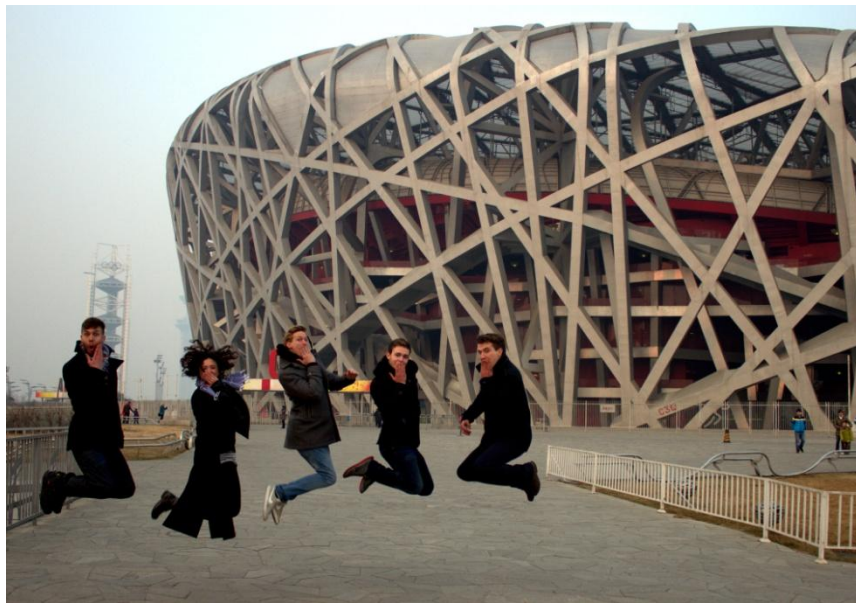




## Projects Abroad China February 2014 Newsletter



## Editor's Note

Welcome to February's edition of the Projects Abroad Shanghai newsletter. February has been a strange month weather-wise. It started with bright sunshine, 25 degrees, and turned extremely cold! Nevertheless, we have been keeping warm from our many adventures and get-togethers. We have welcomed 12 new volunteers this month, all from different countries across the globe! They have started internships in our business, journalism, law and teaching projects and we looking forward to hearing about all their amazing experiences and stories. Everyone is looking forward to March as the Chinese spring shall be upon us!

Enjoy the articles.

## Chinese New Year 2014- Welcome to the Year of the Horse

Shanghai during Chinese New Year sounded like a war-zone! It was so loud that all of the car alarms on my street were going off - adding to the all night noise of fireworks and fire crackers. I was warned that it would be loud but didn't expect it to sound like carnages!

Chinese New Year is the most celebrated holiday in China. Unlike the western New Year, that follows a solar calendar, the Chinese New Year is based on the lunar calendar. This means the calendar is based on the position of the moon. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014, the position of the moon indicated the start of spring and therefore the start of the New Year in China (CNY is also referred to as 'Spring Festival').

There are 12 Chinese zodiac signs that represent 12 animals. These animals are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Each of these animals represents a year once every 12 years. The animal is supposed to resemble personality traits of the people who were born in that year. We have now entered the year of the horse (people born in the year of the horse are supposed to

be good communicators, intelligent and hard-working). All of Shanghai was lit up with massive impressive sparkly lights and there were many horse statues, people wearing horse t-shirts and I even saw a few pretending to be a horse! It is a Chinese tradition for people to spend time with their families during the Chinese New Year and many businesses had a holiday week. A lot of people in Shanghai come here for business so this meant that these people left Shanghai during this time. It was quite strange because the most populated city in the





world was not that busy (apart from a few places where it was just as packed as normal!). It was a joy to get on the metro during the typical rush hour times and not have to fight for a seat!

You could almost feel the sense of excitement buzzing around the city! Even on the metro, people were singing and I had little kids coming up to me showing off their English skills by saying 'happy new year, happy new year' in their squeaky voiced Chinese accents! The whole sky was lit up with impressive firework displays all across the city. BANG BANG WHIZZ WOOOO BANG every split second and literally all night! So much so that I am relatively relieved that I can get a decent night sleep again now that it's all calmed down!



Most of the volunteers left Shanghai during the New Year because their placements were closed for holiday. Many travelled together on the bullet-train to Beijing (approx. 1,500km in 5 hours!) and then headed for a trek on the Great Wall. When everyone was back from their trips we decided to have a social event to celebrate the end of the New Year. We all went to Yuyuan Garden, a popular tourist place in the centre of Shanghai, and experienced a hectic evening. Then we had some delicious Chinese food. You can see a few snaps of our lovely evening on this blog!

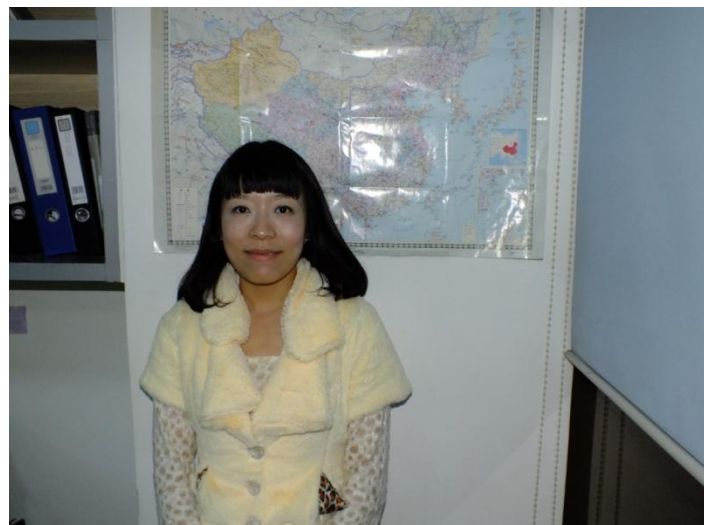
Altogether, being in China during Chinese New Year has been an incredible experience (despite all of the noise!). The Chinese people are very welcoming and they seem to enjoy sharing these celebrations with foreigners. HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR PEOPLE OF THE WORLD AND WELCOME TO THE YEAR OF THE HORSE!

### Our new operation manager's introduction

Hello, everyone! I'm Pauline, Operations Manager from the Projects Abroad-Shanghai office. I'm so glad to join in this big international family. I started my work on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2014; therefore, I'm still very new to the company and trying my best to be familiar with every procedure.

The staff members in Shanghai office are friendly and patient. They are willing to help me figure out with tough problems. Kay is a very responsible supervisor and teaches me a lot of things. Administrative management and accommodation are well organized by Wendy and Lily. Violet is enthusiastic for treating every volunteer. This year we also have a new staff member, Richie. He is from the Sri Lanka office and also helps me to get familiar with Projects Abroad. Although we are a small team of six people, we run every step smoothly and cooperate with each other very well.

From the beginning of my work in Projects Abroad, I visited all the volunteers both at their placements and their



flats. They loved Chinese culture and enjoyed their stay in Shanghai. Some of them visited our capital, Beijing, and other beautiful cities and scenic spots like Hangzhou, Xiamen, Huangshan, etc. There are almost five years gone since I graduated from my university in New Zealand; thus, I admire that our volunteers can have this kind of opportunity to explore another country and experience the different cultures. I hope to see more interactions between Chinese and foreign cultures with my future work in Projects Abroad. This job would be full of fun.

In a word, I welcome all the volunteers who would like to experience a different culture in Shanghai, the metropolis of China. So what are you waiting for?  
Come and join this amazing city!

**Pauline Qian, PA Shanghai operations manager**

From Sri Lanka to Shanghai (via London)

Nee How! I'm Richie from London and I am the new information manager for Projects Abroad Shanghai.

From June 2012 to June 2013, I was the social manager for Projects Abroad in Sri Lanka. This involved meeting volunteers upon their arrival, running social events, assisting with workshops/seminars, arranging feedbacks and basically making sure everything ran smoothly for our volunteers. The volunteers in Sri Lanka are predominantly working in care, teaching and medical placements, and towards the end of my time in the 'pearl of the Indian ocean' we set up a sports placement at a school with 4000 children (hard work is an understatement!). This was an amazing experience and it was a real pleasure for me to assist so many volunteers with their life memories— hence the reason I am back with Projects Abroad in Shanghai after 7 months working in London.

Shanghai and Sri Lanka are different in so many ways, but they still share the exciting Asia buzz, which is a key reason why I am always drawn back here (I previously lived in Thailand, taught in India and have travelled Asia for many months).

The placements that we have in Shanghai are also different from what we offer in Sri Lanka. In Shanghai we do offer great teaching and care placements but we predominantly focus on law, journalism, business, medical and sports placements. Shanghai is the business hub of China so it is no coincidence that we focus on business-oriented internships. There are skyscrapers literally everywhere and you can almost feel the heartbeat of the city from the businessmen and women travelling in their thousands on the new underground system (compared with the London underground it is pristine!).



The volunteer accommodation is also different in Shanghai compared with Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka the volunteers stay with host families, whereas in Shanghai they have their own apartments. Volunteers here generally stay in groups of 3 or 4 in the city, while we arrange regular get-togethers and social events.

Projects Abroad China also has placements in Chengdu and I will be travelling to Chengdu every couple of months to assist our volunteers there. As in Shanghai, we also have mainly business-oriented placements in Chengdu, but perhaps what I am most excited about is our panda base! Our volunteers can look after the pandas in this base, amazing right!

We have an amazing team here in China and I am excited and ready for an action-packed year ahead.

### **Rich Egan, Projects Abroad Shanghai Information Manager**

#### Matt Our British Law volunteer

Matt; Shanghai; what can I say...this place is pretty epic! 8 weeks in and I am loving every minute of it!

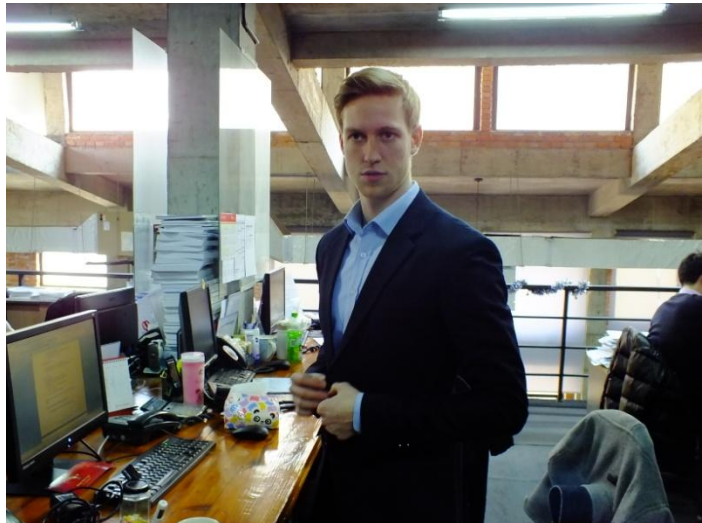
Like most people, before my arrival in Shanghai I was somewhat anxious. Leaving behind all the familiarities of home to come and live in a foreign country was a daunting prospect, but also one filled with great sense of adventure and excitement.

However, all my initial apprehensions were quickly a thing of the past and within a day or two Shanghai really did start to feel like home!

Within 36 hours of my arrival I had formed some pretty solid friendships with the other volunteers but most notably with my flat mate Rodney (Ronald). From day one it felt like we had been mates for years!

Over the weekend we went out exploring Shanghai and I quickly found myself at the fabric market being sized up for a new suit. It's awesome! At just 550RMB (55 pounds), you can get a full tailored suit available to be picked up the following day; how good is that! This is just one of the many wonderful things Shanghai has to offer!

That evening we all went out for drinks and ended up at this place overlooking Shanghai's infamous skyline, made up of the financial districts high rise buildings and spectacular lights.



Although the views were incredible, the prices on the other hand were not so impressive, so we quickly vacated and headed for somewhere more within our price range...This led us to Perry's bar, a place with a good vibe and decent music! The place is pretty legendary with the young expat community in Shanghai and I can see why...It's awesome!

The Sunday was a struggle but after drinking copious amounts of water and eating the unhealthiest foods available, I was ready to tackle the remainder of the day.

With Monday morning fast approaching my attention quickly shifted to thoughts about my new job. Emotions were running high, the apprehension was building and the cliché unanswered questions loomed, "Will I enjoy my job?", "What will my work colleagues be like?" etc. Once again all these little worries were diminished within a few hours of being in the office. Everyone was friendly and my boss turned out to be a pretty chilled guy who was easy to have a laugh with. The work itself is both challenging and interesting, so I was very pleased with what I would be doing each day.



Before I knew it, Friday was upon me and my working week was over. As the saying goes "work hard, play hard" and as I had worked hard in the week I felt more than entitled to enjoy the weekend and that I certainly did...but maybe a little too much!. Safe to say that it was a good Friday night! This pretty much set the tone for the ensuing weeks.

Writing this now, I am currently 8 weeks into my 12 week placement, and time has flown by! It only seems like yesterday I was packing my bags and saying my goodbyes to friends and family. Now 2 months on, equipped with an arsenal of funny stories, wonderful experiences and the opportunity to meet some amazing people along the way, I am approaching the final chapter of my Shanghai adventure.

Let's see what the next 4 weeks has in store for me. If it's half as good as the previous 8 weeks I will return home a very happy guy. Watch the space!

**Matt Morris**

### Georgia- Our Australian law volunteer

I spent one month as a law intern at Links Law Offices, Shanghai, in January 2014. Let me say, one month was not long enough! My time with Projects Abroad was unbelievable, from the moment I



arrived at the Shanghai airport; to my departure for further travel around China, I experienced so much more than I could have believed possible. Shanghai is an incredible city and my experience with locals, colleagues, Projects Abroad staff and other volunteers was one that I won't be forgetting any time soon.

People ask me what the best thing was that I did in Shanghai; honestly, I did so many amazing things that I couldn't even distinguish a top five. The work I did for Llinks during my placement was interesting and I learnt a lot. My placement was purely corporate law, mainly in a foreign investment capacity, and being able to observe the way China interacts internationally from a legal perspective, was something I found fascinating. My work place was so friendly, which is something that soon becomes obvious among the Chinese, and getting to go away for the weekend for my firm's annual party was definitely a highlight. Also, wandering around Shanghai, day or night, the city is buzzing. A million places to eat, drink and dance make for a perpetual playground that you can't help but get out and explore!



## Georgia Dight

### Ronald Our Dutch business volunteer

"In vergelijking met drie jaar geleden gapen Chinezen me nog steeds evenveel aan in de metro als op straat (zelfs in de internationale metropool Shanghai met op dit moment zo'n  $\pm 30$  miljoen inwoners waarvan  $\pm 20$  miljoen geregistreerd en  $\pm 10$  miljoen arbeidsmigrant), ze rochelen nog steeds even smerig (ook zowel in de metro als op straat..), ze slurpen nog steeds net zo hard aan hun thee, ze duwen en trekken nog steeds even irritant



om in/uit de metro te komen, en ze hebben (vanuit Westers oogpunt dan) nog steeds geen enkele vorm van tafelmanieren ontwikkeld! Maar wanneer we dit allemaal onder het kopje 'cultuur' scharen, blijft er toch een hele mooie stad en land over!!"

Zo begon ik mijn eerste update aan familie en vrienden zo'n 7 weken geleden, en eigenlijk is dit alles wat je moet weten voordat je naar China afreist! Alhoewel, het hebben van een VPN is ook wel handig wanneer je gebruik wilt blijven maken van Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.!!

Zo'n 10 weken geleden begon ik dan eindelijk aan mijn stage van 3 maanden bij een kleine investment bank in Pudong, Shanghai. Ondanks dat ik gedurende mijn studie al aardig wat Aziatische reiservaring had opgedaan, was ik net als ieder ander redelijk gespannen wat betreft met wie ik een appartement zou gaan delen, of mijn werk wel interessant zou zijn en of ik wel leuke Chinese collega's zou hebben?! Nu terugkijkend kan ik zeggen dat deze 'spanningen' volledig overbodig waren en kan ik iedere zojuist genoemde vraag met een grote JA beantwoorden!

Werken in een zogenaamde 'boutique' investment bank, na een studie International Business, is als "met je neus in de boter vallen"! Het Chinese zakenleven kan zo nu en dan vrij intens zijn; denk aan diners/lunches waarbij de traditionele witte rijstwijn "Moutai" (à 53% alcohol) geserveerd wordt, als wel overwerken in verband met het feit dat Chinese IPO's na een 'freeze-periode' van 13 maanden eindelijk weer doorgang vinden tot de kapitaalmarkt! Maar gelukkig kwam ik in een team terecht met 2 zeer ervaren bazen en 7 andere Chinezen (waarvan er 5 gelukkig in het buitenland hadden gestudeerd) die mij overal perfect in konden begeleiden! En inmiddels kan ik zeggen dat ze mij gevraagd hebben om mijn stage (en visum) betaald met 3 maanden te verlengen! Vandaar het advies: "Work hard, party hard" & "Always smile"!

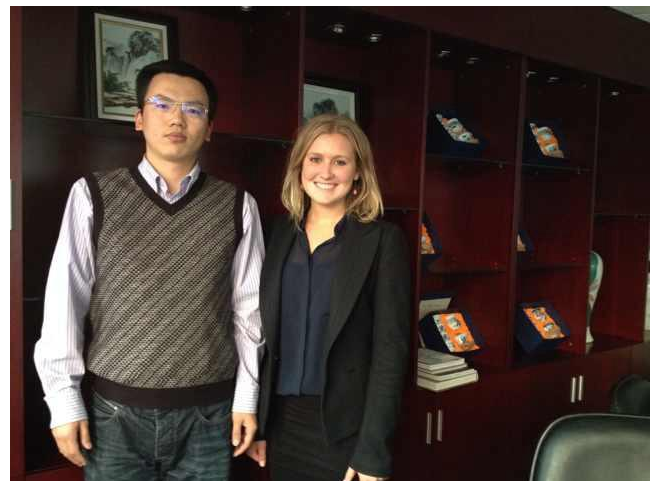
Wat betreft 'party' heeft de op-drie-na-grootste metropool ter wereld vanzelfsprekend ook genoeg te bieden! Van ladiesnight in Geisha (woensdag)/ Bar Rouge (donderdag), tot clubavonden in het weekend van inkopen doen op de Fake Market tot een op-maat-gemaakt pak van de Tailor Market; van vakanties met vrienden/collega's naar Beijing/Chengdu tot weekendtripjes naar Suzhou/Hangzhou; in China is alles mogelijk!

Kortom: Haal eruit wat erin zit ;-)

## **Ronald Lardonis**

### Min- Our Australian Law volunteer

I worked at the Shanghai Promise Law Firm for one month in January 2014. Everything exceeded my expectations - the placement, the city, the people and the food (most of the time!) At work, I mostly undertook research into Chinese and other foreign laws to provide advice for clients on a range of legal issues. The employees at the firm were incredibly friendly. One lady invited me to her house for dinner, the partner took me shopping for porcelain (because apparently he knows his stuff!) and we would





often eat out for lunch together. Only a couple of people could speak English so, in their absence, these activities were often organised via Google translate, which was quite amusing.

Shanghai is a really cool city. There is so much to see and do, you just need to do some research and talk to the locals. I would recommend downloading the Smart Shanghai App, which is really useful for navigating around. I managed to pack in a lot in one month but it was definitely too short and I'll be back for sure! Lastly, thanks to all the Projects Abroad staff, a great group of people that provided exceptional in-country support.

### **Min Simmons**

#### Jie- Our Australian Medical Volunteer

My name is Jie Chen and I am from Australia. I'm doing my medical internship in the radiology department of Renji hospital. I'm in my third year now and as I wish to have more hands-on skills, I choose to do my intern period at the public teaching hospital. On my first day of work, I was shocked by the department's workload; even the radiographer in the CT room didn't have time to go to the toilet. During my stay, my supervisor and other staff were quite helpful and I learned new things eachday! I quite enjoy what I do! I will definitely come back next summer break.

### **Jie Wu**



