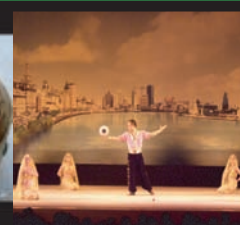


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ProjectsAbroad

中国



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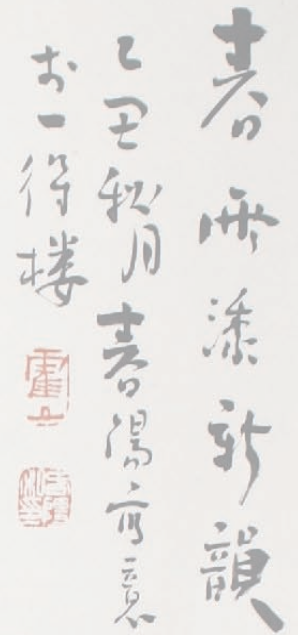
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Editorial Note:

Welcome to Projects Abroad China,

As the temperature drops, we all know that our so called 'fall' is over. The sun sets at about 5:30pm, a clear sign the winter is knocking at the door. For the volunteers that will be joining us, make sure you are prepared for China's underestimated winter. We plan to make your stay here in China an amazing one. We look forward to giving you the full Chinese experience and the beginning of intercontinental friendships from our weekly social events.

In this month's issue, you will read three different experiences from three volunteers; Caroline Hafnor from Norway, Lizet Santos from America, and Riccardo Ghezzi from Italy. This month's feature is about learning Mandarin.

Check out our Facebook group 'Projects Abroad China'. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at DennisBridgeforth@projects-abroad.org.

Learning Chinese

Often volunteers come to China with an interest in learning Mandarin, but only a few go as far as taking courses. Here in Shanghai we work with a language school called Accent Mandarin. They offer all the volunteers one free lesson, this lesson is based around basic survival skills such as greetings, taxi lingo (maybe the most important), and shopping phrases. For those of you who don't know, Mandarin is a tonal language; it has four tones and one neutral tone. The tone of a word determines the meaning. For example:

1. Mā = Mom
2. Má= Hemp
3. Mǎ = Horse
4. Mǎ= Scold
5. Ma = Makes a sentence a 'yes' or 'no' question

To most people, these will all sound the same and that maybe true. However, they all have very different meanings, all because of the tone. This also means by the tone being off it can alter the meaning of a word and/or sentence. So a sentence's context will not help you much, as it does in other languages; chances of someone understanding you are slim.

I wanted to get a volunteers opinion so I asked Sam Ronald's a Business volunteer from America, whom has never taken Mandarin before and has recently enrolled in the Accent Mandarin's language school. Everyone has their own agenda on why they choose to learn Mandarin. So I asked Sam what was his reason for learning the language, he feels that by gaining a basic understanding of the language he will have a more rounded experience in Shanghai. I'm assuming because people often figure out that you can live in Shanghai without knowing the language, but this means that there will be this disconnect from the local community. Ultimately you really don't experience the culture; it's just as if you never left home. I know many expats who've lived here for years, but only know taxi lingo.

Sam also said that taking classes now, while in China would give him a solid foundation, in case he decides to get into international finance or in the event he comes back to China to stay or visit. Getting a good foundation for the language is the most critical part of learning Chinese. Once you have a good understanding of the tones and the phonetic sounds, you will experience a high learning curve. Sam is still in the beginning phase and said the only words you will be proficient at in this stage are greetings and numbers. The issue he's had with greetings is that people will think that you speak the language and began to talk to you as if you know what they are saying. Sam's words of wisdom for those planning to learn the language is to use the language as much as possible, he said he would recommend future volunteers to take lessons and practice wherever and whenever possible. This practice will help it sink in faster.

Personally, I believe a great way to practice your mandarin is with the taxi drivers. In this city you find yourself taking taxis quite often, so what's the harm in practicing, while riding to your destination? I will continue this topic in a later issue, with more opinions and advice from ex-volunteers, who came back to China just to study the language.



Caroline Hafnor

(Journalism, 2 months)



Det har nesten gått en måned siden jeg landet på flyplassen her i Shanghai. Jeg husker det som det var i går. Jeg var både nervøs, spent, glad og redd da jeg tittet ut av flyvinduet mitt og så ned på byen som skulle være hjemmet mitt i to måneder. Det er vanskelig å beskrive akkurat hva jeg følte der jeg stod med koffertene mine midt i et folkehav av kinesere i velkomsthallen på flyplassen. Mens jeg sitter her i skrivende stund, så må jeg nesten smile litt for meg selv når jeg ser tilbake på min første dag. Lite visste jeg hvor mye spennende som ventet meg i ukene som skulle komme.

Boller med rykende nudler, nydelige parker, skyskrapere, blide mennesker, stappette t-baner, templer. Listen fortsetter i det uendelige. Shanghai har så utrolig mye å by på, noe for enhver smak. Jeg opplever noe nytt absolutt hver dag. Jeg har jo nesten ikke tid til alt, med jobben på toppen. Det er jo tross alt den største grunnen til at jeg er her, for å få jobberfaring innen journalistikk. Jeg jobber for et kulturmagasin her i Shanghai, og det er så utrolig gøy. Gjennom jobben får jeg møte masse interessante mennesker og får muligheten til å dra på konserter, kunstgallerier og lignende. Jeg får virkelig et unikt innblikk inn i Shanghai, og jeg liker byen bedre og bedre for hver dag som går.

Bortsett fra jobberfaringen og alt det andre spennende jeg får oppleve her, så føler jeg at denne turen er mer enn bare dette. Man blir mer selvstendig på en slik tur. Man blir nødt til å klare seg selv, stå på egne bein. Jeg har ikke vært her en måned engang, men jeg føler allerede at jeg har mer bein i nesa nå enn da flyet mitt lettet fra Gardermoen. For det er en stor forandring å komme til en by som dette når man er vant med trygge, lille Oslo. Det er nesten et sjokk, for alt er så annerledes. Luktene, menneskenes væremåte, maten. Alt. Men som man vokser på det.

Tiden flyr, men jeg har fortsatt flere spennende uker foran meg. Jeg har en følelse av at de kommer til å bli like innholdsrike og interessante som de forrige. Jeg anbefaler alle som vurderer å reise til Kina med ProjectsAbroad, å bare hoppe ut i det. Det er en så givende og utrolig spennende reise. Også ser det veldig bra ut på CV'en også, da. Zàijìàn

Lizet Santos

(Care, 2 months)

It is currently 2 A.M. on Tuesday October 18th and I feel so terribly sad knowing that in one week I will be boarding a plane to go home. I really don't know how I could possibly write down everything I would like to say about my experience here in China with Projects Abroad. Chengdu is definitely a city everyone, at some point in their life, should take the time to visit and I'm so glad that I was able to live for two months in Chengdu through Projects Abroad because it's been such a wonderful experience.

My first day working at the school for kids with autism was nerve wracking at the beginning because I thought no one knew how to speak English, but luckily one of the teachers knew enough to start a conversation with me and help me adapt to the classroom quickly. At lunchtime he took me out to eat with four of his friends that were teachers at the school as well. They were all so excited to meet me and I felt like a brand new toy that everyone wanted to play with. They were incredibly sweet and nice to me and did everything they could to make me feel comfortable.

The first few weeks were a little tough on me because I thought the kids would never warm up to me and it was really tough to try and communicate with them but everyday proved to be better than the last. At the beginning of the placement I couldn't get my cheeks to stop hurting because smiling seemed to be the only way I could communicate with them. But Kevin was able to help me by giving me a few words to use to encourage the kids during the class. After that everything got better, by the end of the third week I was so happy about how much progress I had made and was glad that I had finally earned both the parent's and children's trust. In the afternoons I was in charge of making arts and crafts to decorate the school for the children. Unfortunately for the kids, my best art work has always been stick figures; therefore the afternoons always seemed never ending. But for my great fortune I was blessed with the arrival of two Danish girls, Jacqueline and Celine. I have a lot of fun with the kids in the morning during the classes and then get to enjoy decorating rooms with the girls in the afternoon.

I really had no idea what to expect when I arrived but after a few short weeks I completely fell in love with the city and its culture. Chengdu, in so many ways, is completely different from Houston. In Chengdu you never need to walk that far to get to your destination because there's always a bus stop, metro, or taxi nearby. The irony of coming from America, where I have no freedom unless I own a car, to arriving in China and feeling so free and independent is so apparent! The other volunteers you meet are great as well. I can honestly say they are some of the best friends I have ever had and I've grown to love them so much! There is so much to talk about when it comes to Chengdu, like the food being delicious, the people staring at you nonstop, and of course feeling like a celebrity when Chinese folk randomly come up to you and ask to take a picture with you. It is so much fun being here and I'm dreading the moment in which I'll have to leave because I'd much rather stay. Someday I will come back and I hope that every volunteer that comes through Chengdu with Projects Abroad has as much of an amazing experience as I did!



Riccardo Ghezzi

(Journalism, 2 months)



Sono Riccardo Ghezzi, laureando al primo anno in Economia delle Imprese e dei Mercati presso l'università Cattolica di Milano.

Ho deciso di intraprendere un'esperienza lavorativa all'estero per diverse ragioni: poterla inserire nel mio curriculum, mettermi alla prova sul piano personale e nel mondo del lavoro, parlare inglese e, infine, conoscere una nuova cultura, nuove tradizioni e nuove persone.

La meta che ho scelto è Shanghai in Cina.

Per quanto riguarda lo stage, lo sto facendo presso il China Merger & Acquisitions Grandall Law Group; oltre a me, presso questa compagnia, ci sono altri due ragazzi, un americano e un inglese, anche loro partiti con Projects Abroad. Il lavoro che facciamo è molto interessante, principalmente si tratta di fare ricerche nel campo della finanza, lavori di gruppo, etc... È un lavoro molto vario, non è routinario. I nostri supervisori sono cinesi, parlano inglese perfettamente e sono molto disponibili. Si inizia alle 9 del mattino e si finisce alle 17,00, con una pausa pranzo di un'ora.

Per quanto riguarda la vita a Shanghai, invece, è un'esperienza incredibile.

Quando sono partito non avrei mai immaginato di incontrare così tante persone e divertirmi così tanto. Tramite Project Abroad sono presenti una quindicina di ragazzi, suddivisi in appartamenti con circa tre o quattro persone per appartamento. L'età va dai 19 a 24 anni e sono tutti di diverse nazionalità. Shanghai è una città enorme, c'è di tutto, si trova sempre qualcosa da fare; la vita notturna è fantastica, i locali in cui andare sono tantissimi e molto belli.

Avere a che fare con i cinesi è divertente, in quanto bisogna esprimersi a gesti, poiché, nei locali non frequentati da occidentali, in pochi parlano inglese. Sono tutti disponibili e gentili ed è difficile trovare qualcuno scortese. Il principale mezzo di trasporto è la metro, particolarmente pulita e efficiente, arriva quasi ovunque nella città; l'unico problema sono le ore di punta!

Sono qua da tre settimane, e non posso fare altro che parlare bene della mia esperienza.

Volunteers' Corner



The History of Zhabei District

From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, China's national capitalism was at the initial stage of development and the number of factories run by China's capitalists was on the rise. Owing to the vastness of the vacant land in Zhabei and the convenience of transportation provided by Suzhou Creek, Huning Railway (Shanghai-Nanjing) and Songhu Railway (Wusong-Shanghai), a large amount of capital flushed into Zhabei, and consequently many a factory sprung up like mushrooms. In 1904, the Commercial Press bought over 80 mu (note: one mu equals one-fifteenth of a hectare or one sixth of an acre) of land east of Baoshan Road, where a new large-scaled publishing house was built. The newly-built Commercial Press consisted of the department of general affairs, the printing house, the translating and editing office, etc. The business activities of the Commercial Press in Zhabei contributed a great deal to the prosperity of Baoshan Road and the operation of Songhu Railway and Huning Railway as well as the establishment of railway stations. Looking back on the history of Zhabei, a conclusion can be drawn that from the very beginning the development of Zhabei was closely connected with commerce and transportation, and with the flow and accumulation of resources, capital and human resources. Therefore, the development history of Zhabei was inevitably deeply steeped in the culture related to transportation, the second world war, and commerce.



No Facebook

For those of you who do not know, Mainland China does not allow you to use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and many other websites that you've grown to love. Special administrative districts such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are exempt and pose no issues while accessing these websites. Blocking such websites has been Mainland China's attempt to control uprisings and/or riots from happening, like the ones in the Middle East. Most people, if not all, will feel disconnected from home. To some people, it's like you vanished, because Facebook has been a popular channel of communicating in recent years. So to get around this most foreigners have a VPN, which allows you to access any website as if you were home.

The vast majority of the foreigners here use the free VPN's, which, after a while, always seem to stop working for one reason or another. Using the free VPN's here is a like a cat and mouse game, they are constantly getting bought-out or shutdown. I've noticed over my time here that it's definitely best to purchase a VPN, instead of using the free ones. They are faster and dependable and the free ones are slow in comparison.

Another major website that still has issues here is Google. Fresh in everyone's memories is last years falling out between Mainland China and Google. So you still cannot access Google.com.cn, all that exists is a simple screenshot of Google.com.cn.



Once you click on the toolbar you are automatically redirected to Hong Kong Google. While using Google here its notorious for not working as well as it does at home whether you use Google.com or Google.HK, there are times that your search is terminated for whatever reason. So using Gmail chat can be a pain.

Social Activities In October

October Social Events - 2011			
DATE	TIME	PLACE	PROGRAMME
Wednesday, October 12	8pm	1221	Shanghainess Dinner
Friday, October 20	6:30pm	Golden Eagle	Dolar Shop
Thursday, October 27	8pm	The Bulldog	Quiz Night

Join our official Facebook Group: Projects Abroad China – The Official Group

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.china>

Read our monthly newsletters.

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/china/newsletters-from-china/>

See what is going on with Projects Abroad! Read our Country Blog!

<http://www.mytripblog.org/>