QMUL Expedition Fund Report

ECUPL Summer School 2019

Shanghai, China

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LLB English and European Law Student
Shanghai is one of the four municipalities of the People’s Republic of China, with a population of over 24 million. Its growth and development over the last century has led the city to emerge as a driving economic force. Its cuisine, architecture and rich cultural history have always fascinated my mind, so when I found out about the opportunity for a Summer School there, I was immediately intrigued. The Summer School was to take place at East China University of Political Science and Law – one of oldest and most well-established educational institutions in China, with numerous notable alumni and an excellent teaching team. What definitively made up my mind was the topic – Chinese Law and Culture and as a law student myself, I was eager to discover its Legal System and its place on the world stage.

I remember how excited I was the day of my flight. It was the first time I would be flying outside of Europe and, coincidentally, it was also my birthday. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by an ECUPL representative and we soon made our way to into the city, marking the beginning of my Adventure in Asia.

On the following day, teaching started and I met the rest of the participants. We were students from countries all around the world – the US, Poland, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Romania, India, Spain, Norway, Malaysia and many more. 54 people, 17 countries and 1 room to share our knowledge and memories with each other – this was perhaps the most enriching experience I have ever had.

The following 3 weeks constituted of lectures on Chinese Contract, Criminal, Civil, Administrative, Trade and Intellectual Property Law. I gained a deep understanding of the case law system, the intricacies of the criminal trial procedures and found out more about the development of the law and how it is shaped around not only logical reasoning, but also around Chinese traditions and philosophies.

My visit, however, did only include lectures at the university campus. The organizers had prepared for us a variety of cultural and study visits, aimed at helping us see the many faces of their culture and admire its architectural advancements.

One of these visits was to the Shanghai Municipal Court, placed in the heart of the city and in one of the most iconic buildings around. There, we learned more about trial proceedings and, most interestingly, saw in action the first-ever online court, which deals with administrative claims and court fines and is looking to revolutionise the way we appear before court in the future.
What really stood out to me was the efficiency of the Chinese arbitration system. With a success rate of 65% cases negotiated before reaching court, it has one of the most effective arbitration proceedings globally.

That day, we also had a planned visit to one of Shanghai’s most esteemed law firms, where we met one of their founding partners and found out more about their clients, recent mergers, the trade deals they negotiate and their view of firm expansion into Europe in the next few years, especially with the fast globalisation of law firms we have seen in recent years.

Shanghai is home to Shanghai Tower, the world’s second tallest building (128 floors) and the world’s highest observation deck. During our visit there, we went up to the last floor to marvel at the beauty of the city during the sunset.

Furthermore, we attended a river boat cruise along the river of Huangpu, which gave us the opportunity to sail across the magnificent shore of the Bund – Shanghai’s cultural and architectural centre and home to the most famous buildings in the world, such as the Oriental Pearl Tower, Shanghai Tower, Shanghai World Financial Centre, Shimao International Plaza and Jin Mao Tower.

When visiting Shanghai, one cannot do so without walking around the French Concession Neighbourhood, the Old City of Shanghai and Qipu Lu Market – home to traditional fabrics and clothes, herbs and small culinary treats.

In between all our cultural and study visits, we also managed to taste some of the most iconic Chinese dishes and, funnily enough, we were shocked to see how different real Chinese food is to the Western one we were all used to.

For example, we visited a restaurant, which has actual robots serving the customers and a famous ‘Noodle Show’, where one of the chefs comes over the table and performs a dance with the noodles we ate after.

Another evening, we visited a typical Korean BBQ Restaurant, where customers cook their own food on a grill, which is placed in the middle of the restaurant.
I can undoubtedly say that this trip benefitted in way I did not initially envision. I went there with the mind-set that I would spend 3 weeks learning about Chinese law and visiting the local monuments. However, being there made me gain a whole new appreciation of this incredibly rich culture and long history, which strongly influence the minds and traditions of Chinese people to this day. I met people from all around the world, with which I am still in contact. I opened my eyes to something different and it will forever stay in my heart and mind.