



- ☺ Topic1: **My different story in Shanghai**
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Our 2011 Christmas Party on 24th December

Shanghai Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange

December, 2011

Volunteer Time

My different story in Shanghai

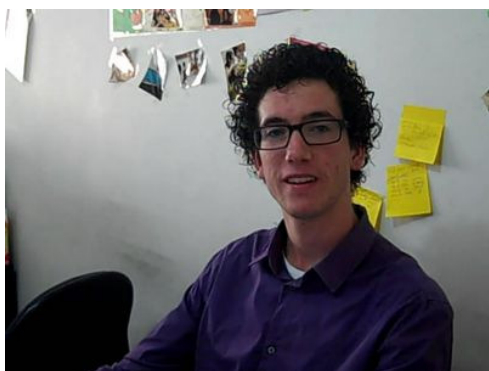
Hi,

My story in Shanghai differs a bit from the interns' stories you might have read in prior newsletters, in that I'm not "just" interning, but working on an applied Bachelor Marketing thesis at Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange in Shanghai. Still interested? Please read on!

It all started earlier this year, end of August, when I arrived at Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange. My first impression: a small, well-oiled and typical Chinese organization. And this turned out to be fairly accurate guess. Being a Westerner and accustomed to Chinese way of business life in theory through university education, but lacking practical experience regarding Chinese business affairs, this corporate placement provided me the opportunity to have a taste of it.



Coping with the difficulties encountered throughout the length of my stay at Xu Bo provided several challenging moments, such as adjusting to the different way of working in China, the language used in the office and in the outside world and the completely different environment. The experienced and knowledge gained about China prior to my working period at Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange felt as a considerable beneficial for me. To give you some examples, I didn't experience a so-called "culture shock", as commonly occurring at volunteers at Xu Bo, as living and working in China. On a general level, I knew what to expect from a corporate placement in China. All with all, I can say working in China gave me the practical insight of how a Chinese business is operating in a metropolitan city as Shanghai, and which aligned to my of goals I was interested in learning more about. In addition, this placement gives me valuable experience, which I, from a professional perspective, will certainly utilize in the future.



Apart from working at Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange, there was the leisure time to experience the Chinese way of living by exploring bustling Shanghai and its nearby cities and beyond. Travel-wise, I was able to do a fair bit of traveling across China. Together with volunteers and interns from Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange, we traveled to cities and sights of interest, including Suzhou, Huangshan, Nanjing and Southern China's Yangshuo.



These trips were a true delight among all those present and offer us the opportunity to experience the rich Chinese culture, history and its breathtaking points of interests.

The unbelievable tasty and affordable Chinese food, the challenges to overcome through to being able to not fully able to comprehend the language, the sudden changes that occur in daily life, working at Xu Bo Art and Culture Exchange and the people from all across the globe I met during my stay in China, made my time in China highly appreciative and will sure be a lasting memory.

Bram Verweij, Buitenlandse stage, August 29th 2011 – January 16th 2012

Why I extend the program for twice?



Before coming to Shanghai I decided to book the program for (now I think only) five weeks. Because there was the opportunity to extend the program directly in Shanghai, I thought: You never know what expects you and you can always extend, so let's take five weeks. And I made the most of this offer and extended two times by thinking: Why didn't I book for three months from the beginning?

Already after the first week I knew that five weeks will be too short. The days in Shanghai passed so quickly and I couldn't imagine staying only five weeks at this exciting place. And the longer I stayed the more I loved this city. There is so much to expect and so much too see so that it is really impossible to see roughly everything in such a short time. But not only had the city moved me to stay longer. Also my work as volunteer and the life with the other volunteers were aspects to extend my stay.

Before I entered the classroom the first time I was a little bit nervous what I exactly have to do with them. But it was easier to get their attention than I thought. At the beginning it felt strange to stand in front of forty Chinese children without knowing their own language and without that they know your language. Because I just finished school this year I did not really feel like teacher and it felt weird that they called me “teacher”. But I really liked their motivation to learn from me and that motivated me to teach them not only English but also things about Germany and my home. I loved to see how excited they were to see things they never saw before, mainly not in reality. For example they were all crazy about pictures of snow landscapes in Germany, my big family, what we eat in Germany and so on. Every time I showed them a picture they liked, through the whole class went a surprised “wow!” They were very interested in what I showed and told them so that I did my job with pleasure.



Also teaching them English was fun. The first lessons the pupils were shy and it was not so easy to know how to learn with them. But after a while I learned how to prepare and arrange the lessons. With more time I found out good methods, games and how to get their attention. Because I staid longer I could see the different levels and types of the different kids. It was also interesting to see the differences to German pupils and different ways to learn. I liked to see the development of some pupils, which were first reserved but after pawing them a little bit they were getting bright and motivated to talk to me in English. There were also often kids who came to me after the lesson to talk to me and ask me questions. For them it was a really grate opportunity to have a foreign teacher which whom they could talk in another language and to whom they could ask questions. So I felt like I they could appreciate that I was there.

Of course there were sometimes difficult moments at school, but I was lucky that I had really nice supervisors which helped me always out and solved my problems. They also invited me to a dinner at the beginning of my time so that I felt really welcome. The relationship to the other English teachers was all the time very good.



Not only at school but also from the volunteer group and the staffs from Xubo I felt from the first day welcome. I spent my free time with other volunteers and with discovering Shanghai and its surroundings. After one day I got so many impressions and new experiences so that I fell in sleep immediately. On weekends I often did trips with other volunteers. For example we went to the beautiful places named Hangzhou and Suzhou, which are close to Shanghai.



But also Shanghai itself got so much to offer. I had the impression, which you can find everything you want in this big city. In Shanghai, the contrasts are enormous from hyper-modern buildings and business men in Pudong to old and traditional Chinese houses and women cooking on the street somewhere in Puxi. From trendy Shanghainese woman, wearing plateau shoes and crazy hairstyles to a workers sleeping in their dirty clothes on a motorcycle. I could go on like this for a while. But this was one of the things which fascinated me so much. I could never get tired of this city and I had not the possibility to feel bored during my stay because there was always something to do or to discover.

And in eleven weeks there is just more time for all this than in five. It also gave me another impression to stay longer because it feels more like living at this place. I did not want to have only a short view in this life as volunteer in Shanghai. Of course in three months it is also not really enough to see everything and to get the real feeling how it is to work as teacher or to live in Shanghai. But I think for me it was the right time to get a good impression of everything. For example, I am the impression of the school and the pupils, the people in Shanghai, their thinking, their behavior, the feeling of living and finding my way in such a big city, to work and spend time with different people and much more. So I really did great experiences during my time here and I learned a lot.

While writing about all this and thinking about my time, I catch myself thinking: Actually I could also stay a little bit longer... But some time it is just time to go home. And I am really happy to go home with much more than I came. Not only with a suitcase full of nice things, but also with a head full of wonderful memories.

Julia Hick, Experiment E.v, October 17th 2011 — December 30th 2011