



光华管理学院
Guanghua School of Management

EXCHANGE REPORT

DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA

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VISA PROCESS

I am an international student (was in India at the time of applying), and I found the visa process to be fairly simple. I applied for the single entry non-business visa, however, tourist visa would have also worked. The cost was INR 5550 and the following documents were required:

- Peking University acceptance letter
- Accommodation letters from all 3 cities (Beijing, Xian and Shanghai)
- Ticket confirmation
- Program Schedule
- 6 months' bank statements (not necessary, but I submitted to show the minimum funds of 1.5 lacs)
- Photograph
- Visa Application form available on the website
- Passport photocopy and original

The only hassle was, that I had to visit the VFS office to submit the documents physically. There was no way to apply online. I had to go twice, once to submit the documents and second time to collect the stamped passport. It took around 5-7 business days for the entire process.

If one plans to travel outside China in transits, let's say Hong Kong or Singapore, then he/she will have to obtain a separate visa for the respective countries.

INSURANCE

I purchased a health insurance from Bajaj Allianz and it costed me around INR 900. I did not use the insurance as my stay was just for 2 weeks, however, in my opinion, the coverage was adequate at USD 250,000.

Also, the program coordinators were extremely helpful. If one needed a basic first aid or medicines, program coordinators were always available to help.

FINANCIALS

I arrived with 3000 RMB (approximately INR 31,200 or USD 460). The two terms RMB and Chinese Yuan are used interchangeably in China, however, both are essentially the same. In case one doesn't want to carry too much cash, he/she can go for a Forex card with USD, which acts as a VISA debit card and is accepted at most of the places. Though in this case, exchange rates will apply.

For the currency exchange services, I used *bookmyforex*. Their services are quick and they offer the best rate amongst the available online exchange rate services in India. There is no need to open any bank account if you are going for a short 2 weeks' exchange. In case of a longer stay, you can plan things according to your convenience.

Regarding the appropriate amount to be carried, I would say it totally depends on the person. Peking took care of the entire stay, provided most of the lunches and dinners, and also paid for the tickets to different tourist attractions. One needs extra money basically to visit places out of the schedule, pay for cab fares, for drinks and for shopping. Both Beijing and Shanghai have some very cheap street markets which are a must visit if you want to buy first copies of bags, electronics, clothes, etc. I used to travel mainly by subway, but as it shuts down by 11, so for the late hours, I used to take a taxi. One of the most popular ways to hail a taxi in China is by phone, using the DiDi app. China is quite safe and has a good public transport system. However, there are black taxis as well, where black stands for shady and not literally the colour black. They are

considered to be illegal and generally charge a lot more than the official ones. In terms of safety also, they are not recommended. Take them only when you are left with no other choice.

ARRIVAL/AIRPORT

The arrival was pretty smooth. I booked a Cathay Pacific flight, which had a layover of 4 hours in Hong Kong. In my opinion, Cathay is one of the best airlines, both comfort as well as food wise. If not Cathay, you can go for Singapore Airlines. As I booked it 2 months in advance, the return ticket from India costed me around 38000 INR. Do not go for a longer lay over if you don't plan to move out and explore the country in which you have the lay over. For me, 4 hours were enough to explore the Hong Kong airport (which is a pretty good one) and to transit to the flight to Beijing.

The pickup from airport to Beijing hotel was not arranged by the school, however we were told the approximate amount that the cab will take from the airport to the hotel. It was close to 130-150 RMB.

Be careful with the luggage weight and try to travel as light as possible. In our case, we had to travel to 3 cities (Beijing, Xian and Shanghai in the mentioned order), so packing and carrying the luggage every time from one city to another was a cumbersome task, especially when we had to travel in the bullet train from Beijing to Xian. The bullet train experience was pretty good though and the cost of the ticket was taken care by Peking. Peking also paid for the China Eastern flight from Xian to Shanghai, which allowed us to carry 20 Kgs check-in and 7 Kgs carry on. Another reason to travel light is, that when in China, one would want to shop!

ACCOMMODATION

As a part of the program, we were provided accommodation in 4 star hotels in all the 3 cities. All 3 hotels (names provided in the Detailed Program Schedule PDF attached below in Travel, Recreation and Culture section) were pretty amazing. The facilities, food and services were up to the mark, resulting in high level of satisfaction. The staff was aware of the fact that we are foreigners and ensured smooth stay with not much of hassles in terms of language and food. Xian hotel was right next to the school, so travel was never a problem. In Beijing and Shanghai, school provided the shuttle services to travel from hotel to school and vice versa. Otherwise also, in case you miss the shuttle, it was quite safe and quick to reach the school via subway or taxi (DiDi).

CAMPUS FACILITIES

Primarily, Peking university is in Beijing, and Guanghua School of Management is one amongst many other schools there. While in Xian and Shanghai, there is only Guanghua School of Management and not the entire Peking university. The infrastructure at all the 3 locations is excellent. The lecture halls are spacious and very well equipped. Even the other facilities, such as cafes, groceries, merchandise, books, etc. are easily accessible to the students. The Beijing campus has a mix of modern and traditional buildings. The entire atmosphere at the university gives you a very good vibe.



Beijing campus



Classroom at Xian campus



Shanghai campus at Huangpu river

THE COHORT

Our cohort had a mix of 41 students from some of the top MBA schools/universities such as Duke, Kellogg, USC, NUS, Schulich, Peking, TAMU, etc., covering nationalities such as US, UK, Argentina, Colombia, Canada, Australia, China, Japan, India, Ghana and Malaysia. There were business grads as well as undergrads, both full timers and part timers. This diversity definitely helped me learn the cross cultural differences and how to appreciate them, and gave me a sense of how business is conducted across many other nationalities, and not only just in China.



ACADEMICS

On day three, we were taken to the Peking University campus in Beijing. A campus tour was arranged to familiarize us with the important landmarks, and plenty of photographs of the entire cohort were taken. At the end of the tour, headshots of all the participants were taken, and were handed out to us on the last day. After the tour, we were taken to the class room, where the program director, Professor Coulter Douglas, gave a welcome speech that covered the purpose and motivation for organizing the exchange program. The support staff gave us the entire academic roadmap (see the attachment below) for the next 13 days. The

teaching modules, deliverables and expectations were clearly communicated by the support staff. There were about 6 teaching modules spread across 9 sessions/lectures that needed to be applied in group project. The group project was a strategic recommendation for a company in the west to enter the Chinese markets. It weighed 75 percent of the total grade, and the rest of the 25 percent was class participation. We were divided into groups of 6 randomly, while ensuring that no two people from the same school or nationality were together.



The following were the teaching modules:

- China's Reforms and Waves of Starting Businesses
- Capital Markets in China
- Cross-Cultural Management Case Study
- China: Institutional Reforms and Growth Models
- China: Social Structure, Cultural Norms and Business Practices
- Marketing in China

Most of the modules had pre-reading materials. The classes were very interactive with the professors being sympathetic to any question raised by the class. The answers from different nationalities were encouraged and considered. The design of lectures was quite similar to that of Schulich, wherein real-world examples were included at every step. This enabled me to clearly apply my past learnings in the Chinese context. Further, all the professors were very knowledgeable and made sure to design the lectures to cover vast content to provide maximum value in such less amount of time. Bio for each professor is given in the Course structure document attached above.

The final group project was due on the last day. It included a 15 minutes' presentation with 5 minutes Q&A. Every member of the group had to present and participate actively in the project. We, as a group, chose a US based Fitness company, Orange Fitness Theory. It was a fulfilling experience for me as I was able to apply my learnings in the first two terms as well as the modules taught in the program to a real-world example. Also, the diversity within the group, both professional experience and culture wise, fortified my learning through discussions and exchange of thoughts.

Lastly, four corporate visits were included in the program to help the participants understand how the existing businesses function in China. The companies included Beijing Hyundai, China National Oil Corporation, Xi'an New Airport and Cisco Systems Inc. Shanghai Research Institute. These visits were also interactive in nature. A great deal of regulatory requirements and compliances, and nuances in operations were explained. The visits were a cherry on the cake, as we could experience the classroom learnings in practice.

We were provided with a booklet of printed slides for all the lectures, so Laptops were generally not required in the classroom. While the professors used slides and cases to teach, we made notes on this booklet. Laptops were mainly used for the group project, for the research work and making the power point.

TRAVEL, RECREATION AND CULTURE

The program was designed to include fun activities as well as academics. I have attached the detailed program schedule below. On the first day, we had a welcome dinner, with a basic round of introductions and ice breakers. The second day started with a breakfast at the hotel and was followed by a trip to Great Wall of

China. It was one of the best experiences. We hiked for close to 1.5 hours and made a lot of good friends on the way. In the evening, we visited Summer Palace and explored the city of Beijing on our own.



DBIC Detailed
Program Schedule

We were taken to most of the tourist attractions in all 3 cities by the school and all of them were totally worth the visit. Mentioned below are the places we visited or things we did. I would highly recommend these to someone going to these 3 cities.

Beijing:

- Great Wall of China
- Summer Palace
- Forbidden city and Tiananmen Square
- Temple of Heaven
- D-One club (Worker's Stadium West Road, Chaoyang District)
- Beijing Zoo (especially for Pandas)
- 99 Yurts (for Mongolian food)
- Bicycle ride at Peking campus (loved the bicycle culture in China, where you can simply scan the code using mobile applications of Mobike and Ofo Bikes and rent a bicycle for the required distance).



Great Wall of China



Forbidden city



Summer Palace

Xian:

- Downtown tour
- Muslim Quarter Street (a variety of delicious and cheap street food)
- Huaqingchi Restaurant
- Long Sorrow Opera (A song of everlasting sorrow - a beautiful depiction of Tang Dynasty's emperor's love story through dance and drama)
- Terra Cotta Warriors and Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum
- Qin Dynasty Style feast
- Karaoke Night (popularly known as K-Pop)



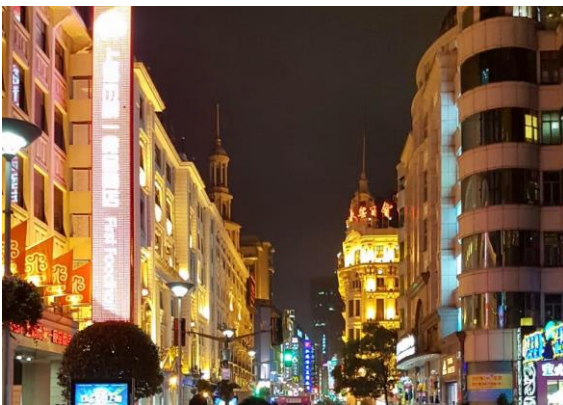
Terracotta Warriors



A snapshot from the Long Sorrow Opera

Shanghai:

- Nanjing Street (Modern, electric street filled with shops, eateries, and lovely restaurants)
- The Bund (try to cover the expat bars as well)
- Huangpu River Night Cruise (best to see the shanghai skyline)
- Shanghai tower and Financial centre (must visit sky scrapers, sky walk is worth it)
- Shanghai aquarium
- Oriental Pearl tower (looks very beautiful at night. Try to go to observatory if the sky is clear)
- Street shopping (cheap stuff with lots of variety)
- Myst and Unico club



Nanjing Street



Shanghai Skyline from Huangpu river

In all the above-mentioned attractions, I was able to experience the Chinese culture from close quarters. I was also able to observe the diversity that exists within the Chinese culture in terms of costume, cuisine and people.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the Chinese people are very disciplined, respectful towards visitors (especially foreigners) and hardworking. There are many things to learn from them. One of them is embracing modernity and being rooted to your culture and value systems. The entire country today stands on the Confucian philosophy.



After the Great Wall visit!

FOOD

If you are a foodie and love to explore new Asian cuisines, you would have a great time. For someone who is a vegetarian, he/she is going to have a hard time because Chinese eat non veg (especially pork and beef) in almost every meal. It is not that easy to find vegetarian food in China, even in the quick service restaurants. Also their food is mostly boiled and not high on spices.

For us, as mentioned in the schedule, most of the lunches and dinners were covered by Peking at the school, hotel or the tourist attractions that we were taken to. Every day the breakfast was served at the hotel. The breakfast was generally continental and was the best meal of the day. Local Chinese beer was also provided in most of the lunches and dinners outside the school's campus.

We got a chance to try some of the amazing Mongolian, Taiwanese and Chinese food. The Mongolian dinner and the Qin Style dinner were definitely the best. For the Mongolian dinner, we were taken to one of the best Mongolian restaurants in Beijing, **99 Yurts**, where we got an opportunity to watch a traditional Mongolian dance performance, apart from having delicious food. This restaurant has dedicated huts called VIP rooms, which can accommodate close to 40 people per hut, so it was more of a private affair for us. The dancers came and performed, and made sure to engage everyone out there. Their signature dish, Roast Whole Lamb (image below), which is served with dips and pita pockets, was definitely the highlight.



Roast whole Lamb



Mongolian dancers and singers



VIP huts from outside

Another worth mentioned dinner was the ***Qin Dynasty style feast***, wherein we were given an opportunity to dress in traditional Chinese silk attires, which were available at the restaurant itself. It gave the whole feel of the place and the culture. This was followed by a Karaoke night, which was a lot of fun. Our cohort mates sang songs in their local languages, which definitely bonded us closer as a group.



Qin Dynasty Style Feast



Dressed in Chinese attires

The lunch at the school was generally authentic Chinese and we did get a good variety every day. Apart from the usual lunch, during the lectures, we used to get a break after every 1 hour and were provided with a lot of snacks, drinks and bakery items. The hospitality and services provided by the school were commendable in every possible way. We also got to experience the different authentic Chinese teas during these breaks and were also given samples of the same.

Lastly, Peking duck, Hotpot, dumplings and street noodles are a must try when in China. We were served Peking duck in 2-3 dinners/lunches arranged by the school. Normally, a Peking duck would cost around 130-200 RMB in a local restaurant plus one needs to order “tortillas” to wrap the duck meat in and the extras that go along inside the wrap: sesame sauce, sugar, onion, cucumber, melon. Some of the most famous location for it are Jingzun, Duck de Chine and Jing Yaa Tang.

LANGUAGE

Language was definitely a barrier in China. However, with the help of Chinese people in our cohort and in general, program coordinators and baidu translator, I was able to happily sail through. In the classroom and

in corporate visits, English was used as the medium of instruction. For every cultural visit also, we had a guide who used to explain everything in English and helped in translating things, if required. The school had put in best of their efforts to make sure our experience is invaluable.

Also, internet sometimes can be an issue, if you don't have the international data plan activated on your number or you don't get a local Chinese number. In my case, I did not get the international plan activated and when I arrived in Beijing, I learnt that I cannot get a prepaid sim for a week. One can get a post-paid sim and will have to get it de activated before leaving the city. As I had a 6 days stay in Beijing, 3 days stay in Xian and 6 days stay in Shanghai, it did not make sense to buy 3 new sims in 3 different cities, so I decided to survive on hotel WiFi. For convenience sake, I took a city map (which had both English and Chinese) from the hotel staff and asked them, other locals and coordinators about the places that I should visit out of the fixed schedule. I used to carry the map with me all the time, which helped me get the subway tickets easily. Also, I would recommend to take screenshots of the basic translations, like the name of the places to visit, food that you would want to eat, shopping centres you would want to explore, etc. You can show the names in Chinese to anyone on the street and they would be very happy to help you. Some locals were hesitant and refused, but most of the people were quite helpful and friendly, and sometimes also gave us personal hotspot to use the internet to translate or to use the GPS.

THINGS TO BRING

The exchange program was held in May, so the weather was quite pleasant. In the nights, it might get a little cold, days are invariably warm (especially in Beijing). In Xian and Shanghai, it would be prudent to carry a jacket and an umbrella as it might rain every now and then. Apart from that, we were informed to carry some business casuals for days of the project presentation and corporate visits. A few other things that one could carry include:

- Necessary Identification Documents
- Sufficient cash
- Warm Clothing (Jacket /Sweater)
- Business Casuals
- Umbrella
- Chinese Plug for electronics
- Laptop

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

The support staff and program coordinators at Peking were extremely helpful and fun. The staff went out of the way to help us all the time. We always had a point of contact to reach out to in case of any queries or concerns. Shadow & Jenny from Guanghua School of Management went above and beyond to extend all possible help before the start and during the course of the program. The other coordinators, Hailey and Pie also supported us as and when required. There was a group created on 'WeChat' (used in China instead of WhatsApp), where all the information, tips & day by day schedule was communicated to us.

At Schulich, we were well supported by the International Relations team led by Cheryl Stickley. An orientation program was organized and we were informed about various Do's and Don'ts. The session was helpful and provided us with details on what to expect and pre-requisites to do before departure.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Having faced the questions “Why did you choose China for exchange” and “Do you want to later work in China” multiple times, I can only answer that I could not think of a country more important to understand in today’s business world, than China. I really recommend taking the chance to go far out of US, Europe and other English-speaking countries for exchange studies! China especially is such a culture that once you experience it, it breaks you out of prejudices and stereotypes we’re fed about it back in Western countries and by the media. Peking university is world class, and you cannot imagine how much more highly top education is valued in China.

An exchange period and getting abroad, out of your familiar comfort zone is an important time to grow and learn real life skills, not just to study information and theory from books, but to learn confidence and to be street smart. There is no better way to learn about yourself and your own skills compared to others, than to be amongst people from other disciplines, schools, cultures, and backgrounds during exchange or any other opportunity.

To summarise, I would say, this was one of the best experiences of my MBA journey, in fact the most memorable 15 days. There was not even a single dull moment. The administration staff at Peking was extremely helpful in addressing issues and guiding us throughout the program to have an invaluable experience. The program was very well structured, the professors were great, and most of all, our cohort was awesome. China is a modern and a fast growing economy. I loved how their people and cities are so organised, Shanghai being my favourite amongst the 3. Chinese people are extremely helpful and as I mentioned before, some of them even went out of the way to help us. I will highly recommend this program to anyone who is interested in international business or is looking at exploring China from a different angle.

Ni Hao!!

