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First group of volunteers for summer programs  
30 June, 2009

## Shanghai Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange

June 2009

# Volunteer *Time*

## Returned Volunteer



Hi, my name is Emily Nowacki and I'm from the United States. I first traveled to Shanghai as a volunteer during the fall of 2007; now, I'm back and working as an intern for Xu Bo this summer. As a volunteer, I worked as an English teacher in the Zha Bei Primary School—it was incredible!

I would begin most mornings with 'English Corner' in the courtyard. For fifteen minutes, I would meet with a group of students outside of the classroom setting to have informal conversations and play games such as 'I Spy.'

During the week, I taught fifteen lessons and worked with students from Grade 2 to Grade 4. Despite their young age, all of my students were so enthusiastic and dedicated to learning. Their positive attitude was absolutely infectious! I would begin each class by asking the students a question, whether it be about their favorite food or sport or what they had done that weekend. The school provided me with a copy of their learning materials, which is what I followed while preparing my lessons. We'd generally be given a list of vocabulary words to review during each lesson. These words would be incorporated into dialogues that I would have the students act out in front of the class and fill-in-the-blank type questions that the students would answer. We would also play games to further their vocabulary. They were experts at 'Hangman' and loved to play. Whenever we had a few minutes left over, I would

teach the children words in Spanish and French. They were so excited to learn new things and would furiously write down everything that I said.

Shanghai is the perfect place to volunteer. Children are very inquisitive about foreigners and will want to know everything about you. They'll ask about where you're from, what you like to do, how old you are. . . You'll feel like a celebrity!

My school was just three bus stops away from the famed East Nanjing Rd. and People's Square, so I'd often spend my free time in that area. Shanghai is a massive place with so many distinct regions that wherever you go in the city, you'll surely find something interesting.

After I finished my placement and returned home, I found that I was thinking of Shanghai and all of the amazing people there daily. I wasn't sure I'd ever have the opportunity to return to the city that I had grown to love so deeply. I was so thrilled when I secured my internship at Xu Bo for the summer, and I love being back in Shanghai!

My days in China have undoubtedly been some of the best of my life and I will cherish them forever. Though being so far away from home can seem daunting, you have to make the most of your placement. You're sure to encounter some challenges while you're here, but I assure you that when you return home you'll look back at this experience with the utmost fondness. Enjoy every moment!



*Written by Emily Nowacki, Summer 2009*

# Volunteer Time

## Ben's experience in 3 schools and 2 locations



When preparing a paragraph on the last 4 months of my life it's quite hard to know where to start. Should I start with my 3 months living and working in Shanghai Pudong Foreign Language Primary School, or perhaps my one month living in Miangyang working in Anchang Lu Primary School and Ji Guan Kindergarten?

I turned up in Shanghai on my own with no idea of what to expect, I'd fobbed off my parents with excuses that I knew exactly what was happening and what I'd be doing when I arrived but to be perfectly honest I had no idea. None the less things turned out well and my jump into the unknown has paid off.

I can honestly say that this trip has changed my life, the experience to spend so long indulged in, as well as working along side, a different culture has had such a positive effect on every volunteer and I'm sure will continue to do so. This isn't exclusive to Chinese culture either, German, Mexican, Indian, Swedish, as well as any others you care to mention, are all drawn to Shanghai and the combination is what makes the city so special. I suppose the interesting thing about my placement in China was that I've worked in three schools in two totally separate provinces. This gave me an opportunity to see the urban and more rural china which thus enables me to have a wide perspective on the Chinese nation. I won't lie, it's been hard so If you're reading this thinking that teaching English and living in China are easy then I urge you to have a re-think but just read any of the volunteer stories you can find on the Xubo/Travel-To-Teach website, many of whom are friends of mine, and you'll see how much fun everyone has had in the process.

I started teaching in Shanghai with no experience and nothing to prepare me for what lay ahead. I was only 18 (now I'm old and wise at 19 – yes having a birthday in Shanghai was amazing) and I won't try and hide the fact that for the first four weeks or so I was permanently in a state of panic. What do I do if they don't listen? What if they don't like me? What if the

other teachers don't like how I teach? All I can say is that practice makes...well not perfect but a lot better.

Have you ever felt like wanting to know what it feels like to be famous? If you decide to go to Mianyang you will undoubtedly find out. Just today (my last day at my last school) I had to have a good 30 minutes worth of photo's with various teachers/students/other random Chinese people, as well as permanently being swarmed by hordes of children screaming "MR BEN! MR BEN! NICE TO MEET YOU MR BEN!" as well as letting them yank on my hairy arms... head's turn to follow you everywhere you go and even while in walmart buying supplies you'll undoubtedly hear someone you know calling your name. I really feel like I've made my mark. It might be a good idea to practice your signature too... giving out autographs can get a little crazy.

Despite being practically the only western person in Mianyang the teachers at the schools took real care over me (and sometimes this along with the culture difference I actually found it too much and therefore I'm glad I had my own apartment instead of staying with a teacher).

Without a shadow of a doubt these past 4 months will linger in my mind for years to come. In my opinion I defiantly felt most needed in Mianyang and I recommend volunteers to opt for choices outside of Shanghai.

Don't forget to bring extra cash for travelling, hard sleeper trains ftw! Shanghai, Zhengzhou, The Shaolin Temple Scenic Spot, Wuxi, Nanjing, Beijing, Hangzhou, Mingyang, Chengdu, Leshan, Guangzhou, Hong Kong are only the places I've been so far and I haven't even been "travelling" yet. There is so much to see so don't waste the opportunities and travelling doesn't need to be expensive if you are flexible!



I hope this small account of my adventure helps you to make a decision

*Written by Ben Holding, from Travel-to-Teach, Feb to June, 2009*

# Volunteer Time

## New Home Removal- Volunteer flat announcement

One of the most exciting moments in Shanghai Xu Bo is shifted to the new flat. Sure, it's tons of work and a lot of hassle but walking to the place and knowing it there is a great feeling inside. We are so proud of our new house and would like to show it off to all of the people, how special you are for us. Our volunteer flat had been shifted last week from Ming Hang District to now Xu Hui District, southwest of Shanghai which is located at the same building as Xu Bo Office, you can imagine how convenient it is just to take six minutes walk from the metro, line 4 and get off at DongAn Station, go out from exit 3, then turn right to go down straight, you may see the tall light-brown building, Everwin Garden, next to the bakery store. Because of our office is just up at the 25<sup>th</sup> floor, so volunteers can get help immediately if they need advice or help them to plan their journey during the weekend and so on.

Shanghai Xubo has been passing so many year's of experience from a small room with bringing in lot of volunteers in the past till now move to the convenience location, and has such a great environment that the place can make all volunteers enjoy their stay before taking their placement. There are two big bedrooms with shower rooms, kitchen, dining and living room with balcony, whenever you feel tired, don't hesitate to take an advantage of the club house, the facilities are including swimming pool, table tennis, tennis and gymnastic room, you definitely can come down to work out and refresh your mind right away. Our flat is on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, and there is almost no obstacle in front of the building, where all volunteers can drink and stand at the balcony with facing outside, enjoying the fantastic scenery, they would love to sit and share their thoughts, countries and the culture differences together, that is fun. Please come by to check out! Shanghai Xu Bo and I will be happy to welcome you.

*Written by Serena Chan, Project Manager, Shanghai Xubo*