

YOU CAN'T SPEAK CHINESE?

That no longer precludes you from enjoying city walking tours



—Hellorf



Yang (in black) shows in walks the inscription on a century-old stone bridge in Songjiang District to a tour participant. The inscription gives the name and date of the bridge's construction. — Ti Gong

Lu Feiran

Albert Yang, a white-collar worker who retired from a job with a Japanese company earlier this year, loves taking guided walking tours of Shanghai, and a particular one organized by Shanghai Archaeology got him to thinking.

“That tour enlightened my enthusiasm for exploring the beauty embedded in old buildings and the history hidden in the old streets,” he told Shanghai Daily. “Even though I may have walked on a street many times in the past there are things I never knew or noticed. Those small details are the dots connecting us with the past, the present and the future.”

Yang is but one of many locals who have discovered the joy of guided walking tours in the city, but he lamented the fact that Japanese residents who

don't speak Chinese haven't been able to share the experience. Until now.

Yang, who once lived in Japan for seven years and fluently speaks the language, decided to start Japanese walking tours of the city. There were 40,000 Japanese people living in Shanghai in 2020, according to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so he had a large field of potential walkers to draw on.

“I decided to name the tour Shanghai Saruku because the word *saruku* is Nagasaki dialect for *aruku*, the Japanese word for ‘walk,’” he explained. “I wanted to use a dialect word instead of standard Japanese because Shanghai has its own dialect that is different from Mandarin, and I want to give my audience the vibe that Shanghai has a culture unique in China.”

For his tours, Yang selected areas and streets of personal familiarity or of historical significance related to

the Japanese. They included Songjiang District, where he worked for nearly a decade; Fuxing Road W., where his parents live; and Hongkou District, where many Japanese people lived early in the last century and where a famous battle between Chinese and invading Japanese soldiers occurred in 1937.

One of the most popular itineraries starts from Guangfu Road near Suzhou Creek and wends its way to Huangpu Road on the North Bund. The tour, lasting for two hours, passes nearly 10 historical sites, including old factories, warehouses, residential apartments and post offices.

The tour takes in Sihang Warehouse, where Chinese and Japanese soldiers fought between August and November in 1937 in what has come to be known as the Battle of Shanghai. Bullet and cannon holes remain in the façade of the old warehouse.