

Travel Report – SUFE June-August 2017

In summer 2017 I was lucky enough to be a part of an eight-week summer exchange programme with Shanghai University of Finance and Economics through the Confucius Institute. While we were there we had a full-time programme of Mandarin Chinese lessons with the University as well as some cultural activities and trips.

The Chinese lessons were 3 ½ hours every weekday morning, and we were tutored from the very basics of phonetics, to potentially HSK2 level Mandarin, including some study of Chinese characters. It was tough waking up in the mornings, but it was great to have the whole day free after lessons! We were provided with textbooks, and the teachers were very patient with us, despite our sometimes less-than-wholehearted efforts on the homework! On Monday afternoons we had cultural classes, in which we got to experience all sorts of Chinese cultural traditions including tai chi, dumpling making, and calligraphy.



For the first four Saturdays, the university arranged coach trips for us to different cultural locations in and around Shanghai, where we got to see more traditional Chinese architecture than we were used to seeing in the centre of the city. China is fascinating in the way that it incorporates the cutting edge of modern technology and architecture side by side with ancient traditional palaces and temples.



In our copious time off, we got a chance to explore the city for ourselves and we found it to be endlessly entertaining, with huge shopping areas bigger than we had ever seen in England, and malls on every corner! The business district in Shanghai is one of the most cutting-edge in the world, boasting a world-famous skyline, and many of the towers host nightclubs on their top floors, which have some amazing views of the city at night. There is also a lot



to be explored culturally within Shanghai, particularly some beautiful Buddhist temples, including Jing'an temple which is the biggest in China. A slightly less well-known attraction, on the other hand, is the propaganda art museum, where visitors can see a full visual history of China since the civil war in 1949.

Outside of the city, we went on trips to Beijing and Huangshan, travelling on the sleeper trains, which are an experience not to be missed! It was amazing to navigate such foreign places entirely by ourselves and moreover to succeed in getting home again!



The experience has been invaluable to me gaining experience travelling to new places on my own and successfully getting by, and I would love to go into a career involving international travel, and likewise the grounding in Chinese language gave me a great starting point from which to continue to improve my skills now that I'm home. I hope to be HSK level 3 by the end of this academic year.

Although the tuition and accommodation was payed by the university, we were required to pay for our visas and flights, as well as covering living expenses while we were there, which can add up over two months when you have no cooking facilities! The bursary from the expeditions fund was so beneficial to my time there, because it enabled me to go on our weekend trips to Beijing and Huangshan, which were by far the most expensive things we did, but also the most culturally interesting. I can't recommend the programme enough, and if you do get a chance to go on a similar programme it's always worth seeing whether the expeditions fund can help make your trip even more memorable.

