

A Podcast Guided Tour of Shanghai Postal Museum

Leave the traditional guided walks behind and strike out at your own pace with an audio guide. You are about to embark on an exciting tour of the history of China's postal service. This bilingual podcast is presented by Shanghai Daily and supervised by the Shanghai Science and Technology Committee.

Are you interested in the origins and development of the postal service? Do you want to see various precious stamps? Then please follow us to visit the Shanghai Postal Museum at 250 North Suzhou Road. Here you will get a closer look at the past, present and future of the postal system.

Shanghai Postal Museum is in the Shanghai Post Building, which is one of China's most outstanding contemporary buildings. Listed as a key national historical site, Shanghai Post Building has been viewed as one of the symbolic buildings of the postal service. Therefore, please do remember to take a close look at this building before you set foot in the museum.

Now, let's enter the exhibition area on the second floor.

We first visit the Origins and Development Zone.

The showcase on your left displays the inscriptions on tortoise shells recording ancient people beating drums to convey military information. Next to it is the sealing clay used on official documents to maintain secrecy and a brick bearing the portrait of a messenger on horse back who sent messages in the Wei and Jin Dynasty (220 AD - 317 AD).

In front of the brick, you can view a small multimedia show which recreates a scene of people passing on urgent messages by lighting signal fires in ancient times. Beacon towers are military fortresses used to relay information from one place to another in cases of emergency. Now we press the button to see what will happen. Immediately, the background lights disappear, creating a night atmosphere. Then the beacon towers light up one by one and heavy smoke and big fire can be seen. A splendid multimedia show!

In this section, you can see the message suggesting the founding of the Chinese Imperial Post that was sent for the approval of Emperor Guangxu on March 20th, 1896. Later, that day became the commemorative day signifying the official birth of the modern postal service in China. Not far from the memorial, there is a mailbox with the word "Chinese Imperial Post" and a dragon on it.

A 1:100 scale replica of Shanghai Post Building completed in 1924 is also on display.

Next to the building replica is the Post Commissioner's office where the post director

made of wax is inspecting the arrival of mail on the banks of Huangpu River using a telescope.

Let's continue our visit to the second section -- Network and Technology.

Entering this section, you will notice a huge diagram illustrating the network of downtown post offices. In 1911, there were altogether thirty postal outlets in Shanghai. Through rapid development, the number increased to 584 in 2003 and there are now 600 post offices across the city.

Go ahead, a huge artificial snow mountain is in front of us, reminding us of the two poles. Did you know that the Shanghai Postal service once reached such remote areas as the South Pole and the North Pole?

Here are some valuable exhibits such as the commemorative postcards of the establishment of "Snow Dragon" post office.

A RFID mail sorting mock machine, the application of modern technology, displays the process of mail sorting. Traditionally, the sorting and dispatching were done by hand, but now, mechanical and automatic mailing processing and sorting equipment is widely used. It can sort 100,000 items of mail per day.

We can also see various kinds of postage scales such as the 2-kilogram letter scale and the electronic mailing machine in this section. Beside them are distinctive American blue mailboxes and the Australian red mailbox.

On the left side is an intelligent mailbox which is different from the ordinary mailbox. Its speciality lies in that it supplies users with many practical functions which traditional ones can not provide. For example, users open the mailbox with a cipher code and it closes automatically after letters have been taken out. It's large enough to hold several books.

Now, let's enter the third zone -- Service and Culture.

This zone showcases the letters of some celebrities as well as the photos depicting newspapers and magazine distribution services, postal savings and remittance services. Before visiting the fourth zone, visitors can put on special glasses and watch a small film about the developments and changes within the postal service from the earliest post stations to modern post offices.

Have a rest. Then we come to the Stamp and Stamp Collection zone.

From the TV screen on your right side, you can see a puppet telling the story of the birth of the world's first postage stamp -- Penny Black. The showcase beside it exhibits the

Penny Black and the Large Dragon Issue, China's first set of postage stamps issued in 1878. These two showcases use concave mirror technology and optical theory, so that we can see virtual image of the stamps exactly like the real ones.

Next to them, a table lists the basic information about the first set of stamps of 50 foreign countries and regions, involving their issuing time and issuing countries or regions and their face value.

Walking forward, there are various special stamps of the world. Specially shaped stamps include France's heart-shaped stamp and China's triangle stamp. Poland's silk stamp and Switzerland's wooden stamp belong to the collection featuring stamps made of special materials.

In this section, we can also see postage stamps of the Customs post of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) that includes some precious stamps like the Small Dragon Issue and Empress Dowager Issue, China's first set of commemorative stamps, Chinese postal service stamps and postage stamps of liberated areas.

At the end of this section is Treasure Stamps Hall with a series of precious stamps. Some are linked with great historical events and some are well-known for their rarity because of their short issuing period or natural destruction and accidents. The stamp, "Red Revenue Small 2-ct Surcharge in Green" in the first showcase can be called the most valuable treasure of Shanghai Postal Museum. Its price has surged to the highest among all the Chinese stamps in this century.

After visiting the four zones, let's come to the courtyard on the ground floor.

Entering the ample and bright courtyard of the post museum, we are attracted by the exhibits here. Replicas of mail vehicles, such as the carriage used in the Qing Dynasty, the first mail car purchased in 1917, the first regular air mail plane and post train vividly depict the development of postal services.

The Future Cinema, located at the exit of the courtyard, depicts the future postal world. If you like, you can let the Future Cinema make your image blend with the film frame via digital combing technology. Then, you will have a role in this film. Don't hesitate to have that exciting experience!

Now, let's have a rest in the roof garden on the top of Shanghai Post Building.

In the roof garden, there is a clock tower of Baroque style, featuring two groups of sculptures. The sculpture at the top of the clock tower with three people respectively holding the models of the early-stage locomotive, steamer and telecommunication cable symbolizes the development of transportation and telecommunication. The other sculpture with Hermes in the Greek mythology in the middle and Eros on the left and

right side symbolizes that post is a bridge linking people in every corner of the world and conveying people's feelings.

If you want to get closer to the post's yesterday, today and tomorrow, please visit Shanghai Postal Museum.

Opening time: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 5pm.

Its address is 250 North Suzhou Road, Houkou District.

You can take bus No.14, No.17, No.19, No.21, No.25, No.65, No.66, No.220, No.928, No.939 or Travel 10 line.

For details, please call 6362-9898.