

[CHINE] – [Shanghai Normal University]

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I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

[Help : How was your experience abroad? If you could go back I time, would you go to this university and why ?]

I think Shanghai is one of the best cities in China for student exchange. I had really good experiences with the university, and even more with the international dormitory. The city is just incredible, there's so much to do, and the people I met during the exchange were amazing.

GRADE : [5/5]

=> 0 (I do not recommend this semester abroad to my best friend) – 5 (I totally recommend this semester to my best friend)

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

1. Visa

[Help : Do I need a visa ? If yes, what is the process ?]

Yes, you do need a visa. We wanted the X1 visa because we thought we could have it since we were going on a semester abroad, and also because it would allow us to leave the country freely (after getting a residence permit). But we were told that since we are officially staying less than 6 months, we had to get the X2 visa. You cannot leave China with an X2 visa. But don't worry, China is incredibly diverse, with many cities worth visiting and a wide variety of landscapes. You won't get bored. Even within Shanghai, there's so much to do.

The visa costs around 120 euros. I applied at the Chinese embassy in Marseille (maybe this one is better than the one in Paris, because the French students I met in the dorms who went through Paris were required to show a return flight ticket to get the visa.

That's a bit inconvenient if you plan to travel and haven't decided on your return date yet. It's hard to plan several months in advance).

Here are the steps to get your visa, this is what I did (it's a bit annoying, but it is what it is, it's the usual struggle to get a Visa 😊) :

1) Prepare the required docs in advance

Before booking your appointment, make sure to have :

- **Official admission letter** from the Chinese university (in English or Chinese)
- **JW202 form** (or JW201, but mostly 202)
 - To get the JW202 form, you first need to be accepted by your Chinese host university; after confirming your enrollment, the university registers your information on the “**Study in China**” portal, and then you'll receive an email allowing you to log in, download, and verify the JW202 form directly from that platform. This official document is required for your visa application.
- **Valid passport** (at least 6 months validity after your intended entry date + at least 2 blank pages)
- **Passport photo** (white background, recent)

- **Housing confirmation** if possible, but not necessary (e.g., dorm booking confirmation, but the dorm confirmation we got it after doing our visa, so don't worry it's not important)
- **Proof of enrollment** from your current school (in France)
- **Flight ticket** (be aware, like I said, the Paris consulate often requires a **round-trip ticket**, even for X2 visas)
- **International health insurance** (but I personally didn't need it)

2) Fill out the online application

Go to the **official Chinese Visa Application Service Center (CVASC)** website :

🔗 <https://www.visaforchina.cn>

Select **France**, then your chosen visa center (e.g., Paris or Marseille)

Steps:

1. Create an account
2. Complete the online visa application form (select **type X2**, enter personal info, university details, etc.)
3. Upload any documents if requested
4. Print the **completed form** and **summary page with the barcode** (I think there was a barcode but I'm not sure anymore though)

PS : Celia Wang, our coordinator told us to put July 31st as the visa end date

3) Book your appointment online

Once the form is completed on [visaforchina.cn](https://www.visaforchina.cn), book your appointment at the chosen center (Paris, Marseille, etc.) and print the confirmation.

I recommend again, Marseille because they didn't ask us for the return ticket. So for you too, they may not insist on it.

4) Go to the Visa center

On the day of your appointment, bring :

- The **printed application form**
- All **required documents** listed above
- **Photocopies** of your passport (and previous Chinese visas if you have any) and your passeport (and previous Chinese visas if you have any)
 - PS : they did a photocopy of my passport there
- Your **payment method** (some centers accept only cash or only card, check ahead because I don't remember) I personally paid by card

5) Visa collection

Processing time : **around 7 working days**

You can **pick it up yourself** or authorize someone else

2. The flight

[Help : what flight did you take (the company name, airport etc.) and when did you take your flight ticket]

I flew from Barcelona, with a layover in Budapest (about 48h, yes it's pretty long but we used this time to see our friend who had already begun her student exchange in Budapest 😊), then from Budapest to Guangzhou for another layover (about 2h or less), and finally Guangzhou to Shanghai. I chose this route because it was very cheap, around 300 euros (not including the checked baggage and the travel insurance I bought on the website while buying my ticket). The website I used is "trip.com" (it's a Chinese booking platform used worldwide). My flight was on February 11, and I booked it around October/November (the earlier, the better). The airline for Buda-Shanghai was ChinaSouthern Airline

3. My luggage

[Help : what to not forget in the luggage (what was useful and what you would like to have taken)]

Since Chinese people (and East Asians in general) don't typically use deodorant (because genetically they often don't need it), I recommend bringing a few from home. Don't worry though, you can still find deodorants at the Walmart near the university (there isn't a huge selection, but you'll find good brands like Nivea), or in some cosmetic shops like "Harmay" or "Wow Beauty." Also, bring winter clothes ; it was very cold during the first few weeks. Or you can buy them once you're there.

If you have allergies, don't forget your treatment ! If you're lactose intolerant, you might feel strange drinking milk in China. I personally had no issues (same for my classmate Enzo who also did his student exchange at SHNU like me), but a friend of mine who lived there for more than two years, and who already had pretty bad allergies, developed allergies to several things, including Chinese milk, although she's fine when back in France (I'd like to remind you that she already had allergies back in France, so that's something to take with a grain of salt). So maybe bring something for your gut health, just in case.

Also, very important : bring a stock of medicine like Doliprane, Spasfon, Smecta, etc. aka the basics you can easily get in France. I highly recommend it. I didn't do it myself, but I got lucky and didn't need any. Don't be foolish like me, especially if you plan to travel around China. Bring medicine for digestion (if you know you have a weak gut), general well-being, and stomach issues (the food and drinks are quite different !).

Don't forget to visit a general practitioner to check which vaccines are required for China, or if you're up to date with them. Usually, the official government website 'France Diplomatie' provides all the necessary information regarding vaccinations, entry, and exit requirements, it's a must !

4. Bank account

[Help : did you have to change bank? To respect some amount requirement on the bank account etc.]

Yes, I had to open a Chinese bank account. Alipay and WeChat, which you'll use every day to pay and communicate, didn't let me transfer money to some friends or pay in some canteens when I only had my Revolut card linked. Also, having a Chinese bank account is super helpful to avoid international card fees (you'll get charged above 200 RMB, so above 24 euros, you get charged). I went to ICBC Bank. It's the most convenient chain across China and offers the lowest fees (most international students in the campus also use ICBC). You'll need your passport, proof of enrollment in China (certificat de scolarité), and a Chinese phone number. That's what I remember, maybe there are more documents required, sorry lol.
So it's a must.

5. Insurance

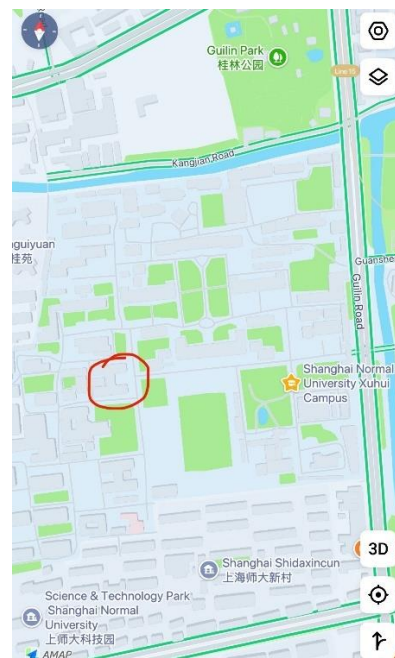
[Help : What insurance did you subscribe to ?]

You need, and I recommend, international student insurance. I used "Heyme World Pass" from Heyme. It's easy to get and available online. Also, when you arrive at the International Student Center on campus, they'll make you pay for a kind of school insurance, but it's not enough (it doesn't cover a lot). So I recommend something more complete, like Heyme. I don't remember how much I paid though.

B. Housing

1. Where to live

[Help : Do a google maps capture and circle the area you recommend to live in (and the one you do not recommend)]



I lived on the campus, so I don't know what to recommend or not (sorry). It was in the International student dormitory (circled in red)

On the map, you can see that the campus is very large, and there's a big road running through the middle that splits it in two. Our classes were on the side of the campus across Guilin Road — not the side where we lived. There were also security guards

everywhere, both at the entrance and inside the international student dormitory building.

(For your information, there's a second large campus that belongs to SHNU — it's about 40 minutes away and is called the Fengxian campus. The one we were at was the Xuhui campus.)

2. Find a flat or a room

[Help : How did you find your flat? Do you have any recommendation]

I stayed in the International Student Dormitory on campus. It's very cheap, around 150 euros/month, but the quality of rooms varies. The ones on the first floor are very moldy (be careful if you have allergies or skin/breathing issues), the second and third floors are better. You share your room, and for a one-semester exchange, you'll only get the small ones. There are two dorm buildings: one has big, better rooms (for Master's students, those who fully pay their room, or/and who stay longer), and the other has smaller rooms (for scholarship students and exchange students like us).

If you prefer privacy and don't want to share your sleeping, working, or bathroom space with a classmate (aka the person from the L3 IM class going to SHNU too or your classmate in China) or a stranger of the same gender, you can look for an apartment outside campus. One of our classmates (the only classmate we had in China) did that since she didn't like the dorms and found an apartment instead (I think the university helped because she complained a lot). If you stay in the dorms, check your room first and ask at the reception if you want to switch, they may agree ! So ask them, don't be shy.

3. Cost

[Help : How much should I plan for a room or a flat?]

Like I said, around 150 euros/month

III. When I arrive at the university

A. Inscription at the university

[Help : How was the process, what did you have to do?]

Moma RI helped us a lot with registration. They handled most of the process. If you need to send documents, just do what you have to do, they take care of the rest. We received our admission letter in early November (important for the visa). Then someone from the university contacted us. For us, it was Celia Wang (our Chinese teacher in Shanghai). She sent us documents like the admission letter and dormitory instructions.

When we arrived in China, we had to go to the International Student Center. On the second day after arriving in the dorms, we went there to give our passport, admission letter, and other info. We went back another day to submit a photo for our student card. That card is important and the picture too because it gets linked to facial recognition for entering campus. Before getting the card and the facial recognition implemented for you, just show your admission letter at the security gate.

B. Information on the university

1. Class

[Help : for each class tell us how was the class, what did you like and not like, would you recommend it for the next student?]

Everything is in point 3 (list of courses and recommendations).

But you should know that, unlike other partner universities arranged by MOMA, at SHNU you can't choose your courses, they're assigned to you.

2. Organization of the Class

[Help : tell us the duration of the class, the volum of work, the behavior of teachers etc. ?]

Each class lasted 2h30. Only downside : we were just 3 students, because we were the only ones doing tourism/hospitality fully in English. If we had a higher Mandarin level or a certificate, we could've joined bigger classes. That's why I was a little jealous of French students at the SHNU School of Finance and Business (SFB, it's on the campus too) they had bigger groups. But you can still be friends with them, they live in the same dorms. The teachers were kind, since we were international students in a small group. You can ask them for tips or advice on what to do in Shanghai or in China in general 😊

3. List of courses and recommendation

[Help : list your different courses and let us know what do you think : level (easier, same or harder than the 1st semester course at MOMA, what you liked about the content, how is the class organization, who is the professor). Finally, for each class, tell us if you recommend the course.]

We had 5 classes total. Until May, we had only 4. Then "Appreciation of World's Boutique Hotels" was replaced by our 5th class, "The Science of Marketing."

Since each class had only three students (except for Chinese, which had only two because the other student already had some basic knowledge, better than my classmate from L3 IM and me), the interaction with the teachers was much more personalized, and we felt more comfortable speaking.

It was a bit awkward though when you ended up alone with the teacher.

- **Chinese** : Fun and interesting. Chinese seems easy at first but is full of subtle rules, so review often. We only had class once per week, which wasn't enough. I wish we had two classes weekly to learn more and retain more class content. We had access to the digital Chinese textbook thanks to the teacher, but she also offered to get us the paper version if we wanted. I said yes, and she ordered it for me (of course, you have to reimburse her afterwards). We used the textbook in class and also for doing exercises at home as homework. We also used the teacher's slides because she added clarifications on certain concepts that weren't in the textbook. You need to take notes, as there are

vocabulary words that aren't in the book but that she writes on the board.
We worked a lot on pronunciation, because in Chinese there's the concept of the four tones (quite hard ngl)
The final exam was a mix of writing, oral comprehension, translation, etc

- **Chinese Culture and Communication** : A great class. We learned about Chinese food, medicine, philosophy, and history. It helps understand the country you're living in. The class material was based on slides, but she doesn't send them. So take notes, and in addition to that, take pictures when you feel the slide is going to disappear quickly.
Final exam was an oral presentation.
- **Tourism Culture** : This class introduced China's many tourist cities and places with their meanings for Chinese people. Good tips for future travel too. Class materials were also in slide format, so make sure to take notes. For example, she introduced us to the ancient capitals of China, as well as the mountains and caves that are very important in Chinese culture and tourism.
- **Appreciation of World's Boutique Hotels** : Loved this one (and also the teacher is soooo cool and nice, we could ask her for any kind of advice). We explored boutique hotels in China and globally, plus famous hotel chains. After this class, you'll notice hotel details more, especially in Shanghai. Same for this class, it was based on slides. But she was more flexible about sharing them, so she sent them to us. We had a few short oral presentations to do, but not many.
- **The Science of Marketing** : I liked it. The approach was different from what I knew. There were concept I knew but also new things I didn't see before so I really appreciated that. (I also think the approach was just different because the teacher studied in Australia and was Chinese so yeah). Slides as well, and a lot of interaction with the teacher. We mainly saw marketing concepts in the field of Tourism Destination.

In general, we interacted a lot with the teachers — it was really nice. Everything was easy to understand, and you could tell they genuinely enjoyed explaining things to us. I really liked the interactions because sometimes we compared China with France and Europe in general, and it was great — it taught us to see things not just from our own perspective or culture(s), but through their point of view as Chinese.

Overall, the courses are easy, but Chinese might be tricky if you don't review your notes.

One thing I didn't like, but it's nothing major, is that the classes were spread out across the week, even though they could have easily been condensed into just two days. But well, you can't have everything, and it also depends on the teachers' availability. We had Mondays off, so we basically had a three-day weekend.

4. Exam

[Help : How was the exam? Format? Duration? Grade]

We had writing, listening, and oral exams for Chinese (translation, vocabulary, small pinyin texts, oral Q&A, etc). Marketing had a written project. The other courses were evaluated via oral presentations. Tourism culture was a mix of both : a written project and an oral presentation. The Chinese exam lasted around 1–1.5 hours (I don't remember how long it lasted exactly). Presentations were 10–20 mins, depending on the course. Grades are out of 100, not 20, like in France. It was quite easy, but like I said, study your Chinese or you may get surprised.

The exams took place over one week, during the second-to-last week of June : they started the week of June 16. The first exam was on June 17 and the last one on June 19. We had an assignment to submit online by June 20 at the latest, and another one, the marketing project, was due before June 30. But officially, we finished classes on June 20.

IV. When I life there

A. Safety

[Help : Is it safe? Is there areas or times I should avoid]

Shanghai is the safest place I've ever been. Honestly, one of the safest cities in the world. As a woman, I've never felt this safe. You can walk around late at night without any fear. All the cities and villages I visited in China felt safe. 100% recommend. You don't need to worry about leaving your stuff without any surveillance in the McDonald's, about pickpockets or any crime issues. The only thing you need to be paying attention to (and it's still a stretch for some places), is when you go to venues mainly frequented by non-Chinese people (obvs). In Shanghai, you have this relaxed feeling wherever you walk.

B. Phone and Internet

[Help : How to be able to call and have internet]

You must get a Chinese phone number, it's necessary for everything : internet, administration, banking, and for apps like WeChat and Alipay (you can create accounts with your French number and switch later). Also, **get a VPN** to access apps like Instagram, Snap, or Netflix (any app we use in France or any other country). I recommend "LetsVPN" (I used it for my phone and iPad, works also on your computer) and "V1VPN" (for my computer). There's Wi-Fi in the dorms (in each room) and on campus (there is the "SHNU" wifi and "Eduroam" works too, like in France).

C. Events

[Help : How to know about the events?]

To find events : follow WeChat accounts (like those of the uni or organizations/venues), join WeChat groups, or just ask around in the dorms. People are really helpful, don't be shy. And also, I recommend just walking through Shanghai, you may find some nice places holding events, or ads advertising an event. There also a lot of uni events, which is different from France (I'm gonna miss this), like the International student festival, where you can find booths representing each nationality present on campus. That means there are booths for all the nationalities of international students who study or live there. It's a shame that this year there was no France booth because no one wanted to take charge of it. The university provides a lot of support (including financial help) to students who organize their booth — covering decorations, traditional outfits (which they rent), as well as activities and goodies (like stickers, for example). There also the Dragon Boat

competition day, which I attended with my friends — it was incredible. Several universities from Shanghai take part in it, and the atmosphere is amazing. It's quite a serious and well-regarded event

D. Sports

[Help : What sport can I do ? and how?]

You can register for sport clubs for international students. You'll get the info through the WeChat account of the uni. There's a club fair in front of the International Student Center with student-run booths at the beginning of the spring semester (basketball, badminton, Chinese calligraphy...). BTW look out for **Julie**, a French student who's the captain of the Dragon Boat Club (a popular sport in China and a crazy sport istg). She's super nice and friendly, one of the best person I've met there!

You can go to the gym. I recommend "Ruihon Fitness", it's cheap and 10 mins away by bike. But if you're into intense weightlifting workouts or CrossFit, I don't recommend "Ruihon Fitness" it's more like "KeepCool" or "RunOn" in France, not like "OnAir" or "FitnessPark." (if you know, you know)

E. Eating

[Help : Any recommendation? Or good tips (e.g. an international house buffet)]

Shanghai is perfect if you miss Western cuisine, there's everything. It's very international cuisine friendly. Fast food is everywhere too like BurgerKing, KFC, Mcdo. On campus, you have multiple canteens, mostly Chinese food with some Korean and fried dishes. Also bakeries (kind of), and **Luckin Coffee** : great, cheap, good options, big cups of coffee (like in many Asian countries, those big cup of iced Americano and all).

If you have allergies, be careful. I know someone who got worse allergies in China and developed new ones. Food can be greasy. I recommend the canteen on the other side of the road, it has "Malatang" (a Chinese hotpot-style dish I really liked).

Again, I recommend "Luckin Coffee", worth every yuan !

Buy the dark green bottled water, the brand is "**CestBon**" (yes, like "C'est bon"). It's the cleanest and best-tasting one. Stock up so you don't keep going back to the campus supermarket. Best and better !

Also about the convenience stores (I LOVE THEM, it's the best thing in the world, especially when you compare it to grocery stores in France). They're everywhere and open 24/7. I recommend the **Lawson** store near the big KFC (not the mini one). Exit campus, turn right, walk straight, and turn right again. And voila.

F. Go to the university : bus, car, bike

[Help : How did you get access to the bus, car or bike]

I lived on campus, so I walked to class. But there are shared bikes, metro, and buses nearby. Transport options in Shanghai (in China in general) include : metro, rented bikes, Didi (Chinese Uber), e-bikes, and scooters (the electric kind — better than e-bikes)

for long distances I think). You can rent e-bikes and scooters in specialized stores, there a few near the campus.

Also for the rented bikes there are 3 kinds : yellow ones (we call them Meituan ones), blue ones (you need to use Alipay for those ones) and turquoise/green-ish ones (we call them Didi bikes). Use either Wechat or Alipay (for the blue ones) to scan the QR code, it's easy, but you need a 24h verification (passeport) before being able to use them.

G. Travels

[Help : What do you recommend and what do you not recommend]

I visited Beijing (Pékin), Chongqing, Wulong (natural park near Chongqing), Suzhou (near Shanghai), and Zhouzhuang (near Suzhou). Highly recommend all. One itinerary I wish I could have done is : Shanghai → Xi'an → Chengdu → Chongqing → back to Shanghai (can be done by plane or train).

China's train system is amazing : you can go anywhere. Domestic flights are also very frequent (obsv)

H. Any other information you would have liked to know about

[Help : What would I liked to know if I could have gone back in time]

Must-have Apps :

Download before arriving : WeChat, Alipay, Amap (it's Baidu but English friendly [you can switch to the Chinese version tho] like Google Maps but Google maps doesn't work really well in China).

Then, less urgent, you can download :

- Taobao and Pinduoduo for online shopping (you can find literally everything on those apps, I personally prefer Taobao, but Pinduoduo is cheaper)
- Meituan (for food and grocery delivery). I used Meituan's mini app inside WeChat because it auto-translates in English (or any language you want), no need to screenshot and go on Google Trad to translate.

Also download Google Translate with offline packs (Chinese, English ...).

For rides, I used **Didi** (also available inside WeChat, but not as a mini app, it's in "services"), and also Amap for taxis because taxis are cheaper on Amap. But I find Didi interface more convenient than Amap's interface. I used both, depending on the price and my mood (for 6-seater cars, I always used Didi with my friends. The Didi interface is much more user-friendly)

Package/food delivery

Also, good to know : in general, on Chinese university campuses, there are Meituan lockers at every entrance for picking up food deliveries. At least on the Xuhui campus, that's how it was (and there were four entrances — north, south, east, and west — so there were rows of lockers that were easy to access).

For parcels (non-food delivery/Meituan, so online shopping), there's a large package

storage area on campus, about the size of a small supermarket. Ask the reception to show you where it is, or ask a student to go with you the first time.

V. After your semester abroad

A. What are you planning do to?

[Help : What do you want to do next year]

I'm planning to do a Master's Degree

B. Did you apply for master?

[Help : in which master where you accepted]

I'm gonna do a PGE (Programme Grande École) at Montpellier Business School, Paris campus, not the campus in Mtp, in alternance (work-study).