I honestly never minded doing stop overs, so to reduce the cost of my flights so I decided to do a stop over at Hong Kong International Airport. My Cathay Pacific flight was delayed and changed 3 times in the space of one hour. Welcome to China. Why does this happen? Aviation experts agree that one of the main problems in China is the fact the country’s airspace is largely controlled by the military, leaving little room for civilian aircraft even as the domestic airline industry booms. According to the state-run China Daily newspaper, less than 30% of China’s airspace can be used by commercial airlines, compared to about 80% of the airspace in the United States. That’s why you are never late until you travel in China.

After arriving 5 hours later than expected, I finally landed to Shanghai Pudong (PVG) airport. I did my research and a taxi from the airport to Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFE) costs between 20-25 pounds (200-250 yuans), but I was on a budget. What I did was the most cost-time effective route. The cheapest was the tube with a fare of 6 yuans (80p) and the fastest of all with a decent price was around 45 yuans (4.5 pounds). The cost effective journey was a combination of Maglev train and tube. Maglev train (see figure 2) uses super magnets to move, so no electricity or fuel is used. It reached 423km/h, which was pretty amazing. Chinese technology at its finest.
Arriving to the accommodation was really easy because I followed Google Maps, no lie. Finding the accommodation was a nightmare. I had no wifi, I end up in the wrong student accommodation and the Ayi (auntie= how Chinese people call the cleaners or old ladies as a form of respect) couldn’t understand what I tried to say. After she realised I was lost she took me to right place. We end up being really good friends. I got assigned room 201 with two other roommates. Not going to lie, but my student accommodation was bigger than what you would expect in London. The only bad/weird thing is that my room had a weird tree colorful painting that gave me a couple of nightmares the first week. It looked like the previous student had a moment of inspiration and went crazy with the brushes (see the figure 3). As a welcome gift they gave me a packed of bread, really kind.

On the top picture I’m in tone of the most iconic places in Shanghai, the Bund. Also, on the picture I’m holding a bottle of my favourite Chinese lemon tea. The most impressive about Shanghai is definitely its skyline. It’s quite different from major cities skyline where most of the buildings are quite high but have a uniform mainstream shape (e.g. NYC, Hong Kong). These three buildings can easily identify Shanghai’s skyline: Pearl tower (left hand side), the bottle opener (the building with a square in its center) and the Jing Mao tower (the tallest building in the picture and the second tallest building in the world).
Another must in Shanghai is Shanghainese food. For less than two pounds you can have a hot dish in a local restaurant. Obviously, if you don’t like Chinese food don’t come. I tried everything. Even cows intestines that were pretty gross, but people in China seemed to love it. I’m going to put a couple of pictured of Chinese food that I tried, so you can see what you’re missing.

Happy QMUL students trying amazing food. Foodies paradise.
Chinese food in China is 1000 times better than the one in UK. I had Chinese since I got back but everything tastes pretty plain.

Another good thing of traveling in China is that it is fairly easy. If you speak Chinese it would be a plus when you buy train tickets at local train stations, but if you have a picture (IN CHINESE) of where do you want to go with dates and train number it should be pretty straight forward. If you’re planning on going to different cities in China ctrip.com will become your new best friend.

During my time in China, I spent my weekdays in Shanghai going to lessons and during the weekends I travelled to the nearby cities in a really small budget.

The first nearby city that I went was Hangzhou, which is well known for their lotus flowers, mountains and west lake.

![Image of Hangzhou](image1.jpg)

Justine (me) being the ultimate tourist in Hangzhou.

And finally, you can’t go to China and not go to the Great Wall. It’s like going to London and not going to the Big Ben, going to Paris and not going to the Tour Eiffel. Do you get my point? The next pictures are going to be about the Great Wall of China and Beijing. I never sweated that much in my entire life. Get ready to see Forbidden City, Pandas and the Great Wall, the one in China not the future wall in Mexico.
To summarize, here are my must go places in Shanghai:

1. The Bund during the day and night (for those amazing skyline pictures)
2. WaiPoJia (外婆家) a Shanghainese food restaurant, it literally means Grandma’s House
3. Bar Rouge (expensive bar with the best views to the Bund)
4. HongKou area for shopping and food.
5. Jing’an for the ‘European vibe’, area where most expats live.
6. People’s Square Sunday Marriage Market (A MUST)
7. Yang’s dumplings (The best one is the pork one)
8. French Concession and Xintiandi shopping center
9. LuJiaZiu (like the City but x1000 bigger and taller)
10. Go for a massage or get your nails done (both under 10 pounds)

I really hope that reading this inspired go to Shanghai or any Chinese city. Make the most of your summer and try everything at least once in your life, like I tried cow intestine.

Lots of love, Justine.