

Student Report Fudan University, Shanghai Fall 2019/2020

Background information:

First a little background information to help you relate. I feel like, depending on a lot of factors, your experience may or may not differ from mine. I am currently a student at Free University Berlin, pursuing my Bachelor of Arts in Sinology. During the fall of 2019 I was able to attend the Fudan University as an exchange student for one semester. The Fudan University is one of the best schools within China and Shanghai. In this report, I will share my experience with you to help you avoid the mistakes I made and have a better understanding of the exchange program and the life in Shanghai at Fudan University.

Preparation:

After you finished applying at your home university and are nominated to do the exchange program at Fudan University, you will receive a separate email from Fudan. I got my nomination email from the Free University on the 02/23/2019. The email will tell you, that you need to confirm your name as shown in your passport and the exchange program you would like to apply for. There are three options:

1. Chinese Language Students (ONLY taking Chinese Language courses)
2. General Advanced Students (taking undergraduate-level courses)
3. Senior Advanced Students (taking graduate-level courses)

You can only choose one of them and if you decide to exchange as a Chinese Language Student you are not allowed to take other courses and are also not allowed to do an internship during your stay at Fudan University. On the 7th of March I received an email from the Fudan University confirming my nomination. The next step was to apply at the Fudan University starting from the 2nd of March until the 1st of May. After that it's just a waiting game. The chances of an acceptance are, according to the Free University, quite good. My confirmation of admission arrived on the 10th of June via email. Your exchange at Fudan University comes with a scholarship, free housing and tuition waiver. This may not always be the case so please check with Free University. After that I had to wait for Fudan to send my admission package to Free University. Only after you receive your admission package you can start applying for a Chinese Visa. In my case the package arrived on the 18th of June.

Visa and tickets:

After receiving the package, I started booking my ticket and applied for my visa. The orientation week started on the 2nd of September that means I had to arrive at the latest on the 1st of September. I booked my ticket with Finnair which only cost 450€. You can arrive earlier or later, but make sure that if you decide to arrive earlier the visa should still cover your stay until exams

are over. Otherwise you will have to extend your visa which costs extra. If you stay for only one semester, like me, you will have to apply for an X2 visa. Unlike before the X2 visa is **only** for **160 days** instead of 180.

Application process:

1. Complete an online application and after that you will be directed to make an appointment at China Visa Application Service Center.
2. On the day of your appointment, you will have to bring your letter of admission, passport and some additional papers (I can't really remember what else it was).
3. You pay once you pick up your visa and passport. (If you, for which ever reason need to get a new passport, do not worry. You can still enter China with your old passport with the china visa in it + your new passport. Just make sure to make copies of both passports in case they ask for it.)

Course selection:

If you are a Chinese language student, you don't need to select courses. You only need to take a language test. If you are a general advanced student, make sure to keep track of the starting date. Courses are distributed on a first come first serve basis. A tip from me is to research beforehand what courses you want to take. Once you've decided, note down the course codes, so you only have to copy paste. Another important tip is to use the Chinese version of the course selection program because the English one tends to crash a lot. I was 30 mins late for course selection because the English server kept crashing. By the time I decided to use the Chinese server most of the courses I wanted to take were already full. Don't worry though because you will have other chances to enroll in courses. Fudan has three course selection phases where you can add and drop courses. If you still can't get into the courses, you have the opportunity to go into the class as a guest during the first 2 weeks and ask your teacher if he/she is willing to take in one more student.

Dorms:

Since Free University and Fudan University have a bilateral agreement, you don't have to worry about getting a place in the dorms. You will automatically get a room without having to register for it. In my case, I stayed at the sub-building for international students (留学生公寓) Located at 杨浦区武东路 57 号近武川路。Make sure to write down the address of your dorm because you will need it if you take a taxi home or if you need to navigate your way home. The sub-buildings have no elevator, so I recommend you to arrive early to choose your floor. The "apartment" consists of 4 single rooms, 2 bathroom and one common area. If you compare it to German standards the apartment is not as clean as you would expect it but acceptable. The common area only has 2 sinks, no kitchen or whatsoever. The 2 bathrooms are tiny but have

the basic utensils. To be able to use hot water, you will need one of the three cards you receive during the registration.

Upon Arrival:

I arrived on the 1st of September at Shanghai Pudong airport. After landing you have to head straight to the fingerprint scanner, only after going through that procedure you can proceed to the immigration counters. Once you are done with the whole immigration process head straight to the taxi stands located outside the airport.

IMPORTANT: GO STRAIGHT TO THE OFFICIAL TAXI STANDS OUTSIDE THE AIRPORT BY FOLLOWING THE TAXI SIGNS! DO NOT FOLLOW ANY PEOPLE PRETENDING TO BE AIRPORT STAFF TELLING YOU THERE IS AN AIRPORT TAXI AND YOU JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW THEM!

The taxi ride from Pudong Airport to the Foreigner student dorm should cost you only 200-220 yuan. Bring enough money with you if you can't pay with Wepay or Alipay yet. I brought 1500 Yuan with me. I paid 400 Yuan at the registration. 430 Yuan for a sim card with 100GB (30GB regular data 70GB for tencent videos and other APP's) per month for a year (that was the most expensive plan but apparently also had the fastest internet). I chose this plan because I didn't want to buy an internet router for my laptop as well. I just used my phones hotspot to connect my laptop to the internet.

Bank Account:

If you are from the Free University and have a scholarship you don't need to look for a bank. The first thing you have to do is to get the "Introduction Letter" from the Foreign Affairs Office at Fudan University. Afterwards you head to the Fudan China Bank branch located at the main entrance of the Handan Campus, right behind Agriculture China Bank. During the orientation week always carry all your documents and copies with you. This way registration and etc goes smoothly.

Life on Campus:

When I first arrived in China, I was super lost and didn't know where to go, what to do or where to get things. Thankfully I wasn't the only one. Being lost made me initiate conversations to ask for help or directions. As a result I did not only leave my comfort zone (I'm introverted), but also started putting my Chinese to use. I met so many new friends through this whole talking to random strangers' process. Don't worry if you don't meet anyone during the first week, you will likely meet people in class too and even if you don't strike up a conversation first, someone else will do so.

Fudan University is right next to 五角场 (Wujiaochang - popular area to eat and shop). The University is surrounded by many delicious restaurants and shopping places. If you're too lazy to go out and get food there is also 外卖 (Waimai) which has almost every food you crave and it delivers 24/7. Important apps you have to download if you are a foodie are 大众点评 (Chinese yelp), 饿了么 and 美团外卖 (Chinas food delivery Apps). If you are too lazy to go out to shop you can also order on 淘宝 (Chinas amazon) which is cheap and fast. Be careful though because cheap doesn't always mean good quality too.

On weekends you can go to many bars and clubs in Shanghai. Most of the clubs are free entry and if you know the promoters you don't even have to pay for drinks. During my whole time in Shanghai I only had to pay for the taxis to the clubs and back home. To avoid getting overcharged for a taxi ride, download the APP 滴滴 (DiDi - Chinas Uber). This way you don't have to tell them the address and can have an estimate of how much you will have to pay. It would be more beneficial if you know some Chinese because sometimes, they will call you.

If you're on an X2 Visa, you can only enter China once and can't travel outside China. China has a lot of beautiful places to travel to as well. I for example went to 黄山 (HuangShan), 杭州 (Hangzhou) and 桂林 (Guilin). I could have gone to more places, but I rather stayed in Shanghai.

All in all, I can guarantee you that your time in Shanghai and at Fudan University will be a challenge and an experience you will unlikely forget. It will not only help you with your Chinese skills, but also make you grow as a person. If I had the chance to go again, I would definitely use the opportunity. Being in China also made me realize that I needed to work harder on my Chinese to one day be able to live and maybe work in this beautiful country. I want to not only thank Free University for giving me this chance, but also thank my Professors for encouraging me to go and make this experience.