Getting Settled

Well after a couple hours of delay in Chicago we finally made it to Shanghai! The drive to our campus through the lights of the city at night was mesmerizing. For many of us this is our first experience in a city of such magnitude. The majority of our hour long drive was spent on an elevated highway that had to be at least 100 meters off the ground and surround by skyscrapers lined with lights. It was clear that we were not in Indiana any more. The first few days here were spent adjusting to the 13 hour time difference and familiarizing ourselves with the city (a few of us getting lost in the process).

For the first 6 weeks of our studies here we will be saying in Xujiahui, a part of Shanghai which is about a 20 min metro ride to the center of downtown (shown on map). This has allowed us to easily travel to all of the main sights within the city. We truly are in the heart of it all. In only a few more weeks we will be moving to the engineering campus in the Minhang district, which is roughly an hour from the city so all of us have been...
taking full advantage of our prime location in the city while it lasts.

Food

As most people can imagine, the food here is dramatically different than a typical American college student diet found at Purdue. We traded out of pizza, peanut butter and jelly, and Chipotle for rice, noodles, and vegetables. Most of us have truly enjoyed the eastern diet since we’ve been here, though. The dining court on campus is open everyday and serves many typical Chinese dishes for very little cost; it is the go to place for lunch during the week. There are endless dining options off campus, and as a group we’ve likely visits hundreds of places already, so I’d like to highlight a few to give everyone an idea of the selection. It is also important to note that Shanghai is very accommodating to the many people on the trip with restrictive diets such and vegetarians.

Pulled Noodles: Delicious hand pulled noodles with your choice of vegetables and meat served on a platter or as hot soup.

Hot Pot: Essentially Chinese style fondue, but instead you cook meat, vegetables, and tofu in boiling water with seasoning. It’s a ton of fun and delicious!

Food Carts: At most street corners in the evenings, lines form at carts that serve stir-fry made right in front of your eyes.

Grocery Store: A five-minute walk away, located on the lower floor all a mall, the grocery here is a great place to stock up on snacks for your room or fill that American craving like peanut butter.

Shanghai Brewery: Buy one get one free burgers on Tuesdays, that’s all you need to know.

McDonalds: Nicer than McDonald’s in the US. I know some people have already caved in, and Mickey D’s even delivers here.

Quotes

"I feel so lucky to be here, just in the first few weeks we’ve been here, I can tell this is going to be one of the most memorable times of the life” -Katie Desmond

"The food here has been Heaven in my mouth" -Andrew Fan

"The people are nice, the city is massive, the attractions are many and the food is very, very different.” -Michael Bednara

“The traditional dancing made me feel goofy and uncoordinated and my hands were frozen, but the attempt was humorous and well worth it.” - Jon Tucco

“That Chongming cake was hella good” – Annie Tarabini

“Someone asked me for one word to describe Shanghai, I responded ‘interstellar’. Because when I arrived here, I felt as if I was in another world.” –William VanBuskirk

“The locals were very enthusiastic about teaching us how to make dumplings!” –Trevor Tschosik
Classes

Here at the downtown campus, all 35 of us are taking Inter Cultural Teamwork with our Purdue professor, Diane Atkinson along with Chinese Culture with our teacher Weiqi. In Diane’s class we are learning about the six Hofstede dimensions of a culture. We are comparing and contrasting China and America. We have found that there is not one right or wrong, but rather just preferences of how things should be done within a country. In Weiqi’s class, we are learning all about Chinese culture. She is very excited to teach us and keeps the energy high. We are all learning great things about the culture that have come in handy while touring the city, especially when she tells us about scams and table manners.

For those of us who are new to Chinese language, we are taking that course as well. Our group is split in half so it is a smaller class. Positive things have been said about both teachers. Instead of learning characters, we are learning ‘pinyin’ which is Chinese with English letters. This has been proven useful while speaking to locals around the city. Many of us are taking ME 375 online as well. This is our only class where the letter grade matters. Since it is only one class, as a whole we are staying on top of it and getting nice homework grades.
Activities

Professor Atkinson has given us, quite possibly, the best project ever. She has made a list of 25 tags around the city. These are things that we should do while we are in Shanghai and when we do them; we have to take a selfie. These are things that really introduce you to the city and get you out of your comfort zone. We have been using these tags to start our adventures around the city. Some of our favorites include the Yuyuan Gardens, the Bund, Peace Hotel, Nanjing Road, People’s Square, wet markets, acrobat shows, marriage markets, and temples. Besides the tags, we are having a blast trying new restaurants, street food, bakeries, and finding our way around Shanghai.

Field Trip to Chong Ming

Last Wednesday and Thursday we took a class trip to Chong Ming Island, a beautiful nature preserve just off the coast of Shanghai. The whole experience was very exciting and it was nice to get out of the city for the first time. The purpose of the trip, which was coordinated by our amazing culture teacher Sa Weiqi, was to get to know local Shanghai people and learn about traditional parts of Chinese culture. Activities included multiple traditional family style meals, roundtable discussions, nature walks, preparing food, mahjong, karaoke, calligraphy, an incense ceremony, Chinese dancing, and Tai Chi. Everyone really enjoyed the trip and learned a lot about Chinese culture.

The ETA and GEARE programs in China are made possible by a long standing partnership between Purdue University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Any questions or requests for pictures can be sent directly to the editors of this newsletter.