

A Podcast Guided Tour of the Shanghai Museum of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Leave the usual, ho-hum guided walks behind and move at your own pace with an audio guide. You are about to embark on a tour of traditional Chinese medicine. This bilingual podcast is presented by Shanghai Daily and supervised by the Shanghai Science and Technology Committee.

When you make a cup of herbal tea to draw away the heat in summer, try the popular Hong-Kong-style dessert Guilinggao or enjoy a taste of nutritious medicinal soup. These are both forms of TCM. Have you ever noticed that TCM appears in our daily life more than you realize and not merely as treatment when we are sick?

Now you are invited to explore the history of TCM, its concepts and uses.

Ready? Follow the podcast and start your tour now.

Located at the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park in Pudong New Area, the museum opened in 2004 and covers an area of 6,413 square meters. Its three-story exhibition halls occupy about 4,000 square meters. It is based on the original TCM museum founded in 1938 and boasts more than 14,000 exhibits and almost 10,000 TCM documents. It is also reputed as the largest professional TCM museum in the world with the most exhibits.

Set foot inside the gate of the museum and you will see a copper engraving on the floor leading you to the middle of the main hall. The engraving shows bone needles and Bian-stone, the primitive tools of medical treatment in the New-Stone Age, as well as carapace bone inscriptions from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (16th century-770BC), and

the 12 words of advice from the Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic in the Warring States Period (476-221BC), from the Qin and Han dynasties (221BC-220AD). The sculpture is an example of TCM's long history.

Go forward along the engraving and you will arrive at the main hall of the museum. An abstract sculpture of the theory of the five elements (fire, water, earth, metal and wood) will come into view in the center of the lobby. The upper part of the sculpture is made up of two fish that represent Yin and Yang energy. TCM is based on a holistic and dynamic system that includes Yin and Yang energy. Good health is believed to come from a balance of Yin and Yang energy. The bottom part of the sculpture consists of five stones representing the five elements. The integration of circles and squares in this sculpture is symbolic of the ancient Chinese understanding of the universe — a round heaven and square earth.

Walk a little further and behind the central sculpture is a relief carving of Jing, Qi and Shen. Jing, Qi and Shen are regarded as the three vital elements of the human body. Jing is the "essence" and considered the source of life. Qi is energy. It can be transformed into Shen or Jing and healing energy. Shen is "spirit" and it is everywhere. It forms through the combination of Jing and Qi. The ultimate goal is to cultivate, balance and expand the Three Treasures. They are derived from ancient Chinese philosophical concepts formed before the birth of TCM. After they were applied to TCM, they soon comprised its core theory.

Surrounding the central sculpture are six stone carvings, three on each side. These stone carvings display the major achievements and characteristics of TCM in different periods of Chinese history. **Take some time to look at the carvings.**

After looking around, turn left and go upstairs. Here you will find the

Medical History Hall, which is the earliest and largest on TCM history in China. It was founded in July 1938. The hall presents the development of TCM chronologically during the last 5,000 years.

First you will have to learn the rough origins of TCM through the ivory mini-statues of Fu Xi, Shen Nong and the Yellow Emperor. They are believed to be the ancestors of the Chinese nation and TCM. In this part, you can see what bone needles and Bian-stone look like and how primitive people made use of fire to dispel cold and dampness to prevent sickness. This laid a solid foundation for the later invention of diathermy, moxibustion and decoction.

Walk straight ahead and you enter the section for TCM from the Xia Dynasty (21st century-16th century BC) to the Warring States Period. This part mainly deals with how ancient Chinese philosophy influenced TCM. For instance, the concepts of Yin and Yang from “Zhou Yi” not only play an essential part in the ancient philosophy, but also proved to be the soul of TCM theory.

You can have a look at the pottery from the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD) in the front section. At the back, you can learn about the formation and development of TCM theory, as well as some of the remarkable therapists in Chinese history.

Move clockwise to the next stop and you will encounter a bronze acupuncture figure that was a landmark achievement in TCM. It replicates the original one from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in 1900. It was initially designed to teach acupuncture by Wang Weiyi, an acupuncturist from the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The body’s acupuncture points are marked on the sculpture. It was once used to distinguish these points on the body or to find the exact point in examinations.

Opposite the bronze acupuncture figure is a scene from an ancient imperial medical institute with four bronze figures in it. Teachers are instructing students to give acupuncture in this scene. Such institutes were the earliest government-operated medical academies in the world.

Move further in this area and you will enter the TCM section from the Song Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. You can also see some artifacts from those dynasties such as large pots that were used to store medicines.

Take a short break before you go upstairs to continue the tour.

On the second floor of the Museum, five halls greet your arrival. **Let' s continue the tour on your left.**

First you visit the Acupuncture and Tuina Room. The acupuncture tools from the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the end of the Qing Dynasty are on display. They unveil the achievements in the course of acupuncture. In this hall, the bronze acupuncture figure of an old woman' s image cast in 1744 with 580 acupuncture points is the only one of its kind surviving from this era. It is very precious and considered the key exhibit in the museum.

Next is the TCM Culture Room. TCM is born out of traditional Chinese culture and enjoys a sense of cultural profundity. You can see various fan coverings and prescriptions from Chinese therapists in different periods in this hall.

On your way to the next hall, you can try the two touch screens to learn more about therapists' prescriptions and the progress of acupuncture.

Continue on to the Room of Chinese Herbal Formulas. Chinese herbal

medicine constitutes an important part of TCM. TCM falls into four categories: herbal, animal, mineral and metal medicines, the primary branch of which is herbal. You' ll see relics such as unearthed medicines, prescriptions, and delicate medicine containers in the hall.

The middle ring-shaped hall is the Health-care & Rehabilitation Room. Health preservation is featured as one of TCM' s advantages. TCM' s precaution-oriented theory and post-disease conditioning methods are delivered to you in this hall.

Before you continue your visit on the third floor, don' t forget to **step out from the gate beside** the Room of Chinese Herbal Formula and drop by the science classroom **opposite the curator' s office**. There are some interactive displays in the room. The devices uncover TCM' s secrets by modern scientific means.

Take another rest and then go upstairs to the third floor.

Welcome to the second part of the museum — The Specimen Hall of Chinese Herbal Medicine founded in 1958. More than 3,000 specimens of Chinese herbal medicine and ready-made herbal products are displayed here. You can see the select herbal or animal medicines, distinguish rare medicinal herbs from counterfeits, learn the names of different TCM, answer questions about TCM and the museum on LCD screens, watch films or attend lectures on TCM in this hall.

Continue your tour on the left of the Specimen Room and enter the third part of the Museum — the Exhibition Hall of the History of the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. You' ll learn the course of the University' s development from May 1966 to October 1976 during the Cultural Revolution.

Now you come downstairs to the first floor and step out of the Museum, but you haven't finished the tour yet.

An outdoor herbal garden on the left of the Museum—the last stop of your tour — awaits. The herbal garden covers an area of 8,600 square meters. Its greenhouse is open to the public for free. A wide variety of small gardens in it are relevant to the Specimen Room on the third floor of the Museum. Visitors can have a closer look at more than 300 plants commonly used for medicine.

That's it. You have finished the tour. We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Shanghai Museum of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Address: 1200 Cailun Road, Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park, Pudong New Area (inside Shanghai University of TCM)

Opening times: 9am -- 4pm (closed on Mondays except Mondays during the National Day holiday, May Day holiday and Spring Festival)

Ticket prices:

1. 15 yuan per person (One adult can bring a minor for free). 10 yuan per person for groups of teenagers, 12 yuan per person for other groups. (Group visits need to give notice 2 or 3 days in advance, more than 10 people are required for a group)
2. Free for retired cadres, active military personnel, the disabled and the city's senior residents aged at 70 or more with their relevant identifications.
3. Free on the second Saturday of every month.
4. Free from May 15 to June 15 annually.

Bus routes to the museum: Bus Daqiao Line 5 (through Nanpu Bridge) or Daqiao Line 6 (through Yangpu Bridge), Bus No. 609, Bus Xuchuan Line or Shengjiang Line, Metro Line 2 (get off at Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park station)

to transfer to Zhangnan Line or Zhangchuan Line

For more details contact the museum at 5132-2710, 5132-2712 or 5132-2721.

Key Words:

1. Holistic (adj.) based on the belief that the whole person must be treated, not just the part of their body that has a disease 全面医治的

eg: Furthermore, we have also developed holistic approaches to fighting aging: yoga, herbs, acupuncture, etc.

2. Diathermy (n.) a method of physical therapy that involves generating local heat in body tissues using high-frequency electromagnetic currents 电气透热疗法

3. Moxibustion (n.) a traditional Chinese medicine technique that involves the burning of mugwort, a small, spongy herb, to facilitate healing. The purpose of moxibustion, as with most forms of traditional Chinese medicine, is to strengthen the blood, stimulate the flow of qi, and maintain general health. 艾炙, 艾灼

4. Decoction (n.) the process of extracting water-soluble substances by boiling of water. 煎煮的药

5. Acupuncture (n.) treatment of pain or disease by inserting the tips of needles at specific points on the skin 针灸、针治、针刺疗法

eg: His lecture is intended to bear down on the application of acupuncture anesthesia in brain surgery.