



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD CHINA

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the March 2014 edition of the Projects Abroad China Newsletter. This month we welcomed volunteers from Italy, Holland, USA, Germany, Denmark, UK and Switzerland, to our two destinations, Chengdu and Shanghai. They are all working in a whole range of different exciting projects which includes journalism, sports, teaching, medical, care, law and a Mandarin language school.

We have not only welcomed volunteers, but also a new member of staff to the Projects Abroad China team; Elaine Gao is our new regional manager for Chengdu. Elaine's introductory article is to follow in this newsletter.

Also included in this newsletter is a message from George Underwood, our British journalism volunteer, who talks about his 'crazy experience' in China and the popular free magazine whom he is writing for. We have Danielle Pezzini, our Italian journalism volunteer, who is writing for a big Shanghainese newspaper. Marcel Schwarz, our German business volunteer sharing his experience at his business

placement. Stef Van Assche, our Dutch journalist volunteer, informs us about what it is like to work for Shanghai's biggest expat magazine. Victor Liew, our Australian medical volunteer, has been working in the anesthesia department in one of the biggest hospitals in China, and last but not least Tass Eulberg, our sports volunteer, who is teaching sports in a few schools around Shanghai.

Together with all the brilliant work from the volunteers, China is brightening up as flowers are blooming and we are thawing. It's time to get rid of our coats, hats and gloves due to spring's arrival! Spring in China is considered by many to be the best time of the year. It is no longer freezing and we are not yet in the sweltering heat. Differing from other parts of the world, spring in China lasts for only six or seven weeks. Therefore we will enjoy every hour!

We hope you enjoy our March Newsletter. We are all looking forward to a busy April as early in the month there is a national holiday for 'Tomb Sweeping' day. Find out more in April's edition.

Xie Xie, thanks, obrigado, dan ku vel, graci gracias, tak, danybad, kapunkap, es toothe, merci beacoup, danke schon!



RICHARD EGAN
INFORMATION MANAGER

George Underwood

(Journalism) - UK



Shanghai took my breath away from the moment I landed here and I am constantly astounded by the scale of the place. The Pudong Area, where I live, feels like it could be in a completely different city to the upmarket central areas or the traditional Old Towns, so I feel like I'm getting several travel experiences in one place. There's something around every corner and the endless tourist sites and vibrant nightlife mean that I'll never run out of things to do. It's great that all of the volunteers here are friendly with each other and always willing to take advantage of all of these opportunities.

The differences between China and the UK were overwhelming at first. The lack of people who are able to communicate in English and the fact that Chinese characters are incomprehensible to a European are a bit unsettling, but I've found that just throwing myself into the culture is the best way to overcome this. I've discovered so many neat shops, traditions and sights by doing this. I found that there are more home comforts, such as western food, around here if I ever need to relax a bit – which is good, because otherwise I would get sick of rice and spicy food!

Working at Time Out Shanghai has been a great way to get to know the city better whilst also getting the kind of work experience that would be hard to find in the UK. It's especially nice working in an office with a mix of both Chinese and English employees, so that it's easier to fit in but also a good experience of a different kind of work culture.

Victor Liew (Medical) – Australia



My time in Shanghai has been phenomenal. It is difficult to put experiences down in words, but here are some of the key parts for me.

The nightlife in Shanghai is incredible. Westerners, and friends of Westerners, gain free entry and drinks at nightclubs. We have been to a different clubs almost every time we went out and none have failed to impress. Live performances seem to be a big deal in Shanghai nightlife, and I will miss these when I go back home. The volunteers you meet to go out with you are a great bunch, and really makes the experience worthwhile. I had never thought I would meet such an easy-going, friendly bunch of people from all parts of the world.

The people of Shanghai are my second mention. I have had some dealings with mainland Chinese migrants back home, but this reflects nothing on my experiences here in Shanghai. It is hard to

describe the people of Shanghai, suffice to say that I have learnt a lot about these people during my time here, and it has really changed my view on China as a whole.

Finally we touch on the city of Shanghai. The city, with all its beautiful skyscrapers, not so beautiful aspects and some downright disgusting aspects comes together marvellously. We, the volunteers, are constantly amazed by how we grow to like the city more and more each day, despite it being so different to what we are used to at 'home'.

I end off by saying that Shanghai epitomizes the 'work hard, play hard' mentality, and that when in the city, you feel like your opportunities are endless.

Don't be afraid of something different, come to Shanghai!

Stefan over zijn ervaringen bij het journalistiek project in China



Voor ik vertrok dacht ik dat ik na een maand in Shanghai alles wel gezien zou hebben. Na hier een week te verblijven wist ik al hoe fout ik was. Elke dag brengt wel iets nieuws, interessants of vreemds. De stad is enorm, en ik probeer deze stap voor stap te verkennen, want de verschillende districten

zijn fascinerend op hun eigen manier. Over de verschillende toeristische attracties ga ik niet uitweiden want er zijn er gewoon te veel om op te sommen.

Shanghai zou gemakkelijk een klein land kunnen zijn, met een populatie van 24 miljoen, meer dan dubbel zoveel als België. Het eten is gevarieerd, en enorm lekker. Het vergt wel enige aanpassing, want met stokjes eten is niet zo gemakkelijk als het lijkt.

Maar als je ze driemaal per dag gebruikt wil je al gauw niet meer terug naar vork, lepel en mes.

De stage waar Projects Abroad me heeft geplaatst is nog leuker dan ik had verwacht. Elke dag moet ik een zestal artikels schrijven, met een interview elke week. Dat klinkt nogal saai en monotoon, maar de verhalen die je hier in China tegenkomt tarten elke verbeelding. Enkele voorbeelden: de Chinese overheid die de dodelijke vervuiling als iets positief probeert te verkopen omdat het een perfect anti-laserschild vormt, Chinese toeristen die gevechten starten overal ter wereld voor de gekste dingen, een vrouw die haar man neersteekt vanwege een geschil over een soap, een boogschutterclub die levende kippen als doelwitten gebruikt, een vrouw wiens maag ontplofte vanwege een combinatie van te veel alcohol en een elektrisch chirurgie mes, of een verveeld koppel dat naar het ziekenhuis moest na een uit de hand gelopen sexspel met een hardgekookt ei. Buiten de rare verhaaltjes zijn er ook veel interessant onderwerpen, zoals ivoersmokkel, vervuiling,

wereldeconomie, Chinese cultuur en geschiedenis, en zoveel meer. Kortom, elke dag leer ik bij.

Na mijn stage volg ik meestal een of andere Kungfules, wat hier in Shanghai verbazend weinig wordt beoefend door Chinezen. De meeste studenten zijn andere expats, vriendelijke en interessante mensen. De meesters zijn zeer getalenteerd en bijna allemaal hebben ze ettelijke decennia ervaring. De leerwijzes zijn rudimentair, lichaamstaal en enkele kernwoorden Chinees en Engels, maar het is effectief. En zo oefen ik mijn Chinees; bonus!

Ik volg Chinese les tweemaal per week, en het is verbazend gemakkelijk om te leren. Gebrek aan grammatica is een opluchting voor Europeanen, en de woordenschat valt ook goed mee. Als je het dagelijks hoort spreken door ongeveer iedereen – de meerderheid van de bevolking in Shanghai spreekt amper Engels – pik je wel wat dingen op. Daar komt ook nog bij dat het gewoon



leuk is om te leren. En het staat zeker goed op je CV.

Het leven in China is zo anders dan in België, maar indien de lucht hier minder vervuild was zou ik het zeker overwegen om naar hier te verhuizen. Mijn dag begint om half 9, en tijdens

de week kom ik meestal pas thuis om half 10, 10. Lange dagen, zeer vermoeiend, maar het is het waard.

Danielle Pezzini (Journalism)



Lo shock culturale che si prova nell'arrivare in un paese così distante da noi come la Cina è sicuramente notevole: i volti, la lingua, il cibo, lo stile di vita, gli atteggiamenti delle persone....quanto di più distante dall'occidente si possa immaginare.

Tuttavia ci vuole davvero poco per abituarsi al cambiamento e cominciare così a godersi le infinite opportunità che offre una città come Shanghai.

Dopo pochi giorni in questa pazzesca metropoli ci si sente subito a casa. Le sue immense strade, i suoi enormi palazzi, i suoi mille odori, i suoi divertimenti...diventano immediatamente parte della tua vita quotidiana e farne a meno si rivela presto difficile.

Certo bisogna arrivare in Cina con la mente aperta e pronti a qualunque cosa, perché da queste parti davvero tutto può succedere. Ci si ritrova catapultati in un mondo totalmente diverso da quello a cui siamo abituati e che, per quanto a lungo ci si possa fermare, non si finisce mai di scoprire.

Lavorare in Cina può essere difficile all'inizio: la discrezione radicata nella cultura dei colleghi cinesi può essere scambiata all'inizio per indifferenza, ma

non ci vuole molto tempo per scoprire che in realtà sono persone molto disponibili. Ciononostante, con il giusto atteggiamento mentale e il giusto spirito di iniziativa, qualsiasi esperienza lavorativa si può trasformare in un'opportunità di crescita. Il giornalismo in Cina è vissuto in maniera profondamente diversa da quanto accade nei paesi occidentali e il primo impatto può essere spiazzante. Non esiste la "caccia alla notizia", ma solo un'attenta analisi delle fonti e un'accurata selezione degli eventi più significativi da riportare. Il tutto, naturalmente, sotto il severo controllo della censura governativa.

Al Global Times non mi assegnano compiti specifici, ma mi lasciano libera iniziativa di scegliere le storie più interessanti da raccontare. Una vera e propria sfida per uno straniero che poco conosce della città e che ha accesso solo ai media in lingua inglese. Una sfida che, se accolta nel modo giusto, può aiutare ad aprire la mente e a conoscere davvero in profondità un paese e una cultura tanto diversa dalla nostra. Il contatto giornaliero con la Cina "vera", i suoi eventi culturali e i suoi fatti di cronaca è probabilmente il modo migliore per comprendere davvero questo paese di cui tanto si parla in occidente, ma di cui poco si conosce davvero.

Ad ogni modo, le normali difficoltà di adattamento diventano presto l'ultimo problema quando si condivide questa avventura con i ragazzi di Projects Abroad. Le cene in compagnia, le serate nelle affollate discoteche della città, le escursioni nei weekend, le emozioni di condividere con altri ogni momento della propria vita lontano da casa.... sono forse questi gli aspetti più importanti del viaggio. Quelli che lo trasformano in un'esperienza realmente unica e indimenticabile.

Marcel Schwarz (Business)

Meine Zeit in Shanghai war wirklich sehr schön. Seitens Projects Abroad wurde ich stets sehr gut betreut, und ich konnte mich immer auf die Organisation verlassen. Beispielsweise ging auf dem Hinflug von Frankfurt nach Peking und von Peking nach Shanghai mein Gepäck verloren. Bis spät in die Nacht hat mir eine Betreuerin geholfen, schnellstmöglich an meine Sachen zu kommen, was letztendlich auch funktioniert hat.

Ich habe in einer Wohngemeinschaft mit vier Mitbewohnern in der Pujian Road gewohnt. Die Wohnung war richtig schön und es hat uns an nichts gefehlt. Kleinere Supermärkte waren innerhalb fünf Minuten zu Fuß erreichbar – die nächste Metro Station (Lancun Road) ebenfalls. Auch ein größerer Supermarkt war

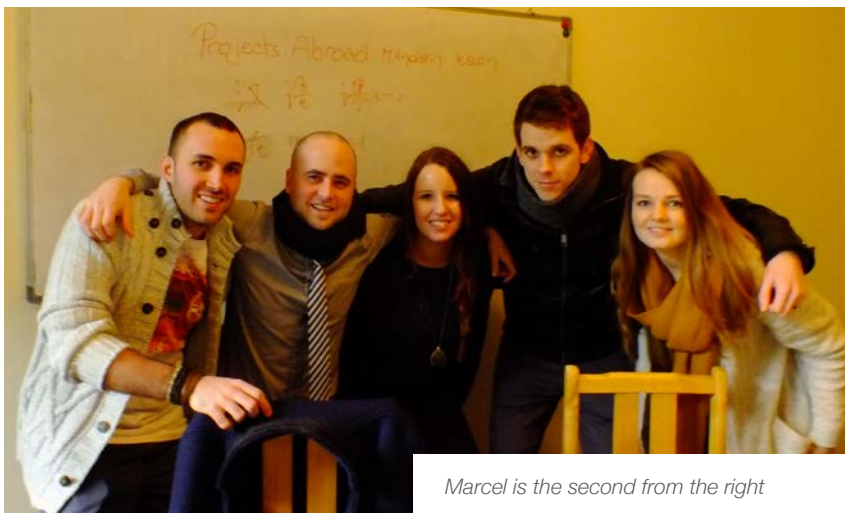
in unmittelbarer Nähe (ca. zehn Minuten Fußweg).

Zu meinem Arbeitsplatz habe ich insgesamt 30 Minuten gebraucht. Meine Kollegen waren stets sehr hilfsbereit und freundlich. Da ich vegetarisch lebe, was teilweise nicht einfach ist in Shanghai, haben meine Kollegen in der Mittagspause immer nach passenden Restaurants gesucht. Teilweise haben Sie vorher sogar angerufen, wenn Sie sich nicht sicher waren. Da ich nur vier Wochen in Shanghai war und somit eigentlich nur zwei Wochenenden für Besichtigungen hatte, hat mir mein Supervisor oftmals angeboten, einen Tag unter der Woche frei zu nehmen. Somit konnte ich insgesamt fünf Städte besuchen, worüber ich sehr froh bin.

Meine Aufgaben im Büro waren relativ vielfältig und

mit großer Verantwortung verbunden. Da ich für eine Consulting-Firma arbeitete, welche sich auf das Organisieren von internationalen Konferenzen im Luftfahrt/-fracht-Bereich spezialisiert hat, hatte ich täglichen Kontakt zu potenziellen Teilnehmern. Ich telefonierte, schrieb E-Mails, überlegte mir interessante Diskussionsthemen für die Konferenzen und plante neue Veranstaltungen. Insgesamt war es sehr interessant, und bei Fragen bekam ich jederzeit Unterstützung – auch abseits des Berufslebens.

Durch die ca. einmal wöchentlich stattfindenden „Socials“, organisiert von Projects Abroad, konnte man schnell Kontakt zu allen anderen Praktikanten aufbauen. Dadurch wurde man sehr schnell in die Gruppe integriert und man hatte immer viele Leute um sich, mit denen man beispielsweise abends weggehen konnte. Unter der Woche haben wir uns häufig zum Essen getroffen oder sind in verschiedene Karaoke-Bars gegangen. An den Wochenenden sind wir dann zusammen in die Nachbarstädte gefahren oder sind in einige Diskotheken gegangen. Langweilig wird es hier sicher nicht! Ich kann es jedem nur empfehlen!



Marcel is the second from the right

Freiwilligendienst in China

Tass- Our German teaching and sports volunteer



Drei Monate vergehen wie im Flug. Gerade ist man in Shanghai angekommen, wird man hineingeworfen in eine Welt, die vor Vitalität nur so pulsiert. Ein schnelllebiger Alltag, zahlreiche soziale Events mit Projects Abroad; und man hat schon die Hälfte seines Aufenthalts genossen. Auch wenn man bei meinem Engagement in einer Grundschule für wenig privilegierte Kinder im Süden Shanghais sehr früh aufstehen musste, da die Busfahrt an manchen Tagen durchaus 2 Stunden dauern konnte, war

es doch eine sehr wichtige Erfahrung, mit den Kindern zusammen zu arbeiten, ihnen Englisch und Sportunterricht zu erteilen und mit ihnen in den Pausen Tischtennis zu spielen.

Nach 3 Monaten stand dann ein Arbeitsplatzwechsel an. Ich ging zu einer Fußballschule. Der Unterschied war enorm. Nachdem wir in der Grundschule weder Fenster noch Heizungen in den Klassenzimmern gehabt, hinter dem Schulhof die Slums begonnen hatten und eine katastrophale Infrastruktur geherrscht hatte, trainierten wir nun hauptsächlich westliche

Kinder auf den Plätzen von Privatschulen, die dermaßen gut ausgestattet waren, dass es mir beim ersten Mal die Sprache verschlug.

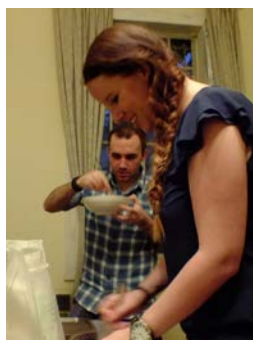
Neben der Arbeit hat man in Shanghai so viele Möglichkeiten, die Freizeit zu verbringen. Fitnessstudios, Tennisplätze, ausländische Fußball-Mannschaften, denen man sich anschließen kann, und so weiter.

Abschließend kann man sagen, dass die Zeit, ich denke unabhängig von dem Land, in dem man ist, einen unglaublich weiter bringt.

Dumpling Making Social



Every week, the Projects Abroad China team prepare a social event for our volunteers and we try and make these events as much of a Chinese cultural experience as possible. Food is one of the fundamental aspects within Chinese culture. According to KC Chang, “food is at the centre of, or at least it accompanies or symbolizes, many social interactions.” This tradition goes back thousands of years, outliving any form of colonial rule or Chinese dynasty. Therefore the Projects Abroad China team thought that it was a given to arrange a social that involves making one of the many delicacies in China. This month eleven



of our volunteers got together to attempt to make what is potentially China's most famous delicacy, dumplings!

Wherever you go in China you will be sure to see people frying, sizzling, chopping, spinning dough, making noodles. Whether this is on the road side on a stall with one wok, or a fancy restaurant, the almost hypnotic aroma of Chinese herbs and spices is certain to delight your nostrils!

Chinese food has a whole variety of internal influences from the many provinces of China and wherever you travel in China each province will have their own delicacy. To name a few, in the Xinjiang province one of the main delicacies is the Xinjiang barbeque which is predominantly lamb. The Xinjiang province has a majority of Ughur, Muslim people and the province borders Tajikistan and Krgystan so the Xinjiang food is heavily influenced by these mountainous regions. In the Inner Mongolia province in China the food is heavily influenced by Mongolian cuisine. This is where the hot pot comes from! For those who don't know a hot pot it is basically a big stew that simmers while on the table and everyone on the table helps themselves. Delicious but will be sure to leave a stench on your breath for hours! As well as internal influences, Chinese food has been influenced by past European invasion. However I am most thankful to those in Northern China who created dumplings!

Although originating in Northern China, dumplings have become a delicacy nation-wide. The Chinese dumpling (in Chinese pinyin dumplings are called 'Jiaozi') can be fried, boiled or steamed. The fillings can vary

but predominately ground pork and vegetables wrapped in dough.

During this month's dumpling lesson the Projects Abroad team of staff and volunteers turned up at the class in time for dinner. The class started with an introduction by Kelly (the manager of our mandarin placement) about the origins of Chinese food and a brief about how to make the perfect dumpling. Then we all washed our hands and after an example from Kelly we started to prepare the dough and build the dumplings! The volunteers all took turns in mixing the filling, rolling the dough and making the final version, ready for the oven. After we were out of filling we boiled and ate! I was seriously impressed with the dumpling making skills of some of the volunteers, (some more than others! I think I was the worst.) and the finished product was as delicious as what you will find in a restaurant. The pictures will explain more about this day!

Looking forward to the next Projects Abroad China social!





Georgia Hill (UK) Volunteer story

Georgia (18) is our British volunteer who is carrying out her placement at a Mandarin school. During her short stay with us (one month) she is doing an intensive Mandarin course. Our Mandarin placement is in Xintandi (translated to English as 'Heaven & Earth'), a vibrant area in the French Concession. The French Concession is a region that was built for French settlement in the mid 19th Century and the area sort of looks like it has been teleported from Europe! Anyway I could go on about this all day, so back to Georgia.

Georgia will be studying Mandarin at Nottingham University starting in September this year. Eventually she wants to start a business in international buying/selling, particularly in the wine industry. 'I am learning Mandarin because I feel that this is essential for international business. I want to communicate directly with my customers. Also I want to start business in the wine industry and wine is becoming increasingly popular in China.' Georgia has been studying Mandarin back in the UK for two years. 'At first my parents advised me to start these lessons, but after I started I really enjoyed it.'

This is Georgia's first time in China. In her second year at university she will be moving to Ningbo (a city around two and

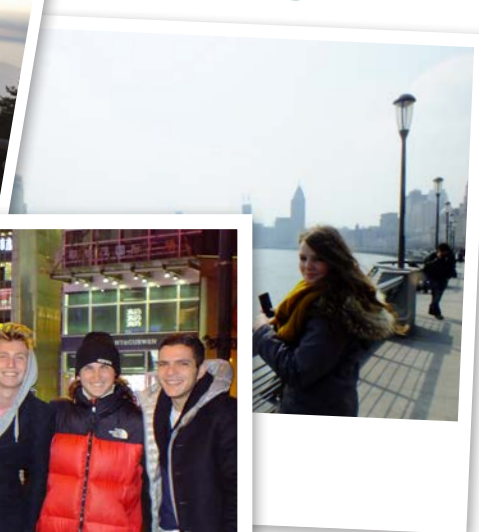
half hours' train ride from Shanghai) for a year, so one purpose of this trip was to see if she could spend a year here in the future. 'If I'm going to study Mandarin for three years and live in China for one year I wanted to make sure that I liked the place before making this commitment.' Therefore this trip was the 'make or break' for Georgia's plans to study Mandarin at university.

Georgia chose to study the Chinese language at Projects Abroad China's Mandarin placement because everything was organised for her. 'Everything has been set out - from the time I arrived to the time I leave. Projects Abroad arranged my accommodation and it's great living with volunteers from around the world. Everyone is very sociable and open-minded. There was a social event in my first week here, where the Projects Abroad staff and volunteers all met, so I made a lot of friends very quickly. The Projects Abroad staff showed me my placement on my second day and I started straight away. My Mandarin teacher is also very friendly and helpful.'



Georgia has been making excellent progress with her Mandarin. 'At the placement there are three books to complete. The first one is for beginners and the other two are intermediate and advanced. I have just completed the beginner book and that is a great feeling!'

Georgia is now coming into her final week with Projects Abroad. When speaking to her, I asked her whether this trip has helped her decide whether to go ahead with studying Mandarin at university. 'Although sometimes shocking, China is how I expected it to be. I am really enjoying my time here. I am now sure that I will study Mandarin at university and I'm looking forward to moving here!' Good news all round then!



HELLO APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 Tomb Sweeping Festival
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 A visit to the Shanghai Propaganda Museum Afternoon, meet at Changshu Lu (Line 7 Exit 2)
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 A tour of the ancient city of Shao Jialou Afternoon, meet at Shendu Highway (Line 8, Exit 1)
27	28	29	30			
Night River Tour Evening, meet East Nanjing Station (Line 2/10, Exit 2)				Table Tennis! Evening, meet at Yuanshen Stadium (Line 6 Exit 3)		

* Times to be confirmed. Contact Rich, on +86 (0)18221063387, for more info.

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