

A Podcast Guided Tour of Shanghai Jiangnan Shipbuilding 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 journey into China's shipping history. This bilingual podcast is presented by Shanghai Daily and supervised by the Shanghai Science and Technology Committee.

When you enjoy the fantastic night view along the Bund, watching all kinds of ships coming and passing by, does it ever occur to you to wonder how China started its shipping industry? Do you want to come with us to visit Shanghai Jiangnan Shipbuilding Museum and find the answers for yourself? Our journey starts here!

The first thing you'll notice upon entering the gate is the introduction of Jiangnan shipyard's 140-year-long history and a picture of the founder of Jiangnan Shipyard Co - - "scholar general" Li Hongzhang.

Established in 1865, Jiangnan Shipyard was the result of the "Self-Strengthening Movement" initiated by the necessity for China to gain expertise in making Western weaponry and heavy machinery.

In 1865, Li proposed setting up the Jiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai, which literally means "South of the Yangtze River." In response to China's naval weakness against the Western powers in the 19th century, Jiangnan focused its business on muskets, artillery shells, large-caliber guns, Remington breech-loading rifles and gunboats.

As you can see to the right of the gate is a steel cannon made by Jiangnan Arsenal during the Qing dynasty. It was unearthed on May 8, 2001 when workers were rebuilding docks.

Walking into the next chamber, prepare for an awesome sight -- the giant cannon in the middle of the room. In 1888, Jiangnan successfully cast the first Armstrong breech-loading steel cannon made in China. This replica is made to the scale of 1:1.5. The original was used as a major weapon for defending the country against outlying forces. Now the original one is preserved in Jiulong Mountain, in neighboring Zhejiang Province. By 1898, Jiangnan had made 19 cannons of this type.

Looking around this chamber, you can also appreciate some other Jiangnan firsts. The pictures are of the first lathe in 1867 with drawings to show the first batch of breech-loading guns in China and some ancient gun drawings.

Walking past the statues of the contemporary scientist Xu Shou, who published the first textbook of inorganic chemistry in China, we come to some pictures of the cruiser "Pinghai" made by Jiangnan during the 1930s. With a displacement of 2,400 tons and 110 meters long, cruiser Pinghai was delivered to the Chinese navy in 1937, as the

flagship of the fleet. Unfortunately, the fleet was destroyed in September of the same year by the Japanese navy while defending the Jiangying fort.

At the left of the Pinghai is a picture of a steam engine. The 2,733 kilowatt steam engine was manufactured in 1914 and was the biggest marine engine in China at that time. Later, this engine was installed on one of China's earliest cargo ship ``Guanfu'' which later retired in the 1930s.

Strolling down to the next room you can see many highlights in Jiangnan's illustrious history such as China's earliest water planes and pictures of the cargo vessel ``Minduo.'' ``Minduo'' was the first ship in China to fully use welding techniques instead of rivet connection, which marked a huge step forward for China.

At the exit of the first part of the museum you can find a re-enactment of the scene at Jiangnan Shipyard in 1949, just before Shanghai was freed from the control of the KMT and the Communists took power. In May, 1949, the KMT retreated to Taiwan carrying everything they could take and they bombed all the production facilities and workshops, leaving the once renowned factory completely destroyed.

Take a break before we continue the journey into the second zone that has the theme of the achievements that Jiangnan has made since 1949.

When you step onto the third floor, the first exhibits are pictures of the top Chinese officials and foreign presidents who have visited the company including the first Prime Minister of China Zhou Enlai, former Presidents Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zeming and the incumbent President Hu Jintao.

Beside the pictures is a model of Jiangnan's main workshops. In these workshops, many awards and historic breakthroughs have been achieved in the Chinese shipping industry.

Opposite this model is a picture of the cargo and passenger ship ``Minzhong'' which was launched on September 3, 1953. The 1,540 ton ship was the first to be built after the founding of the PRC, it was suitable for river sailing and is able to accommodate 968 people and 700 tons of cargos. The picture captures the scenes of festivities at the launching.

The next picture beside Minzhong tells us another story of submarine Type 03 and unveils some of the submarine building history in China. As the first domestically-made submarine, Type 03 was an upgrade of the former Soviet Union's Type 613 submarine and later it was delivered to the Chinese navy for service. On January 10, 1956, former president Mao Zedong paid a visit to this submarine and that's how the submarine got its pennant number 56-110. By 1964, Jiangnan had made 13 submarines of this type and exported them to Pakistan, Albania and Egypt.

Around the corner stands a replica of the first home-made hydraulic press. Composed of more than 44,700 parts, this 12,000 ton hydraulic press stands up to 23.65 meters

high. It is capable of forging more than 250 tons of steel and is a key piece of equipment for the heavy industry. After decades of work, this oldest hydraulic press is still in service now in the Minhang District of Shanghai.

Also on display in the same room is a picture of vessel called "Dongfeng", which literally means "east wind" in Chinese. It is the first domestically designed and made cargo vessel. With seven years of effort, the 161.4-meter-long Dongfeng is capable of carrying 11,642 tons of cargos at a speed of 32 kilometers per hour. This was a breakthrough for Chinese shipbuilding industry.

At the rear of the exhibition hall lies a replica of a submarine command module, which provides interactive activities for visitors and marine fans. You can walk in and feel the fascination of submarines for yourself. Wanna have a try?

Now on your right is an electronic board indicating the route of the Chinese navy's first global voyage in 2002. Designated as the main fleet for this voyage, Jiangnan-produced missile destroyer "Qingdao" has crossed the five oceans, covering more than 61,000 kilometers and has visited more than ten countries including the Ukraine, Greece and Brazil.

Walking through a corridor, we come to the last part where models of Jiangnan's future blueprints are displayed.

In order to make way for the World Expo 2010, the Jiangnan Shipyard moved its factories to Changxing Island near the mouth of the Yangtze River. Now the shipyard has a worldwide clientele for its highly sophisticated vessels, including liquefied gas carriers, car carriers, crude oil tankers, Panamax bulk carriers, multipurpose cargo ships and "fast-feeder" container ships.

We hope you enjoyed your visit to Shanghai Jiangnan Shipbuilding Museum.

The opening times are as follows:

Monday to Friday: 9am - 11:30am, 1:00pm-4:30pm

Exclusive for organized group trips only. No ticket fee is charged.

The address is 600 Luban Road, Luwan District and the museum is located on the second and third floor of the technical center building of Jiangnan Shipyard Company.

To get there, you can take bus No. 45, 96, or 253.

For details, call the museum on 6315-1818-2439.