

Exchange report: Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China



*Antai School of Business and Management
Chantel Leung
Information Systems and Management, Year 3
Spring 2018*

Monthly log

February

I arrived at Shanghai on the 29th and was greeted warmly by the students from SJTU. We settled in and attended the orientation session for exchange students. It was very informative and helped us to navigate around school and Shanghai in general.

March

It was a very busy and stressful month. SJTU operates very different from any other schools I have attended before. Many processes, e.g. course selection or dorm registration, were very manual and not many information were given to us. Luckily, the staff was very helpful. Once we settled in, we took a quick trip to the nearby Wuxi to enjoy the cherry blossom season. It was such an underrated spot and I highly recommended it. Locals were very friendly and the view was stunning.

April

I flew back to HK for 2 weeks to attend internship interviews. When I was back, it was my priority to catch up on the class progress. Another thing about SJTU that makes it different is that they don't have a similar system to Canvas like we do at UST. Hence, I had to talk to individual professors to see what assignments I was missing. Giving out lecture note was also not a thing there so I asked classmates for help. Nevertheless, it was a great way for me to know my class and lecturers better.

May

We strolled around Shanghai to explore the non-touristy side of this beautiful city. I also took a solo trip to Hangzhou and it was a very interesting experience. I would suggest students to always go with a friend when travelling in China. School was very hectic because many projects are coming up and because of the little language barrier we had, I had a hard time understanding in class. Therefore, I spent most of May hanging out with local classmates at the library to catch up on the class materials.

June

June was another stressful month because finals are coming up and I couldn't risk failing any classes. The weather in Shanghai became rainy and humid; therefore I wasn't up for travelling anymore. The semester ended with a bittersweet goodbye. I cannot wait to see my friends again in the near future!

Overall Experience

SJTU provides a great variety of course selection. Some of the most popular classes among both local and exchange students are wine tasting and F1 racing. Therefore, exchange students can enjoy the freedom to take classes that help to find interests outside academia, which is quite different when compared to HKUST's course selection. Professors and students are very friendly and eager to help. At many times when I encountered challenges at school, they were always there to answer my questions.

Shanghai itself is a very beautiful city with rich culture. Hongkongers can generally adapt to Shanghainese lifestyle rather quickly as it is similar to HK's in many ways. Some might even agree that Shanghai is a more convenient city than HK. People's attitude to foreigners are very positive as well. I hadn't received any mistreatment or discrimination because of my accent or where I come from. In fact, people are more enthusiastic to talk to you when they find out that you are a foreign visitor.

However, it is important to note that Minhang campus is located far away from the city center, and it is nothing like the convenient and vibrant Shanghai as mentioned previously. The commute between Minhang to the closest city center usually takes around an hour. Therefore, this may be a problem if you are someone who likes to go out every so often.

SJTU also provides little support and poor management for exchange students, probably due to lack of experience. Many of us had to email or Wechat our coordinators back to back in order to get some trivial things done. Therefore, it was quite helpless and inefficient in the beginning because there isn't a clear guide of what exchange students must do. This also goes to the class structure, which is very loosely structured. Since SJTU do not have a system that is similar to Canvas, it was very hard to keep track of the class progress. Asking questions to professors and classmates can help a lot in this case.

Generally speaking, completing this exchange program at SJTU was a very different and fruitful experience. Study wise, as it was very hard to make the sudden switch from English to Mandarin, I don't think I learnt as much in SJTU as I would have in HK. However, there are many other life lessons to learn which are probably more useful. There were many challenges and incidents that I encountered in China, and they taught me to be independent, adaptive and open-minded. I believe these qualities can be very useful for my personal development.

General exchange information

1. Visa procedure

Mainland travel permit for HK and Macau holders do not need visa to study in mainland China.

2. Orientation activities

Antai business school provides an orientation talk in the first week of March on the topics of course registration, accommodation and transportation info, and introduction to SJTU.

3. International services & activities

Antai business school organises some field trips to visit local businesses and interesting workshops that are opened to all international students.

4. Accommodations

It was arranged that all HK, Macau and Taiwan undergrad exchange students live on Minhang campus. The dormitory has a 12am curfew and 3 exchange students share a room. The room itself is similar to that in HKUST, with an addition of a balcony. However, mattresses are not provided. Each floor share one common bathroom. The big issue is that it is a common shower. There are some low-priced hotels outside campus if needed.

I would recommend ordering bottled water from tmall and a bathrobe for covering up.

5. Courses registration

The process is done online by ourselves during the first 2 weeks of March. Course catalog should be sent out by email before the semester starts. The registration server is very unstable so make sure you do it as early as possible.

6. Teaching & assessment methods

SJTU uses absolute grading and the passing grade is 60. Lecture styles vary greatly among professors and you will be handing in assignments to professors individually. Since they do not have a system similar to canvas, it is important to keep track of the course progress and collect all lecture notes in class.

7. Sports & recreation facilities

Sports wise, there are a few indoor gyms, running tracks and a swimming pool on Minhang campus. IMO running around campus is a much better and more comfortable choice.

As Minhang campus is a relatively remote area, SJTU provides students with a number of entertainment facilities on campus, such as cinema, pool, bowling etc.

8. Finance & banking

There is a Bank of China on campus and it is recommended to register a bank account upon arrival. Alipay in China is more common than cash so by linking your bank to your Alipay account, you are set financially.

9. Social clubs & networking opportunities

There are many clubs on campus, but none cater to HK students as there aren't many of us here. You can join any clubs in the beginning of the semester. There is one place that serves alcohol near campus where you may meet some new people.

10. Health & safety

Call 120 for ambulance service, 110 for police and 119 for firefighters. Patrolling on campus is available at night. Generally speaking, it is safe on campus.

11. Food

There are 6 cafeterias on campus. Coffee shops, convenience stores, grocery stores and other smaller tuck shops can also be found. However, the main method to get food is probably using delivery apps, two of which are 美團外賣 and 餓了嗎.

12. Transportation

Taxi service apps are very common and reasonable priced in Shanghai, including 滴滴打車, 美團打車. There is shuttle bus service between Minhang and Xuhui campus. You will need to take a 10 min bus trip to get to the closest subway station, and around an hour to get to the closest metro area Xujiahui. Taking the train (gaotie) is a very local and authentic way to travel across China.

13. Climate

March and April are very cold, and you will need a heavy winter jacket to get by. Temperature rises from then on and it gets relatively warm in June and you will need summery clothes like shorts and tank tops. The difference in temperature is also high within the same day (+/- 5C).

14. Communication

Download VPN prior to travelling as it will not be available once you are inside China. In order to communicate with students and professors here, use WeChat. Skype is also available here if you need to connect with people oversea without VPN.

15. Cautionary measures

- a. Do not get into cars that are not taxis nor from taxi service apps.
- b. Do not walk outside campus at night as the campus is located in a relatively quiet and remote neighbourhood.
- c. Avoid eating at places that are not up to hygiene standards.
- d. Study mandarin well because classes are mostly taught in Mandarin.

Items to bring

1. Mainland travel permit
2. HKID
3. Phone with VPN installed
4. Laptop with VPN installed
5. Adapter
6. Winter jacket (~10C)
7. Summer clothing (unless you like to use Taobao/tmall)
8. Medical insurance card
9. Runner and sports clothes
10. USB
11. Medication
12. Passport photos

Useful links and contacts

1. <http://electsys.sjtu.edu.cn/> course registration website
2. <https://www.baidu.com> equivalent to Google in Chinese
3. <http://cn.bing.com> equivalent to Google in English
4. <https://www.tmall.com> tmall supermarket provides next day delivery
5. Download these apps:
 - a. Alipay
 - b. 美團外賣
 - c. 餓了嗎
 - d. 上海移動 for purchasing data outside Shanghai
 - e. 百度地圖
 - f. 掌上校園 for student ID
 - g. 攜程旅行 for train tickets
 - h. 美團打車
 - i. 哈羅單車
 - j. 大眾點評 similar to openrice/yelp
 - k. 掏票票 for movie tickets