging melons).

The last greenhouse is quite different – it' s a place of beauty, color and fragrance. It is filled with flowers and ornamental fruits, changing with the season. There are pinks, snapdragons, gillyflowers, begonias and many more. Every season has its own beauty with its characteristic flowers.

Let' s leave the garden and go meet the cute baby animals in the next exhibition hall.

Mini Baby Animal Exhibition Hall

At the end of Qishi Avenue, you will find the mini-baby animal exhibition hall on the right side. Here is a cozy home for five kinds of little animals: Holland lops (a rabbit), New Zealand rabbits, Rex Rabbits,

hamsters and chinchillas.

The position of the exhibits often changes, so we are not able to guide you to any particular animal. But the hall is quite small, and you can spot the animals.

The Holland lop or rabbit mini-sized, with lop ears and long hair. It is a nocturnal animal and moves slowly in the daylight.

By contrast, the New Zealand rabbit is very robust. It has pink eyes and pure white fur.

Rex Rabbit is quite easy to distinguish by its short thick especially glossy fur. It weighs around eight pounds and has many different colors of fur.

Hamsters and chinchillas are both very small animals. Hamsters are much smaller and have short tails. Chinchillas are larger with very long tails.

Outside the exhibition hall, there is a Mini Zoo. The whole process of rabbit breeding can be observed.

You can also see other animals, such as goats, chickens, ducks, pigs and

fish. You can buy a pack of food and feed them.

Also

Returning to the entrance gate, you' ll pass through a long corridor, an extension of Qishi Avenue. There are various kinds of climbing plants entwined around the columns. On either side there is more information about horticulture and agriculture.

That ends our tour today. If you want to stay longer and learn more, you can book a hotel in the garden.

Contacts

Oriental Holiday Pastoral Garden

Address: No. 3888 Lianyang Rd., Baoshan District

Opening Time: 8:30am - 16:30pm all year round

Admission: 30 yuan for adults, 21 yuan for seniors with senior card, 18 yuan for students with student card (except college students), 10-20 percent discounts for group visits (no less than 18 people with advance notification). Discounts depend on the size of the group)

Hotel: 200 yuan / standard three-star double room

Telephone: 5601-8698

For student groups, please contact Ms Qu: 13501832968

Transport:

Bus Routes: Take Metro No. 1, get off at Gongfu Xincun, shift to Pengluo Line or No. 552, get off at Diaobang Bridge, and then shift Luo Dian Village Circle Bus and get off at Oriental Holiday Pastoral Garden.

Take one of the following buses: Beiluo Line, Beihua Line, Shangliu Line or No. 963, get off at Diaobang Bridge, then shift to Luo Dian Village Circle Bus and get off at Oriental Holiday Pastoral Garden.

Driving: Take Hutai Road. to Lianyang Road.

Key Words:

1. Xanadu (n.) 世外桃源

eg: Sensing people's quest for an idyllic place, a lot of holiday resorts are naming themselves Xanadu so as to attract more tourists.

2. Water conservancy (n.) irrigation works 水利

3. Loom (n.) a textile machine for weaving yarn into a textile 织布机

4. Waterwheel (n.) a wheel with buckets attached to its rim used to raise water from a stream or pond 水车

5. Fossil (n.) 化石

eg: This fossil may be over 2 million years old.

6. TCM (n.)=traditional Chinese medicine 中药