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Shanghai Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange

*It was one of the best times in my life. I met the most wonderful people I could ever imagine and it was just a great experience.*

*I definitely want to come back to Shanghai, so will meet again :)*

*Jaqueline Paasche  
Germany  
Oct, Shanghai City*

November 2008

# Volunteer Time

## Kind People, Ferocious Food



I have been teaching for three weeks now at Middle School #2 in Mianyang, Si Chuan. It has been an eye-opening and thoroughly enjoyable experience. The headmaster picked me up at the airport in Chengdu and then drove me to Mianyang. This was fairly late at night, but he and several others, including the headmaster at Cheng Mian Lu Primary School, stayed up late to welcome me over dinner.

The next day a trip was arranged to go to Bei Chuan, a small town very near the epicenter of the earthquake. This was a completely unexpected gesture for which I am very grateful. Mianyang is very safe after the earthquake. I don't feel in any danger whatsoever. The only signs of it are some damaged buildings, which have been safely blocked off. My first morning, I gave a brief speech to the entire student body during the flag-raising ceremony. It went pretty well, I think. The headmaster had just started at the school a week earlier, so we were both giving our first speeches to the school that day. The teaching consists of a few lessons (2-4) per day with each lasting 40-45 minutes. I am absolutely spoiled by my classroom. I have a computer, projector and screen, so I can prepare my lessons in Powerpoint. This makes it easy to incorporate pictures and even video into the classes. I am mostly teaching Grade 1 students, which correspond to Grade 6 or 7 students at home.

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I loosely cover the grammar and vocabulary from their book, but I am encouraged to teach whatever I feel like. I have also taught more advanced lessons with the Grade 2 and 3 students, whose English is very good. We have had dialogues about food, sports, and the differences between student life in China and the US.

They have some very good questions. All of the students are curious and fun to teach. They all say hello or try a little conversation in English between classes. There is also a lot of support from the other teachers at the school. They keep me on schedule, offer tips and feedback, teach me a little



Chinese, and provide great company in the evenings after school. I certainly never feel lonely. I live with Mr. Zhao and his family. He is one of the teachers at the middle school. I cannot say enough kind things about him, his wife and his son. They have all been very warm, gracious and accommodating. They help me get around and make sure I am never hungry. Speaking of which, the food here in Si Chuan province is very good with lots of chili peppers. The local favorite is hot pot, which is a bit like fondue except the cheese is boiling chili oil. Various meats, tofu and veggies are cooked in the oil at the table. The oil comes in three grades: spicy, very spicy, and paint remover strength. The hotter, the better for me. The beer is pretty good, too, and that's important when you need something to put out the flames coming from your mouth. I have one more week to go, and I am not anxious to leave. The school teachers really want me to have a good time, and I have. It has been a wonderful place to teach, especially since this was my first time teaching. It has gone much better and more quickly than I had ever expected. The experience has been unforgettable.

*-----Written by Chris Brown, volunteer from United States*

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We, Amelie Chen and Wendy Che, join Xu Bo group for the projects of High School Exchange, US internship, culture visit and inbound internship programme. We appreciate this opportunity that gives us a large open space to put a lot of particular characteristics into our work. Work

atmosphere and circumstances here are dynamic and pro motive. We feel that we can gain some precious experiences from my work not only on paperwork, and also on communication with people from different nations, religions, and life background. Another point we want to talk is we are not only working, and we also enjoying our life while we put our passion into our task. I hope the coming of us will bring more vigor to Shanghai Xu Bo Art & Culture Exchange.

## My China experience



I feel so lucky that I was able to come to China. It is really greet fun to teach all the children. I teach grade two and three and all the children are so excited every time they see me. The first day I taught the classes the students where quite amazed by my appearance and their English was good enough to say “You are so tall” even the teachers

turned their head the first day I was at the school. Now the students are a bit more used to me, but

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still every once and a while a student pulls him- or herself together, it is quite exciting for them to talk to a Western person, to tell me that I am tall. For me the teaching really lightens up my day and I enjoy the students very much. Every week the first thing I do during the lessons is the repetition of what they learned the week before and it is so much fun to see they remember the new words, even if

it sometimes takes some stimulation. Also the teachers are very supportive and always ready to lend a hand. I really made new friends.

Besides the teaching, Shanghai itself is also an amazing experience and every weekend I do my best to get to know some more about the city, the culture and the language, from which especially the last sometimes presents a great challenge.

I really start to admire the students here in China learning

English. None of the words are even slightly alike.



*Written by Mieke Alekregtse, volunteer from Netherland*