



**SUZHOU: ALL OF CHINA IN ONE PLACE**



BASIC INFORMATION		World Rank	Similar To
Urban Area Population (2007)*	2,600,000	116	Manchester, Fukuoka, Havana
Projection (2025)	3,160,000	136	Caracas, Chittagong
Urban Land Area: Square Miles	245	150	Copenhagen, Tehran, Sapporo
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers	635		
Density: Per Square Mile	10,600	485	Manchester, Porto Alegre, Bologna
Density: Per Square Kilometer	4,100		
*Continuously built up area (Urban agglomeration) Land area & density rankings among the approximately 750 urban areas with 500,000+ population. Data from Demographia World Urban Areas data. See: <sup>1</sup> <i>Demographia World Urban Areas Population &amp; Density</i> <i>Demographia World Urban Areas: 2025 &amp; 2030 Population Projections</i>			

5 December 2008

**INTRODUCTION**

If you only have time to visit one place in China, it should be Suzhou (pronunciation: SOO JOE). Suzhou provides a sampling of virtually all that China has to offer. Suzhou is Old China, from its temples, pagodas and canals to its tastefully designed and attractive gardens. Suzhou is also modern China, ringed by light industrial and commercial development. Suzhou also has elements of Italy, with canals like Venice and a leaning tower like Pisa (Yunyan Pagoda). Like other large urban areas in China, there are expanses of massive multiple building high-rise condominium development as

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf> and <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua2015.pdf>.

well as lower rise townhouse developments and detached housing (called “villas” in China). Finally, Suzhou has a freeway and road system which is more comprehensive than most in North America.

## **GETTING TO SUZHOU**

There is another reason to visit Suzhou --- it is conveniently located close to Shanghai, so a Suzhou is only a quick train, bus or taxi ride away from China’s principal urban area. Suzhou is on the new high speed rail line (CRH) from Shanghai to Nanjing. Air service is by the Shanghai airports.

## **LOCATION**

Suzhou is located 45 miles (70 kilometers) west of Shanghai’s Hongqiao International Airport and 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Puxi, Shanghai’s commercial core. It is another 20 miles (32 kilometers) to Pudong International Airport, which serves most international flights. Suzhou is in Jiangsu province, which, along with the provincial level municipality of Shanghai, occupies the south bank of the Yangtze River Delta. Suzhou city (the regional government) is bounded on the south by the Huzhou city (regional government) in Zhejiang, on the east by the provincial level city of Shanghai and to the west by Taihu and Wuxi city or regional government (Slide 2).

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Suzhou sits at the gateway to China’s lake country. There are a number of lakes within the urban area. The west side of the urban area reaches into Taihu (Tai Lake), China’s third largest natural lake, at 900 square miles (2,250 square kilometers).

The topography is generally flat, however there are some hills in the urban area, including Tiger Hill, on which Yunyan Pagoda stands. The urban area extends to three islands in Taihu.

The Suzhou urban area now has 2.6 million people and is expected to increase to 3.2 million by 2025. The urban area covers 245 square miles (635 square kilometers) and a population density of 10,600 per square mile (4,100 per square kilometer). Suzhou is one of the least dense urban areas in China, principally because core densities are lower than elsewhere. The most dense core district (qu) reaches less than 50,000 per square mile (20,000 per square kilometer), well below Shenyang’s 80,000 (30,000) and Shanghai’s more than 100,000 (40,000).

However, as is the case in virtually all of the urban areas in China, the pattern of density is very uneven. Population densities are very high in the core or old city and fall off precipitously in the peripheral areas.

## **THE GRAND CANAL**

The most unique feature of Suzhou is its canals. The most famous is the Grand Canal, or the Beijing-Hangzhou Canal, which is more than 1,100 miles (1,700 kilometers) long. The canal was started more than 2,500 years ago and completed 1,500 years ago. It is the longest canal in the world. The Grand Canal courses through Suzhou. It carries considerable commercial traffic (Slides 3-24).

## THE URBAN FORM

**The Old City:** The core, or old city of Suzhou covers approximately six square miles (15 square kilometers) and is surrounded by a broad canal, which forms a rectangle (called the Peripheral Canal in this Rental Car Tour). Parts of this “ring” canal have parks and well manicured green spaces on the old city side. This is particularly evident in the southwest section of the Peripheral Canal (Slides 419-444).

Boat cruises are available from the western side of the canal. The boat route goes to the north and continues into smaller canals further north toward Tiger Hill and the Yunyan Pagoda (Slides 25-104). The cruises provide a view of Yunyan Pagoda at their northern terminus. However, the terminus is well south of the pagoda. The rest of the canal toward Tiger Hill is closed to tourist traffic.

There are a number of additional canals within the old city. Many of these canals are also closed to tourist traffic. It would seem that Suzhou could increase tourist traffic by taking the necessary steps to open more of the canal system and making it possible to travel around the area by canal. Suzhou would appear to have greater potential as a tourist destination than it is now experiencing.

The old central business district is located in the middle of the old city (Slides 127-166). The central business district contains major shopping areas, but does not have much in the way of high rise commercial buildings. The population density of the core area appears to be somewhat lower than usual for the such an area in a Chinese urban area. In the older areas, the mid-rise multi-unit developments so typical in China appear to be up to five stories instead of six to nine. Like many Chinese core areas, the old Suzhou has many tree lined streets.

The old city is home to the Humble Administrator’s Garden (Slides 167-186).

**The Emerging Western Center:** Approximately three miles (five kilometers) the west of the old city a newer, bustling commercial core is emerging. This area contains a number of shopping centers and the tallest buildings in the urban area. As is the case with Chinese urban areas, the large commercial buildings are somewhat dispersed, rather than being concentrated as would be the case in North American or Australian urban areas. The Grand Canal divides this core, running north and south within walking distance of some of the largest buildings in the urban area (Slides 4-16). Just to the east of the Grand Canal is Suzhou Henghe Plaza, which is 48 floors and 600 feet high or 180 meters high (Slides 11, 120) . Suzhou’s tallest building, the Suzhou Xindi Center is located just to the west of the Grand Canal. The Suzhou Xindi Center is 54 floors, 761 feet and 232 meters high (Slides 203 & 205).

**The Eastern Sector:** To the east, there is a large number of new and under construction luxury condominium developments. These are both high-rise and mid-rise residential developments. There are also shopping centers.

**Western Industrial Area:** The western industrial area is to the west of the western core. This area has a grid of wide streets, which are up to eight lanes in width. The generally light industrial buildings are low rise, as would be expected in a similar area in Europe or North America. In addition, the area also includes some large luxury condominium developments.

**Southwest:** The southwest includes two older suburbs that have been engulfed by the expanding Suzhou urban area, Xiukou and Mu Du. These areas have older housing, much of it multi-unit and commercial districts. This area also includes much of the older industrial base of the urban area. There is a new area of more sparse development between these suburbs and the mainland shore, which includes commercial areas, hotels and housing, both multi-unit and detached.

**Taihu (Tai Lake):** The Suzhou urban area continues into Taihu, over a causeway that connects three islands to the mainland. The first island, Changsha, is nearly fully developed with detached housing. The second island, which is the smallest, is covered on its eastern half by detached housing and undeveloped in its western half. The third island, which is the largest, includes at least one older village that has been engulfed by the urbanization of Suzhou and contains commercial areas, some multi-family housing and considerable detached housing. Most of this island is rural.<sup>2</sup>

**Southern Sector:** The southern sector, located to the south of the old city's southern canal appears to be an older extension of the urban area. There is a variety of principally multi-unit housing, both mid-rise and high rise. Some of the developments are somewhat older, while others are new or still under construction. The Grand Canal crosses the southern sector (Slides 17-24)

**Northern Sector:** Tiger Hill and Yunyan Pagoda are located in an attractive park in the northern sector (Slides 70-85). Like the leaning tower of Pisa, Yunyan Pagoda leans, but not as far. Good views of the urban area can be seen from the top of Tiger Hill. Tiger Hill can be climbed from both the south and the north sides, though the climb from the south side is more gentle and more interesting. Like the rest of Suzhou, Tiger Hill and the northern sector also have their share of canals. The rest of the northern sector has residential buildings, principally multi-unit buildings, with some new high-rises. There are also older light industrial activities (Slides 251-269).

**Small Businesses:** As is the case in virtually all Chinese urban areas, many major streets are lined by small businesses (Slides 212 & 220)

## HOUSING

Generally, older residential housing is lower rise in Suzhou than in other major Chinese urban areas. There are fewer of the old standard design apartment/condominium buildings that are found throughout Chinese urban areas (Slides 136 & 156).

As in other Chinese urban areas, there are many outdoor advertising signs for new luxury condominiums, town houses and detached housing (Slides 225, 289, 295, 306, 320 & 352)

## TRANSPORT

Suzhou is well served by high-quality roads. There is a freeway ring road (Slide 315) and freeway connections to the west, east and south. In addition, there are various freeways within the urban area itself. Suzhou is well served by freeways, with nearly 100 route miles (160 route kilometers). At nearly 0.4 route miles per square mile (0.25 route kilometers per square kilometer), Suzhou has a

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<sup>2</sup> We were unable to determine the names of the second and third islands.

higher freeway density than any major urban area in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand other than Montreal and San Antonio.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, virtually all of Suzhou is served by a grid of wide arterial streets, as is typical of Chinese urban areas (Slide 230).

Most urban transport in Suzhou is by bus. A metro line is under construction, which will extend from near the eastern periphery of the urban area, through the old city core, the newer western center and continue well out into the western

## **THE YANGTZE DELTA**

Suzhou is one of the principal urban areas on the Yangtze River Delta, which includes Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuxi, Hangzhou, Ningbo and a number of smaller urban areas. This is one of China's two "mega-regions," --- areas of large adjacent metropolitan areas. The other is the Pearl River Delta, with a somewhat smaller population but much higher population density (see Rental Car Tour: Pearl River Delta Overflight).

## **EATING IN CHINA**

The local food is superb. My rule in China is to never frequent a restaurant that takes credit cards. That way, there is a good chance of getting genuine local food. The experience is a happy one, though language difficulties make it virtually impossible to enunciate any recommendations. There are, along all business streets in the urban areas of China, a plethora of good local restaurants. Ordering can be difficult, since few such establishments have menus in English (though rather more than have Mandarin menus in Western Europe or the United States). Moreover, given the humble status of these restaurants --- low prices, good food, they will not be found in any of the tour guides.

It is recommended, however, that tap water be avoided. The hotels provide bottled water. Generally, bottled water should be relied on in all but the most affluent nations. This is my unfortunate advice after having contracted Montezuma's revenge on every continent but Australia and Antarctica.

## **TRAVELING IN CHINA**

China has one of the world's most advanced air transport systems and has built many new airports. The new Beijing Terminal 3 and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport are among the most impressive in the world. Other large and medium sized urban areas also have new airport terminals, such as Chengdu, Wuhan, Xi'an, Shenyang, Shenzhen, Taiyuan and a new terminal is under construction at Hongqiao International Airport in Shanghai.

Passenger rail is a very inexpensive and comfortable way to travel, especially over shorter distances. China has developed the fastest intercity train in the world, which operates between Tianjin and Beijing. It reaches nearly 220 miles per hour (350 kilometers per hour). Rail travel is very inexpensive. For example, second class travel between Hangzhou and Shanghai has an approximately cost of \$15.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-4colfwy.htm>.

China has developed the world's second longest freeway system, but it is largely inaccessible to foreign drivers because China has not ratified the international drivers license treaty. When and if they do, anticipate a rental car tour covering thousands of miles of Chinese intercity freeway.

## **“CITIES” IN CHINA**

Analysts are often confused by the “city” (“shi” in Chinese) terminology used in China. All of the Suzhou urban area is contained within the city or municipality of Suzhou. Similarly, most (if not all) Chinese urban areas are contained within a single city. While Chinese “cities” are municipalities, they are far different from municipalities in the western world, by virtue of their geographical size and vast rural territories. A better rendering of the Chinese word “shi” would be region.

These cities or regions routinely include large areas of agricultural land, which keeps their density relatively low and leads publishers and analysts to report density data that is so low that it belies a complete misunderstanding of urban geography. For example, the largest municipality in the world is Chongqing, which has more than 30,000,000 people. Its land area is more than 30,000 square miles (more than 80,000 square kilometers) --- nearly as large as Austria or the state of Indiana. The urban area of Chongqing, however has a far more modest population of 4,000,000

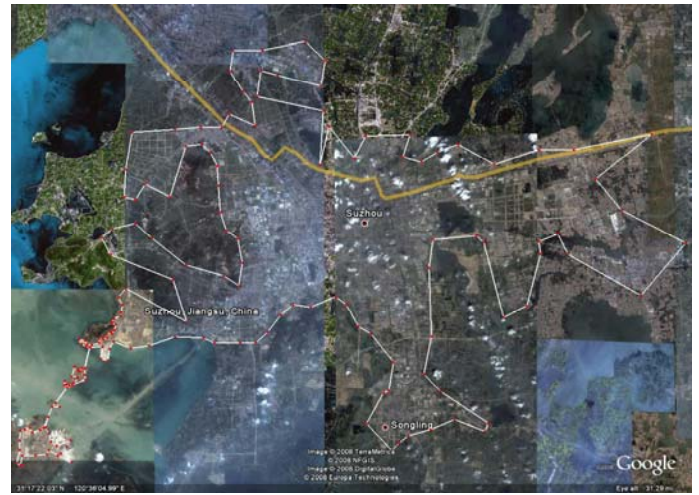
<http://www.rentalcartours.net>

<http://www.demographia.com>

<http://www.publicpurpose.com>



# Suzhou: The Setting



Suzhou Urban Area (Taihu to the West)

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# Beijing to Hangzhou Canal (Grand Canal)



Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Park in Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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Grand Canal: Western Core

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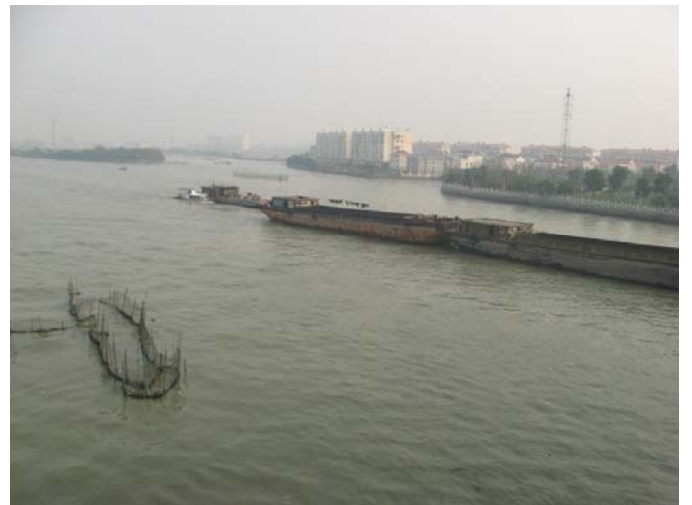


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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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Grand Canal: Southern Sector

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Cruise: Canal Toward Tiger Hill



Entry to Boat Cruise Dock

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Dock

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Boat

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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Tiger Hill Cruise

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Other Canals

URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR



Peripheral Canal

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Peripheral Canal

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Eastern Sector

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Western Area

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Canal in Western Area

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Canal in Western Area

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Canal in Western Area

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Canal at Tiger Hill

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Canal at Tiger Hill

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Canal in Old City

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Canal in Old City

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Old City



Old City

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Old City

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Old City

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Old City

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Old City: Railway Station

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Old City

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Old City

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Old City

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Humble Administrator's Garden

URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR



Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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Humble Administrator's Garden (Old City)

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Western Center



Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Suzhou Henghe Plaza

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Western Center

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Suzhou Xindi Center

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Western Center

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Eastern Sector



Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector: Development to Come

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Eastern Sector: Auchan Hypermarket

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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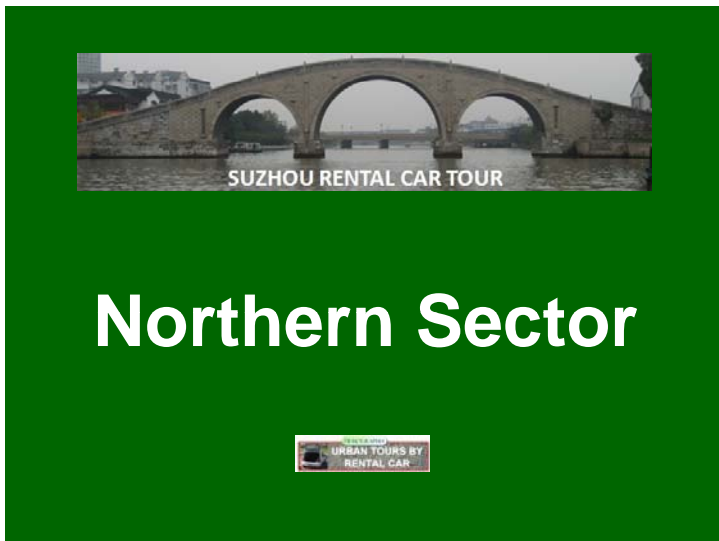
Eastern Sector: Detached Housing Advertisement

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Eastern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector: Town Houses

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Center

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Yunyan Pagoda (Tiger Hill)





Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill: Yunyan Pagoda

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Tiger Hill: Yunyan Pagoda

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill: Yunyan Pagoda

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill: Yunyan Pagoda

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Tiger Hill

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area: Villa Advertisement

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area



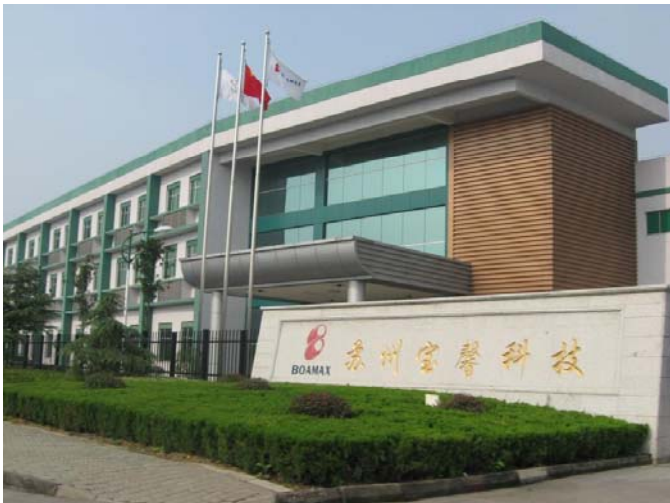
Western Industrial Area: Villa Advertisement

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area

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Western Industrial Area: Villa Advertisement

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Western Industrial Area

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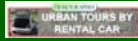
Western Industrial Area: Development to Come

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Southwest



Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector: Town Houses

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Southwest Sector: Development to Come

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector

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Southwest Sector: Detached Housing

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Southwest Sector: Detached Housing

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Southwest Sector: Detached Housing

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Southwest Sector: Detached Housing

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Southwest Sector

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SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Taihu (Tai Lake)




Taihu Causeway

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu Causeway: Housing Advertisements

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu: Third Island

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu: Second Island

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Taihu Causeway

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu: Changsha Island

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Taihu Causeway

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# Southern Sector



Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector: Shopping Center

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector at Grand Canal

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Southern Sector

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Southern Sector

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A stone bridge over a canal with text overlay. The image is a promotional graphic for a rental car tour. It features a stone bridge with three arches over a canal. The text "SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR" is written in white on a black background. Below the image, the text "Peripheral Canal: Southeast" is written in large white letters on a green background. At the bottom, there is a small logo for "URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR".

SUZHOU RENTAL CAR TOUR

# Peripheral Canal: Southeast

URBAN TOURS BY  
RENTAL CAR



Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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Peripheral Canal: Southeast

441



Peripheral Canal: Southeast

442



Peripheral Canal: Southeast

443



Peripheral Canal: Southeast

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