

'Wayfarers' delight in creative respite along riverside walkways in Shanghai

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Joggers can work up a thirst. Walkers can suffer leg fatigue. And sightseers sometimes need to stop for a bite to eat or use of a restroom. No problem!

The city has adapted an ancient Chinese concept to enhance popular public walkways along the Huangpu River and Suzhou Creek.

Back in the early days of Chinese dynasties, relay stations were set up to serve traveling couriers and government officials. The so-called *yizhan* were the cornerstone of postal and communication networks.

On the famed Silk Road, caravansaries provided facilities and amenities for traveling traders.

The ancient concept has been reinvented in the form of multifunctional riverside rest areas, offering amenities such as cozy cafes, reading nooks, emergency first-aid and fitness areas.

"These stations are not just about convenience; they are also about enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike," said Jin Jiangbo, the architect behind the unique design of the No. 1 station along the Huangpu tributary Wenzaobang — a design inspired by the Möbius strip.

The waysides are embellishments to the city's "One River, One Creek" shoreline project, which began about a decade ago. The project has created a continuous series of shoreline walks, greenways and scenic viewpoints, with 45 kilometers on the banks of the Huangpu River and 42 kilometers in the urban section of Suzhou Creek completed.

Currently, around 90 wayside stations have been added along the routes.

Two new waterfront stations along the 1.4-kilometer Wenzaobang River will open by year's end, offering rest areas, scenic views and freshly ground coffee.

The No. 2 station in Baoshan District emphasizes sports themes and a low-carbon environment. Solar panels on the top layer enable the building to generate 80 kilowatt-hours of electricity a day, ensuring self-



Customers enjoy the view of Suzhou Creek at a coffee shop on the second floor of a petrol station by the river in downtown Huangpu District. — All photos by IC

sufficiency in sunny conditions.

The 22 Wangjiangyi stations along the east bank of Huangpu River in Pudong exemplify functional diversity and esthetic appeal. The stations, each about a kilometer apart, feature amenities such as libraries, public restrooms, lounges, vending machines, umbrella stands and first aid.

A Wangjiangyi station comprises two sections. One side features enclosed public restrooms, while the other side is an open lounge equipped with reading shelves, tables, chairs and other rest facilities.

The designs resemble wooden pavilions with elegantly extended eaves and subtly uplifted roofs that all stand

out warmly amid the starkness of surrounding glass, steel and concrete structures.

For residents and tourists who enjoy the riverside public routes, these stations have become an essential part of the experience.

"It's not just about the view. It's about the experience — the coffee, the books and the sense of community," said Xu Wei, a frequent visitor at the No. 14 Wangjiangyi station, which directly faces the sequoia trees and lake of Houtan Park within the former World Expo 2010 site.

"It's like being enveloped by nature. Such a feeling is rare in an urban setting," he said.

Fang Wenhui, a running enthusiast, said the free water, sports drinks, restrooms, first aid and storage lockers at the riverside stations are essential for runners and cyclists.

"For runners, it's important to stay hydrated, but carrying too much water can be cumbersome," Fang said.

The stations have become catalysts for commercial and social activities. The Jiangning Road Bridge station, for instance, not only provides essential amenities but also houses a cafe and exhibition space.

"It's a clever use of urban space — merging utility and leisure, and fostering a sense of community," said the cafe owner.



A cafe is housed in the Suheyi station under Jiangning Road Bridge along Suzhou Creek in Putuo District.