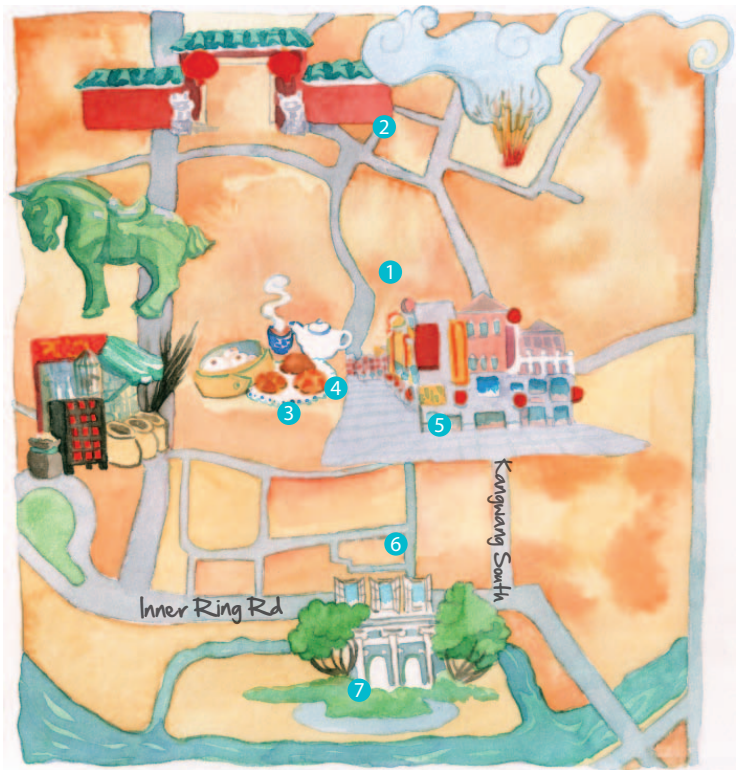


Shang Xia Jiu Road, Guangzhou China



Words by Jillian Mitchell
Illustration by Marion Vitus

GUANGZHOU'S ANCIENT LIWAN DISTRICT IS AN AREA OF CONTRAST THAT FEATURES HISTORY, DIVERSITY, tradition, and culture in an environment that is ever so rapidly evolving.

Small jewellery trading shops line the roadway, but the drawcard here is not the jade market. **1 Hualin Temple** is almost hidden amongst the shops and stalls shrouded in the unmistakable smell of burning incense. The 500 lifelike gold statues of **2 Arhat Hall** each bear an individual posture and expression as they sit beneath the colourfully decorated roof. Like protectors they watch over visitors strolling or worshipping at an array of shrines endowed with offerings and icons.

Far from being a contrived commercial area, the glitzy **Shang Xia Jiu Road** is almost the poster child of modern China. Thousands of youths indulge in one of their favourite pastimes: shopping. It's loud, it's crowded, and occasionally as vehicles attempt to cross over this shopping thoroughfare they seem to be almost engulfed by people. Both exhausting and energising, the street itself is attractively paved and lined with traditional Qilou – a fusion style architecture with both Chinese and Western influences dating back two centuries.

Great food and fragrant jasmine tea coupled with a vibrant, animated atmosphere makes for the ultimate **Cantonese Yum Cha** experience.

To partake in this time-honoured activity head into the **3 Guangzhou Restaurant** or **4 Tao Tao Ju**, both of which are renowned for their high-quality Yum Cha. Guangzhou Restaurant is on the corner of Wenchang South Road and Shang Xia Jiu Road, while Tao Tao Ju is a short walk down Shang Xia Jiu Road in a westerly direction. Literally translated as 'tea drinking', Yum Cha usually incorporates small snacks better known as Dim Sum. Steam billows from bamboo baskets containing little delicacies such as shrimp dumplings and chicken's feet, as well as a plentiful array of sweet and savoury treats.

On the outskirts of the sprawling **5 Qing Ping market**, a curious scent wafts. The **6 Chinese Medicine and Herbs Wholesale market** – which runs along about two-thirds of **Qing Ping Road** –

is just one of only 17 in China and offers a mind-boggling array of dried herbs, plants, and dehydrated sea creatures. Starfish and tiny seahorses, that look more like toys than the real thing, are instantly recognisable – but many of the offerings are not.

Stepping over the pedestrian bridge to **7 Shamian Island** takes you into a world that is the polar opposite of everything you have experienced so far. This is the old British and French concession area, established as a result of the Opium wars in the mid 1800s. In what can only be described as a peaceful oasis in a burgeoning city of busy-ness, Shamian is a stunning collection of serene, colonial-era architecture. Streets of these beautiful buildings sit stately amongst the massive old-growth trees that shade the paved streets and colourful gardens. The air feels fresher, cars are fewer, and crowds are virtually non-existent. To add to the surreal surrounds, a very common site is the numerous young couples, all dressed up, using the picturesque surrounds as a backdrop for wedding photos. ☺

Connect Guangzhou, China → Distance: 6,218 km → Flight Time: 8 hours, 5 minutes → Frequency: Daily