

EVALUATION REPORT:

Fudan University, Shanghai, China

Semester 1, 2016

Bachelor of Arts (Chinese), and Bachelor of Laws.

ACCOMMODATION:

For me the biggest debate was whether I should go into housing provided by the University, or try to find my own apartment. In the end I decided to go with university housing (because it was just so much easier + is on campus + I thought it would be a great way to make friends), and I was relatively happy with this choice. I do have some friends who found their own apartments who loved it (and to be honest if I had known people in Shanghai before I went to Fudan, or was staying another semester I probably would have done this), and others who stayed with Chinese families (which seemed to be a great way to pick up the language).

In terms of housing provided by the university you have three options: the main building of the foreign student's dormitory, a supplementary building of the foreign student's dormitory, or To He student housing.

The main building of the foreign student's dormitory is a twenty-three-storey building located on campus. Each floor has four washing machines (which cost 4 RMB per use) and two "kitchens" (these don't include a fridge, stove-top, or oven, so don't get any grand ideas – although some people did rent mini-fridges for their room and bought hotplates to use for cooking and seemed to get by okay on those). You can go for a single-room or double-room, and each room has its own bathroom, balcony, and should have a heater/air-conditioner. Personally I went with a single-room which was fine, although I will say that the dorms weren't like the halls in Otago – I never even met most of my neighbours and those I did meet weren't very friendly (weirdly, a lot of the friends I made in the dorms were actually people I met in the lifts during the first few weeks when we were all moving in). Some of my friends went with double rooms and they were fine with this living arrangement, but again, it's worth noting you won't necessarily be friends with your roommate (you might luck out but don't necessarily count on it), and indeed might not even be able to communicate with your roommate (one of my friends' roommate only spoke Korean, while she only spoke French and Chinese).

The supplementary buildings of the foreign student's dormitory are right next to the main building. They differ from the main building in that they are set up like flats, with a shared bathroom and kitchen between three or four rooms. Just a heads up, the supplementary buildings don't have lifts, so if you're on the seventh floor prepare for a lot of stairs.

(In the area with the main building and supplementary buildings there is also a convenience store, communal area, and laundry where you can pay 20 RMB to have your bedding, clothes, or shoes laundered).

The To He student accommodation was technically off-campus but really was located about two minutes down the road from the foreign students dormitory. Similar to the supplementary buildings described above, this accommodation is set up like a flat with a communal area, kitchen, and bathroom between two, three, or four rooms. However, unlike the supplementary buildings, these flats actually included a TV and couches, fridge, and a decent kitchen.

BUYING NECESSITIES ON ARRIVAL AT THE DORMS:

So after reading that the foreign students dormitory did not provide bedding, I decided to pack a duvet, pillows, and sheets in my suitcase (I realise this sounds ridiculous but I didn't want to arrive at 12pm with no bedding and no way to buy any). However, on arrival I found that there is in fact a room at the dorms selling bedding when you arrive – so make use of that if you can't fit it into your suitcase.

I bought a sim-card from the little convenience store on the first floor of the main building of the foreign student's dormitory, and they were kind enough to set it up for me. Some of my friends went to an actual phone network store to do this but to be honest that seems like a bit of a hassle as you have to give them passport numbers etc. You can also buy a wire-less router and internet cards at this store (which they will help you set up too).

For water, toiletries, cleaning products, toilet paper etc. you can buy these from the convenience store in the dorms, the small supermarket across the road from the dorms, the bigger supermarket on campus (near teaching building no. 2), or go to the Wal-Mart at Wu Jiao Chang (a train station/shopping centre located close to campus). There is also a Watsons, Sephora, Kiehls, and Victoria's Secret at Wu Jiao Chang if you are looking for better toiletries.

N.B: ladies, for some reason it was incredibly hard for me to find tampons in Shanghai – it wouldn't be a bad idea to throw a few packs of these in your suitcase and bring them with you from NZ, especially if you're wanting to use the same brands you do at home.

FOOD:

There are a couple of massive canteens on campus where most students buy their 3 square meals quite cheaply – these have a number of options including special areas with vegetarian, halal, western food, and Korean food.

There is also street food available outside of the foreign exchange students' dormitory (and permanent stalls/windows a bit further along the road) – I'll admit I was hesitant to eat it at first because I was worried about food poisoning, but I quickly got over that worry and realised it was delicious (way more so than the canteen food, although maybe that was because I was sick of eating at the canteen by the time I tried it), and you'll be happy to hear it didn't give me food poisoning.

If you're wanting to eat at a restaurant, there are a number of options around campus at Da Xue Lu (the one right at the start of Da Xue Lu near the bakery is amazing by the way) and Wu Jiao Chang, and around the dorms on Wu Dong Lu. Obviously there are also a number of options in the city centre if you're wanting to venture a bit further out, but if you have a liking for one of these and can't be bothered actually leaving the dorms (we've all been there) there are a couple of delivery

apps which work a treat (try Sherpas, or ask around for whatever everyone is using) and are a great way to practice your Mandarin.

CLASSES:

During my time at Fudan, I took part in the language programme. This involved five compulsory subjects, including: Extensive Chinese (5 lessons/week), Listening (2 lessons/week), Speaking (2 lessons/week), Writing (1 lesson/week), and intensive reading (1 lesson/week).

Half-way through the semester you will take “mid-terms” and then move up a class-level (don't worry though, the workbooks books are nowhere near as expensive as at Otago). As far as I am aware, even if you fail the exam you will move up a level with the rest of your class (obviously don't count on this though).

Personally, I enjoyed classes and felt my Chinese was really improving, but quite a few people in my class were frequently missing class and didn't bother to sit the final exam. I guess it's just luck of the draw as to what type of class you will get.

Something to note is that attendance is important - if you miss 1/3 or more classes in any given subject, you will fail that subject and be unable to sit the exams.

VISAS & TRAVEL

Which visa to get: when you are spending an exchange at university in China, you have the option of two different visas – the X1 or X2 student visa. Generally speaking, the X1 visa is intended for students undertaking to spend more than 6 months studying in China, and the X2 visa is for students undertaking to spend less than 6 months studying in China. As my exchange was only for one semester, I applied for the X2 visa. Additionally, as I knew I was planning to travel outside of China at least once during my exchange, I chose to apply for a double-entry visa (I did this because at the time I didn't know I could apply for a residence permit on top of a normal single-entry visa in Shanghai later), which allowed me to enter and exit China twice only. If you are intending to travel outside of China more than once during your exchange (and keep in mind travel to Hong Kong is considered exiting China) then you can get a normal single entry visa and apply for a residence permit once you get to Shanghai (the exchange department will walk you through this process when you arrive).

The process of applying for an X2 visa: I realised that I still hadn't applied for my visa one week before I left New Zealand for my exchange so I had to apply for an express visa (my wallet definitely didn't thank me for this). Nevertheless, this was a relatively easy process - I simply went to the Chinese Embassy in Wellington, handed in my application form, passport photos, and a few documents from Fudan University, and went back in to pick up my visa the next day.

Travel organised by Fudan University: if you are at Fudan during the Feb – July semester as I was, after mid-terms there are optional trips hosted by the exchange department at Fudan. I have to say that everyone I knew who took part in one of these trips definitely enjoyed themselves. I joined the trip to Wu Yi Shan and had an amazing time in the Chinese countryside, it isn't a part of China I would have thought to have gone to if not for this trip, but is definitely worth seeing - if only to have a break from the smog-filled city that is Shanghai. There were other trips, including a trip to Shaolin

Temple, which would have been awesome, but unfortunately booked out before I applied (as is apparently often the case), so pro-tip – if you're wanting to take the Shaolin temple trip book it ASAP.

Independent travel: I spent some of my weekends travelling to different parts of China, and took a week off classes to travel to Vietnam with a friend I made in my class – if you're wanting to take time to travel just be mindful of your attendance (if you miss 1/3 or more classes you will not be eligible to sit the exams and are immediately marked as failing the class – although on the plus side my attendance did re-set after exams).