



Heping Park's pavilions and central lake always draw a steady stream of visitors.



Gardens of spring tulips draw shutterbugs to Minhang Cultural Park, which is now open 24/7.



A security robot patrols Fuxing Park, now wall-free and open all hours.

Chen Anbing, a Frisbee enthusiast, found his pastime halted at Fuxing Park during the 2022 National Day holiday when an uptick in visitors caused accidents with flying discs and led to a ban on the sport.

Looking for other spots, he turned to Luxun Park but discovered that lawns there were frequently blocked by waist-high railings.

"The barriers on the outside of the park are gone, but now they're all over the lawns inside," Chen complained.

Professor Da Liangjun from East China Normal University warned that

24/7 access in some parks may disrupt wildlife and suggested "quiet zones" for its protection.

He recommended night access for high-demand areas be limited or even banned to preserve quiet in sensitive spots, like botanical gardens and zoos.

He also noted that parks can remain open without fully removing fences by enlarging or adding entrances, especially near residential or ecologically sensitive areas, where night access should be carefully managed.

Zhong Lu, landscape architect director at the Shanghai Engineering Design

Institute, said she views the removal of park walls in Shanghai as major progress, transforming the city into a vast, unified park.

Central Park in New York is seen as a benchmark for urban parks. Located among Manhattan's towering skyscrapers, it's more than a green retreat. It's also a center for cultural, leisure and educational activities.

Over its 160-year transformation from simple green space to a renowned urban landmark, Central Park now draws over 42 million visitors each year, with 20 percent coming from abroad.

Unlike Central Park, which evolved alongside New York's architecture, Shanghai's urban development has largely involved the construction of buildings, parks, schools and residential zones in isolation from one another, leading to unique challenges when trying to unify them, Zhong said.

"Shanghai is starting a new chapter of blending green spaces with the urban environment — facing challenges but also making steady progress," she added. "The success of integrating parks into urban living hinges on collaboration between parks and the community."