

September 2011 Edition: Issue 58

# ProjectsAbroad



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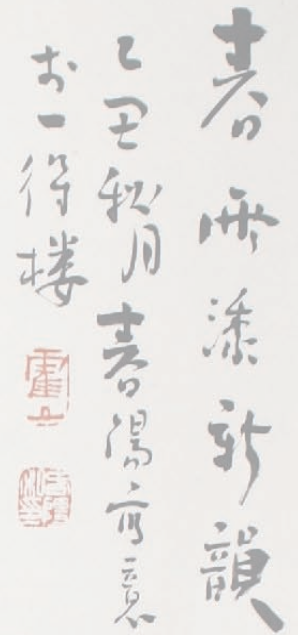
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Projects Abroad China welcomes you!

Fall is finally here; let's see how long it lasts because winters in Shanghai creep in fast. For those who will be joining us soon we plan to make your stay here in China a remarkable one. We look forward to giving you the ultimate Chinese experience and the beginning of international friendships from our weekly social events.

In this month's issue, you will read three different experiences from three volunteers; Todd who has a Journalism placement in Shanghai, Sandra who has a Law placement in Chengdu and Nick who also has a Law placement in Chengdu. This month's feature is about the Mid-Autumn Festival, a traditional Chinese holiday.

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

## Chinese National Day

Chinese National Day is on October 1<sup>st</sup> and for this public holiday the government gives seven days holiday. I found out recently that they give seven days off to develop the tourism and restaurant industries, they call this sort of economic activity *jià rì jīngjì*. All of the volunteers have a weeks worth of free time here, so most of them are using this time to travel. Undoubtedly most volunteers are going to Beijing; they have made plans to try the new speed train that will get you from Shanghai to Beijing in 5 hours, whereas, in the past, it would take between 10-12hours to travel to Beijing. There are two new rules for taking the speed trains that I've learned from the volunteers: to buy a ticket you must bring your passport and to take the speed train to Beijing you must purchase the ticket 10 days in advance. Those volunteers that are going to Beijing cut it pretty close but managed to make it alright.

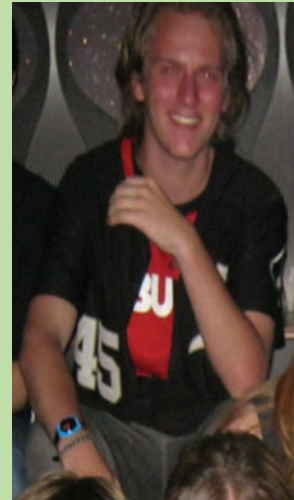
Other volunteers plan to travel to closer cities such as Hangzhou and Suzhou, which are both in neighboring provinces. Suzhou is a famous water town and is only half an hour from Shanghai by speed train. It is full of traditional gardens and canals. Hangzhou is my personal favorite, I recommend all volunteers go. It's very relaxing and very clean; it's a big difference from being in the hustle & bustle of Shanghai. For the rest of the volunteers they are just going to bask in Shanghai and enjoy all that the city has to offer. Overall it seems as if everyone will enjoy their holiday, the only downside is that we are required to work seven days straight after the seven day holiday.



## Life in Shanghai

**Todd Blumenthal from Australia**

Journalism (4 months )



My first impression of Shanghai was that of a metropolis focused on being the most prosperous city in China through its constant development and its attractiveness to wealthy tourists. Though it is true that many expats with heavy wallets visit Shanghai and that new buildings seem to be erected every day, through the months I've spent here I've found that Shanghai is just so much more than this. I arrived at 4am and was dangerously sleep deprived so I really can't use my first impression to judge Shanghai but in the following weeks I would experience some of the best times in my life so far and those weeks are what I'm going to use as my first impression. Now there are some things you must get used to in this city. The constant stares from locals can somewhat intimidate you, and even when you stare right back at them they just keep on looking. People can also be extremely rude here, there is zero sense of order and you see this at its fullest when you queue for the Metro, nobody will go out of their way to help you out.

The weather is another thing all together as it is absolutely insane during this time of the year. You wake up in the morning and its 35 degrees and blue skies, then walk downstairs to find torrential rain spitting in your face. Luckily the pros of Shanghai greatly out way the cons. Food, among other things, is ridiculously cheap here and to eat the food is to experience an entirely different culture unto itself. My personal favorite has been the various Shanghainese dumplings available throughout the city. Roaming tea houses and local food stands are another bonus of exploring Shanghai. Work experience in Shanghai has been great for me also; it's a completely different environment to participate in.

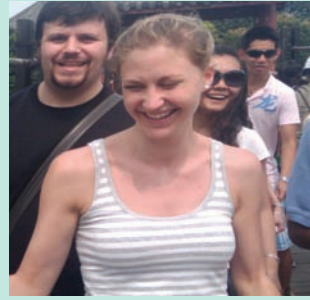
The Journalism project at “That’s Shanghai” magazine has given me opportunity to interview some of China’s most interesting and successful people, while also allowing me to see Shanghai from a different point of view. I’ve received free invites and tickets to a lot of events happening in Shanghai so I have been able to experience the city more directly through all that’s going on. While you may encounter some unfriendly individuals in Shanghai, a lot of the locals I’ve met can be very welcoming. I routinely play basketball with a bunch of Chinese students in their 20’s who don’t speak a word of English, the language barrier isn’t really a big a problem as some make it out to be.

The silk market was a blast to visit and the clothes there are simply incredible, in quality and in how cheap they were. Haggling is a new skill I’ve picked up here in Shanghai, not because I really love to haggle, but because it is kind of a necessity for foreigners living here. You need to use it everywhere from clothing stores to fruit stands to electronic departments. The more cultural sites have been really great to visit as well, Yuyuan Gardens and the Shanghai Museum gave a feel to the China of yesteryear and both were loaded with classical Chinese architecture. So far I’ve loved everything I’ve done in Shanghai, and there’s still a huge amount of things I have yet to experience in this city, which sadly I won’t have enough time to do. You meet great people here and the times I spent with a lot of them have been nothing short of fantastic, I definitely plan on coming back here at some point in my life.

## **My Experience in Chengdu**

**Sandra from Sweden**

(Law 1 month)



Four weeks in Chengdu, China, have now come to an end. It has been four amazing weeks that I will never forget. I remember when I first got out of the airplane, at Chengdu Airport: the heat, the noises and the smells, everything is so different from home. But I got used to it in a couple of days. Time flies by here, literally.

My name is Sandra, I'm 22 years old and I live in Uppsala, Sweden, where I study Law. I wanted to do something exiting, but still useful during my summer break. When I found the Law placement on Projects Abroad's webpage I made up my mind right away - I'm going to China!

I didn't know what to expect regarding my placement. Would I be given assignments that where to difficult for me to solve? I had no experience what so ever, and had only been studying Law for three semesters in Sweden. I was placed at Ying Ke Law Firm, and I was given a Supervisor. My work assignments consisted research and peer review of contracts. Besides my independent work I participated in meetings, hearings, prison visits and court trails. I also visited a number of Chinese authorities and legal institutions. My placement has been everything I hoped for, and so much more. I've learned a lot about the Chinese law system, and got the opportunity to compare it with the Swedish system and I got a useful insight in the Chinese business culture. I was also taken to dinners by my Supervisor, who introduced me to his family and friends, judges and other lawyers.

So, this is what I did during my working days in Chengdu. But that's only one part of my experience here. In the evenings the volunteers usually went out for dinner together. We were a group with about ten people, with someone leaving and someone new arriving every week. I'm so glad that I got the opportunity to get to know them all. It's weird (in a good way of course) that you can travel half way around the world, and find that you have a new little family here, a "Chengdu-family". I'm really going to miss them all!

During the weekends we explored the city. Chengdu is a big city, and you can tell that it's developing. On one hand a lot of the things here feel very "China-traditional", and it's obvious they don't see foreign people that often. On the other hand the city feels pretty modern, with a new metro, nice cars and businessmen and women everywhere. When you visit Chengdu, you also get the opportunity to try food that is Sichuan-traditional. Prepare yourself for a dining experience beyond the ordinary. The food here can be really good, and it's fun to go out to eat with the other volunteers. When you go out and eat with Chinese friends it will be even more exciting though!

Since the people don't speak English (in general) the Chinese lessons have been useful. It's a difficult language to learn, especially in four weeks. But you don't have to learn much to make people happy and impressed. They really appreciate when you try to use a few words. I remember a presentation I had, where I knew that many weren't English speaking. I started with "Nǎo, wǒ jiào Sandra, Wǒ shì ruìdiǎn rén", had the rest of my presentation in English, and finished with "Xièxie", and got applause. That's all it takes.

I can't compare my Chinese experience to anything else I've ever done. It's so different from Sweden and other countries I've visited. I think that's why I liked it so much. China is China, and we can't change that. They have their own way for sure. China, I'll be back!

## **My Chengdu Story**

### **Nick Alexander From America**

(Law 2 months)



My name is Nick Alexander and I'm a 22 year old American Law student. I came to China in order to work at a Law firm, hoping to gain experience in the International Law arena. In addition, I lived with a host family in order to improve my Chinese language skills. My internship was at the Zhong Lun Law Firm in Chengdu. I can honestly say that my time in China and with my law firm was one of the most enriching experiences of my life. Not only did I learn a lot of things about law in China in general, but I also had first hand access to Chinese culture both in a professional setting and in a more relaxed social setting.

Firstly, my placement was a great fit. My work colleagues were incredibly welcoming and excited to introduce me to Chinese legal culture. They provided me with numerous documents and information regarding the law in China. In addition, I was given access to certain legal documents and contracts in order to gain an understanding of how international commercial transactions take place. One of my main jobs was conducting research on the legal systems in countries like the United States, Canada and England in order to provide my colleagues with answers to questions that they had regarding the international business ventures they were conducting. I learned a tremendous amount of beneficial information during as short time with my law firm. I'm incredibly grateful for this experience.

Additionally, my host family was incredible. My home stay mom went out of her way to make sure that I was comfortable in my environment. She really made me feel like I was a member of the family and I am sure that we will remain in contact.

Projects Abroad provided me with a life-changing experience that I could not have made happen on my own. It was a great program and I will always cherish my time in Chengdu. I am sure that this experience will have a tremendous impact on my future life and career. I would seriously recommend Projects Abroad China to anyone who is interested in working in any kind of international field. It gives you great exposure and it is a rewarding experience.

# Volunteers' Corner



## INTRODUCTION OF PUDONG NEW AREA

Located in the east of Shanghai, Pudong New Area lies at the mid-point of China's coastline where the Yangtze River intersects with the sea, adjacent to the downtown area of Shanghai abundant in solid economic foundation, backed by the rich and populous Yangtze River Delta in the north and facing the vast Pacific. With the annual average temperature of 16.2°C, it has distinct seasons and mild climate.

As an important traffic hub in Shanghai, with key functional terminals of Yangshan Deep Water Port, Pudong International Airport and Waigaoqiao Port Area located along over 100-kilometer coastline, Pudong has water-land-air traffic system boasting advanced international logistics port, air transport, railway transport and intercity expressway, greatly shortening the distance with the world.

Pudong is growing to be a stage for China-foreign cultural exchange, a big market demonstrating the Shanghai-style<sup>1</sup> culture and a new district with cultural development potential and prospect. In the past 19 years, Pudong has built a number of famous cultural facilities and tourism attractions, such as Oriental Pearl Tower, Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, Shanghai International Convention Center, Shanghai Ocean Aquarium, Shanghai Oriental Art Center and Lingang Di-shui Lake. As the important platforms that enrich Shanghai people's cultural life, they have also improved Pudong's comprehensive development environment and living environment and urban civilization, attracting a large number of guests and friends.



## Mid-Autumn Festival

Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the most traditional Chinese holiday's. It was celebrated on September 12th this year. Since the Mid-Autumn Festival is a traditional holiday it is held on the Chinese calendar or the lunar calendar every 15th of the eighth month, which means it changes yearly. There are two popular theories or folktales on how this festival came about. I think the one dealing with overthrowing the Mongols, sounds more plausible.

The Chinese threw off their Mongol oppressors during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The Chinese planned to rebel but had a hard time coming up with a full plan, because the Mongols were brutal and would punish the people if they even suspected a rebellion was being planned. It is said that Moon-cakes, which the Mongols did not eat were the perfect means of transporting plans for the rebellion. Families were instructed not to eat the Moon cakes until the day of the Moon Festival, which is when the rebellion took place. On the day of the festival, the Chinese broke open the Moon cake, read the instructions to raise a rebellion and together united and overthrew the Mongols.

To remember this day when the Chinese overthrew the Mongols the Chinese would eat Moon cakes whenever it is Mid-Autumn Festival. Moon cakes are made with sweet fillings of nuts mashed red beans, lotus-seed paste or Chinese dates, wrapped in a pastry. Sometimes a cooked egg yolk can be found in the middle and with ice-cream. They are very dense and are made to be cut into quarters.



# Social Activities In September

September Social Events 2011		
Friday Sept. 8	7:30pm	DongBei Dinner
Saturday Sept. 10	2pm	Century Park
Friday Sept. 16	8pm	Cottons Dinner
Saturday Sept. 24	3pm	Laser Tag

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