

QMUL Expedition report

University Immersion Program

Chengdu, Sichuan, China

July, 2018



Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan province, and one of the major cities in Western China. This summer, me and some fellow QMUL students went on a journey to Chengdu for two weeks as part of the University Immersion Program between QMUL and Sichuan University. I had looked forward to this trip for a long time; as someone who has a Chinese background and spent a large portion of her life living there, I've always wanted to have the opportunity to experience university life in China, with the added bonus of it been on the top of my 'places to visit' bucket list.



Chengdu is a big city with a vibrant and lively population and plenty to do, but with a more chilled vibe than Beijing or Shanghai. It has a population of around 15 million, compared to 21 million in Beijing and 8 million in London. Chengdu has boasted the tradition of teahouses, or Chaguan, which are historically important in serving more than hot drinks. Nowadays they are more of a place for people to relax and read newspapers on bamboo armchairs, or to come together and play mah-jong.



The university also arranged various cultural and language classes for us; we learned the history of Chinese Kungfu, and even played a few notes on the Guqing (an ancient Chinese instrument).

(learning to play Chengdu mah-jong)

This year due to the recent typhoon and heavy rain, unfortunately the Leshan Buddha trip and Qingcheng Mountain had to be cancelled. Fortunately in Chengdu, it's difficult to run out of things to do. I have always been fond of Chinese poems, and I was excited to get to make a special trip to visit the cottage where Du Fu used to live in Chengdu, one of my favourite poets from Tang dynasty. Over the weekend we also visited Global centre with students from Sichuan University, which is the largest infrastructure in Asia with shopping malls and game centre and countless restaurants, and even an indoor waterpark! We had amazing fun.



You can't leave Chengdu without a visit to the Giant Panda Research Base. Sichuan is the home for pandas, and it has the largest research and breeding facility just 30 minutes' drive away from town.

Aside from all the 'must-see' destinations, I think the biggest attraction of China is no others but food. Sichuan is famous for its spicy hot pot and cuisine-rich culture. This picture shows a meal I had in one of their many canteens on the University campus, and you can choose from 20 different styles of cuisine and many



flavours that they offer, all for the price of 10 yuan (roughly £1.4). Maybe I am accustomed to the Chinese style of eating, but I cannot praise the food there enough; there is something for everyone and you will not be disappointed. I'm only showing this picture of simple meal (beef noodle and sweet sago porridge with watermelon) because I have not managed to save another unblurred photo of the food without me indulging on them the nanosecond they were on my table.

I am truly grateful to Queen Mary University of London for financially contributing towards my flight, which made the trip more affordable for me. Coincidentally, the period when we were in China was also when the 2018 World Cup in Russia gotten into the final legs of semi-finals and finals. What are better ways to bond than cheering the teams on together over some drinks? I went from not knowing a single person on the trip to came back home two weeks later with best friends in life after having the best time half a planet away, it's pretty magical. This trip would not have been the same without the people in it, and I have gained so much precious memories to treasure for life. Thank you for making this trip so special for me friends, thank you Sichuan.

Peace and love,

