My experience in Chengdu

I want to start by mentioning that I specifically refer to my stay in China as my stay in Chengdu. China is a vast country with a rich history spanning from the western to eastern borders of China. Chengdu is a large central city within the Sichuan province not far from the Tibetan plateau and the Himalayan mountains. Climate during the summer is thick, hot, humid air with a 70% chance of rain. Fortunately, I experienced this unique monsoon season.

The purpose of my stay was to be enriched with culture, language, and knowledge that seeped from China with the means of a University Immersion Programme hosted by Sichuan University. I stayed for 16 days, where on weekdays I would attend classes that I had previously enrolled upon or attended day trips to famous landmarks in and around Chengdu.

One of them being a visit to Leshan, the Giant Buddha, and others being short trips to Chungxi Road, Wide and Narrow Alley, as well as Tianfu Square.

The explorations were not only about the culture of the past and the history of China and Chengdu, but also of modern day culture.

Many Chinese students do not have cooking facilities in their dormitories therefore eat out, food and beverages are very cheap in most places and even in high classes restaurants, a meal isn’t more than £12 (roughly 100 Kwai). My favourite discovery was the obsession with tea. Bubble tea has long since popped up and won the hearts of many Londoners, but fresh tea and fruit combinations are the next big thing. Countless tea stalls making refreshing, and cooling teas with fresh mango, grapefruit, passion fruit, lime, you name it - they’ll add it. All for no more than £1.50/ 14 Kwai. I found myself repeatedly trying new flavours or bubbles fruit tea until most of my money had gone on delicious meals, teas, drinks and cheap taxis.

Top right, I visited the equivalent of Piccadilly circus, Oxford Circus mushed together and climbed to the roof of the IFS shopping centre where they had small brick statues (like Lego but not copyrighted). Middle is me gazing into triangular square as I descend down the metro.

Left, a picture of the Buddha’s head that guards three intersecting rivers of Leshan.

All the photos you will see were taken by me, Charlotte Moore, and are owned by me.
Chengdu is packed with individual, and small motorbikes, as well as manual bikes with a similar theme to Santander bikes we have in London. However, they aren’t docked or regulated but simply stranded on pavements and roads waiting for their next use. Usually one has to pay via the most useful, and probably one of the few permitted apps in China, WeChat. PS; don’t bother with paying for VPNs or tossing between free trials. You’re best bet would be to stick through your holiday by using WeChat or making sure you have a very good WiFi provider in your hotel/hostel, so that the VPN can hook onto. Otherwise you’ll be left more frustrated than informed.

Funnily enough, I experienced more road rage than ever expected. The rules of the roads are very wishy-washy in Chengdu, and had me constantly running between motorbikes and bicycles. On a red light, a car and any vehicle is still allowed to move if they’re turning the corner along the side of the pavement, which lead to much irritation and swearing.
Other pleasant surprises included the fashion and style of people in Chengdu. Amongst the broken roads, grey skies, and historical monuments, the younger generation is dressed with great finesse and modernity, leaving me slightly jealous. Girls would wear beautiful dresses that I would usually save for a day out, guys would wear t-shirts and trousers with slogans that made no sense but looked very trendy. Almost as if making sense isn’t cool. When I decided to try to look as cool as them, I popped into the shops not far from my Campus at the time, and ended up with a limited choice of sizes between XS and M. Mind you, I’m a size UK 12.

Over all, it was an unforgettable experience. I definitely felt like a foreigner but not an outsider. With some stares and gazes and cheeky pictures being taken of me when I’m not looking, I would definitely return for the bigger picture. The experience has open my mind to travelling and studying abroad. It made me more confident in myself and now I feel like I can take on the world, some countries I would have never imagined to travel to but now I’m making 2019 summer plans already.

Top left, large red gates to Wangjiang campus at Sichuan university. They lead the way to a large road surrounded by more waterlily ponds with large leaves and blooming flowers. Constant rain and evergreen trees. Top right, a teaching building at Huaxi campus, Medical school. Bottom right, a panda dozing off in extremely humid weather and looking rather quite melancholy. This was at the trip to the Panda research base. Bottom left, a group picture which turned out perfectly in front of the main entrance to the panda research base. Can you spot me?