

Key waterways raise city's global status

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Shanghai aims to distinguish itself with its key waterways to rank alongside the world's other top metropolises such as London, Paris, Sydney and San Francisco.

Shanghai's Huangpu River and Suzhou Creek are set to become demonstrations of how a megacity can achieve quality economic development, public administration and social governance simultaneously, city officials have said.

Both the river and the creek have finished massive clean-up campaigns, opened up their waterfront areas stretching for more than 40 kilometers, separately, and will even launch cruise services soon to attract tourists and residents.

Dozens of reporters from domestic and foreign media were invited to embark on a Suzhou Creek cruise ship ahead of the World Cities Day on Monday, to learn the history of the city's waterway treatment and experience a new tourist attraction.

"The river and the creek bear the profound history and culture of Shanghai, and are witnesses to the city's development," said Zhu Jianhao, deputy director of the city's housing and construction management commission.

The Suzhou Creek is a 125-kilometer waterway that originates in Taihu Lake in neighboring Jiangsu Province and winds through the cities of Suzhou, Kunshan and Shanghai before finally emptying into the Huangpu River.

Since Shanghai opened as a treaty port in 1843, the creek has been the backdrop for dramatic landmarks. It was the scene of wartime suffering and the birthplace of China's earliest national industries.

Projects for cleaning up the pollution and redeveloping its banks have been under way since 1998 after its industrial



The Suzhou Creek cruise is expected to become a new tourist attraction of the city. — Jiang Xiaowei

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heritage left the creek's water murky by the end of 1970s, said Ruan Renliang, deputy director of the Shanghai Water Authority.

"Now, no murky water can be found along the main stream or tributaries of the creek, which accommodated 45 species of fish in 2019, compared with only five in 2004."

The great improvement owes to the efforts of more than 2,000 volunteers in 30 teams who patrol along the creek to protect its environment, Ruan revealed.

The creek's riverside development, spanning 42km,

involves the districts of Huangpu, Hongkou, Jing'an, Putuo, Changning and Jiading. Each now presents unique waterfront attractions, such as modern, historical, international and Shanghai-style.

"If the waterfront area of the creek becomes the 'backyard garden' of local citizens, the Huangpu River waterfront the city has already opened up serves as the 'reception room,'" said Zhu.

The Huangpu River once served as a major shipping and transport hub with warehouses, wharves and factories. Over time, most were abandoned

and left to decay. Old housing in the area became derelict.

Urban redevelopment is transforming the waterfront areas into eco-friendly venues such as craft shops, cafes, art studios, recreational grounds and sightseeing opportunities. Historic landmarks along the river are being protected and renovated.

The redeveloped riverfront, stretching for 45km between the Yangpu and Xupu bridges, feature greenbelts and walking, running and cycling paths, flanked by historical monuments and popular scenic views.

The entire project has been compared to the Left Bank of Paris or the Thames walkway in London.

Zhu also pointed out that more than 70 service stations are being built along the Suzhou Creek to further improve the experience of residents and tourists.

To highlight the creek's renewal, the Suzhou Creek cruise

services will gradually open to the public soon, according to Zhang Qi, deputy director of the Shanghai Culture and Tourism Administration.

Eight new docks will be completed by the end of this year near local landmarks such as the Bund and World War II relic Sihang Warehouse.

More docks will be built along the creek, and the cruise routes will also be optimized for the convenience of visitors.

There are more than 200 tourist and historical attractions along the creek, featuring the footprints of the city's century-old industries as well as finance and trade sectors, Zhang noted.

The cruise service, which has been under test operation since September 17, will begin with two routes and boat types.

Visitors can choose a one-hour tour along the entire downtown section of the creek, or a 15-minute cruise from Sihang Warehouse to the Bund.

In the next step, the Huangpu River waterfront will be further expanded from Xupu Bridge to Minhang District. Some remaining downtown disruptions along the river, such as Gongqing Forest Park and the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, both in Yangpu District, will open up by the end of the year.

Some new attractions will also open soon. They include the WorldSkills Museum in Yangpu, Xiepu Road industrial relics in the Pudong New Area and the Star Museum on the West Bund in Xuhui District.

An ancient vessel museum will be built at the former Shanghai Shipyard in Yangpu to display a wooden vessel, dating back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and found sunken in the Yangtze River Estuary.