

PROJECTS ABROAD CHINA

MAY ISSUE, 2014



ProjectsAbroad

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the May edition of the Projects Abroad China Official Newsletter. May is considered by many to be the best month to visit China. The harsh winter days seem like a distant memory, yet the scorching summer has not yet arrived. The greenery has blossomed and the aroma of the variety of Chinese herbs and spices is complimented by smiling old ladies who look like they are 150 and often carrying something pretty heavy! Spring is short in China (maximum two months) and we are currently in the midst of the season, enjoying every minute.



The month started with a national holiday in China, meaning that most of the country stopped work for a four day break. This break was warmly welcomed by our volunteers and staff in both Shanghai and Chengdu and most attended local music festivals in the sweet sunshine that the glorious month of May so often brings. Since then

we have all been hard at work. But at the same time as working hard, we have been playing hard by having regular social events and group activities. We have also welcomed Ashanti, the Projects Abroad China volunteer advisor, from South Africa. Read about one of our socials with Ashanti in this issue.

Also included in this issue is an article from our German care volunteer who explains about his experience in China and at our brand new kindergarten in Chengdu. Our Chengdu staff have also had the pleasure of having Andrew, a business volunteer from the UK; read about his experience below. As well as the action packed experiences from our Chengdu volunteers, within this issue you can read about the experiences of business, architecture and teaching volunteers and an interview with a Swedish business volunteer in Shanghai. In addition to the wonderful experiences from our volunteers from all different backgrounds and countries the Projects Abroad team has started a global shark campaign and you can read about our workshop in China with 50 adorable kids and Jackie from the USA in this edition!

What a wonderful month we have had in China. We are all looking forward to June where we will be welcoming 40 volunteers who will be carrying out internships in a variety of different businesses, journalism, medical, law, sports, teaching and care placements. Volunteering can lead to potentially positive life changing decisions and these rewarding experiences is something that Projects Abroad, in every destination, thrives upon.

RICHARD EGAN
INFORMATION MANAGER

VOLUNTEER ARTICLE



Markus Fenske Chengdu teaching volunteer from Germany

Mein Name ist Markus Fenske. Ich bin 19 Jahre alt, komme aus München und habe gerade mein Abitur bestanden. Nun bin ich seit knapp 2 Monaten in China, genauer gesagt in Chengdu, mit der Organisation Project Abroad.

Untergebracht bin ich in einer für chinesische Verhältnisse sehr geräumigen Wohnung mit optimaler Lage. Sprich 10min. von der nächsten Metrostation und 5min. vom nächsten großen Supermarkt entfernt. Zudem gibt es überall kleine Geschäfte und Restaurants, was die tägliche Nahrungssuche deutlich vereinfacht. Im Moment

lebe ich dort mit noch 3 anderen Freiwilligen.

Jeder von ihnen ist sehr nett und somit freundet man sich schnell an, um gemeinsam das chinesische Alltagsleben zu bewältigen. Man geht zusammen Abendessen, macht am Wochenende Ausflüge und geht abends das chinesische Nachtleben unsicher machen. Da hier jederaus einem anderen Land ist, lernt man nicht nur die chinesische Kultur kennen, sondern in meinem Fall auch die amerikanische, englische und niederländische. Zudem spricht man ausschließlich Englisch, wodurch sich auch mein Englisch täglich verbessert.



Quasi um die Ecke befindet sich eine weitere Wohnung von Projects Abroad. Mit den Leuten dort unternimmt man auch sehr viel, und man wächst somit schnell zu einer Gruppe mit den anderen Freiwilligen zusammen. Aber allgemein ist hier jeder „Ausländer“ sehr offen, wodurch man sehr schnell viele neue nette Leute kennen lernt.

Den ersten Monat habe ich damit verbracht, einen Chinesisch- Intensivkurs zu belegen. Folglich hatte ich fünf Mal die Woche, drei Stunden am Tag, Privatunterricht in einer kleinen Sprachschule, fünf Minuten von meiner Wohnung entfernt. Die Lehrer waren sehr freundlich, und trotz der vielen Arbeit, die mit dem Lernen einer neuen Sprache verbunden ist, hat es sehr viel Spaß gemacht. Allerdings ist ein Monat nicht mal annäherungsweise genug, um Chinesisch zu lernen, und somit schlag ich mich immer noch mit Händen, Füßen und dem ein oder anderen falsch betonten chinesischen Wort durch.

Nun arbeite ich seit einem Monat in einem typisch chinesischen Kindergarten. Das Projekt

macht sehr viel Spaß und ist genau das Richtige für jeden, der die Arbeit mit Kindern mag und einen Einblick in die chinesische Kultur erhaschen möchte. Neben meiner Hauptaufgabe auf die Kinder aufzupassen, halte ich auch zwei Mal die Woche eine Englischstunde, die bis jetzt ganz gut sowohl bei den Kindern als auch bei den Erziehern ankommt. Meine Kollegen sind 100% Chinesen, was einerseits sehr positiv ist, da man so die chinesische Kultur live mitbekommt und z.B. zum traditionellen Hot Pot essen eingeladen wird, andererseits jedoch sprechen sie wenig Englisch und somit fällt das Verständigen manchmal etwas schwer.

Alles in Allem fühle ich mich hier sehr wohl. Und jedem der mal etwas komplett anderes als z.B. Deutschland sehen will, kann ich nur empfehlen, hier her zu kommen. Natürlich könnte ich jetzt noch ewig weiterschreiben, wie das Leben in China ist etc., jedoch ist das eine Erfahrung, die man lieber selber machen sollte, als nur davon zu lesen. Und ich kann euch sicher sagen: Es lohnt sich!



Andrew Haddon

Chengdu business volunteer from the UK



When embarking on my travels I was unsure of what to expect, both from the country and myself. As a person, my self confidence is fairly low and so deciding to go travelling in my gap year to China was a big step in changing who I am. I am attending university in September and felt I wanted to understand more about how business in China works, especially given its growing dominance as an economic powerhouse. I'm writing this now in my final week in China. It feels strange that I am so close to going home. After spending so much time being apprehensive and I suppose fearful of travelling by myself, it seems odd to think that now I wish it wasn't ending.

Spending a month in the marketing department of a Chinese organic food company may sound tedious beyond thought, but it has been anything but. Most of my co-workers stared at me like some giant, ginger demi-god upon first entering the office

and while it was a bit unnerving at first, it soon became a source of jokes for the weeks to come. My office has a very laid back and yet incredibly productive nature about it. I have found myself carrying out a myriad of tasks mainly centering on marketing, research, and design. Initially they would set me long and laborious research tasks which helped me tremendously to hone in on the humble art of 'Googling'. However this soon ended and since then I have been involved in a severe re-branding of the company's advertising at their farms. They were very interested in my different view points and ideas (many of which were branded as western) so much so that they have taken many of my ideas on board. Due to the company's limited budget it is unlikely that I will see first hand the impact of my work, however they have assured me that the pictures of the new designs that I have helped to implicate will be on their way as soon as work is completed. Being part of such a project and receiving praise and

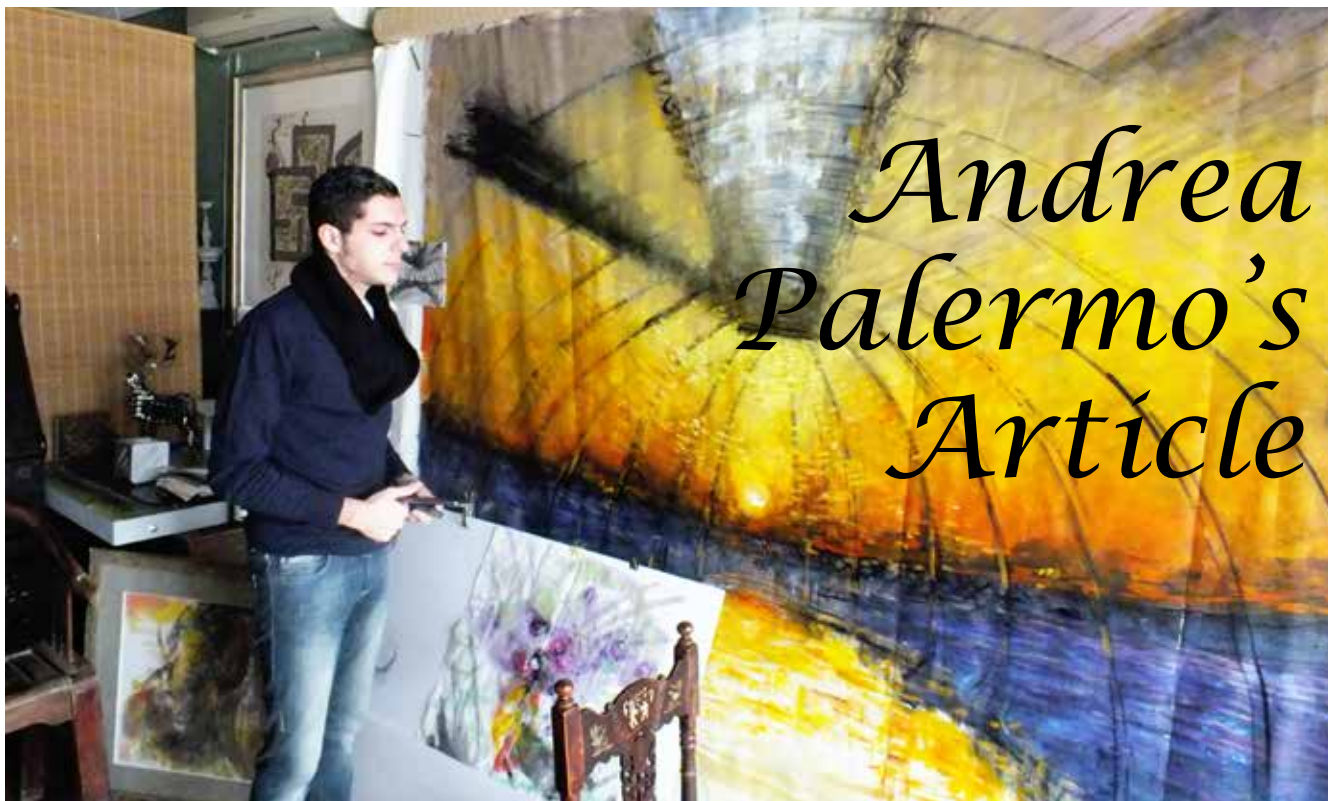


gratitude for your help was one of the high points of my Chengdu experience.

Surprisingly enough, being the apprehensive, un-confident person that I am I was worried about spending four weeks in a flat with three complete strangers from all over the world. My fears were put to rest as soon as I entered the door and received a warm welcome. I was expecting a rubbish dump of a flat, as it seems to be intrinsically linked to student travelling. However I was pleasantly surprised to walk in to a large, comfortable flat. The flat its self was in a perfect location, ideally situated in the Tong Zi Ling area, one of the, if not the richest district in Chengdu. There are plenty of restaurants around serving everything you could want from burgers, chips, ice cream and any other western food you could think of to traditional Chinese restaurants and strangely enough a Japanese barbeque, where I found myself spending the majority of my meal times. At the weekends life in Chengdu is very relaxed. I found myself waking up and going into town on most weekends to see all of the monasteries, parks and sights that Chengdu had to offer. My favourite location was the Peoples Park in the centre of Chengdu. At the weekend you can find it to be a

bustling place of culture, with whole crowds all of a sudden breaking into dance like a flash mob or a scene out of Grease where everyone already knows all the moves to a well choreographed routine, with the exception of one person who to her credit didn't give up but remained about three seconds behind the rest of the group during every routine.

It's fair to say that life in Chengdu is a world away from anything that I have experienced before. I had initially set my sights on a month internship in Shanghai, only being convinced to take a gamble on Chengdu. I sit here now a relieved man; if I had chosen Shanghai over Chengdu I don't believe I would have had the same experience. I came away with the intention of learning about Chinese business, trying to improve my own self confidence and to have fun. I think that I have achieved everything that I came to do but I have had a lot more fun than I thought. This is attributed largely to my flat mates and friends that I have met out here and Chengdu itself. Whether you want to go out and experience an immense night life, wake up early and visit a monastery or scale the heights of mount Emi, Chengdu has everything you are looking for and then more. I dare say that I will be back, but for now I wish to explore the rest of the world. If I can say anything about my trip to Chengdu it is that it has made my desire to travel the world even more intense. I was thoroughly surprised at what Chengdu had to offer and I sit here with a feeling of relief, knowing that if I had decided to 'play it safe' it an almost completely westernized city in Shanghai, I would never have found out about the revelation that is Chengdu.



Shanghai è la città che ho sempre desiderato. Riesce a mixare diversi stili e culture. Da giovane architetto, quello che mi ha colpito non appena arrivato è la grande dicotomia tra vecchio e nuovo, antico e moderno.

Ti basta cambiare linea metropolitana e ad un istante ti ritrovi catapultato tra bancarelle e venditori ambulanti o tra un quartiere bene di una Parigi lontana. La mia esperienza lavorativa è iniziata piuttosto bene. Ho sempre amato l'architettura e l'interior design. Così grazie al mio studio di architettura presso il quale grazie project abroad ho iniziato l'internship, ho cercato subito di capire il gusto cinese. La grande difficoltà è fondere insieme l'occidente con la forte cultura dell'oriente. Gli architetti per i quali lavoro sono cordiali ed hanno subito suscitato in me un estremo interesse nei confronti della

disciplina e dell'architettura in generale. Penso questa sarà un'esperienza indescrivibile. La mia prima settimana a Shanghai è volata e la seconda settimana è piena di aspettative, con tanta voglia di scoprire la cultura cinese, amabile, cordiale e aperta allo straniero.



Ellie Price

Shanghai teaching volunteer from the UK



When I signed up to volunteer I was filled with excitement at the thought of experiencing the vibrant cosmopolitan city first hand. With the mystique of China still prevalent I found the society to be one of contradictions. The beauty of the old incense shrouded temples contrasts with the futuristic skyscrapers and gleaming walkways providing a physical representation of the social and political contradictions of Shanghai. The much-criticized communist structure was present in daily life but so was the glitzy label conscious consumerism that one would expect in any major city. Shanghai is much more than an experiment in economics; its traditional aspects provide so much of its character and what one would truly want from a trip to China. The beauty of Tai Chi in the tree lined avenues of People's Park along with the hustle and bustle of the night time street food give Shanghai its famed individuality and make it so fascinating. Shanghai provides enough familiarity

from its imperialistic past whilst being foreign enough to challenge even the best of travellers; it is this blend of east and west that makes Shanghai so enjoyable.

When I first left for Shanghai in January this year the prospect of Shanghai was thrilling and daunting in equal measures. With family and friends in Hong Kong along with family history in Singapore, the East has always been fascinating to me, but on arrival at Pudong airport everything felt entirely less familiar. I was met in the arrivals hall by Violet who both reassured and settled me in a flat, which was much nicer than the student digs I was expecting! Situated just three minutes walk from the metro station and in a traditional neighborhood very handy for cheap and delicious dumplings! The group that welcomed me at my first volunteer dinner represented the wide range of Projects Abroad- despite only being eight of us we hailed from four different continents.

VOLUNTEER ARTICLE

During my stay the group doubled and diminished a number of times but every reincarnation of the group has proven to be as diverse as Shanghai itself. With endless conversations, endless activities and endless opportunities there is never a dull moment. The nights out that we had as a group are bordering on legendary but just as memorable are the dinners I had with my flat mates when we finally got around to cooking! The people you meet in Shanghai are truly friends and we are as tight as family. Getting to know the fellow volunteers and throwing yourself in to every opportunity (even if it is karaoke) is vital to getting everything you can out of China! It also helps you to feel more settled from telling me when I first arrived that my jet lag would last around eight days and I would lose my appetite, to sharing where you can buy proper Twinning's tea; we became a community within ourselves making settling in to the culture shock of China all that much easier.

As a teaching volunteer I had the privilege of being able to venture out of the shining metropolis of Shanghai daily to experience the lesser-seen rural China. Whilst the poverty of the area could only be described as shockingly awful, the children's joy in learning was proof at the power of human hope and optimism. Teaching was by no means easy with 25 hours of lessons every week to classes of at least 50 children well and truly tired me out. The welcome I received was overwhelmingly friendly which surprised me given the cultural lessons I had on arrival. The fascination with the culture seems to stem both ways and my fellow English teacher was just as enthusiastic as practicing her English as I was at practicing my Mandarin. Classes centered on learning conversational skills especially learning the specific phonics of the English language. The children particularly enjoyed songs that we think of as normal including heads shoulders knees and toes and the wheels on the bus. A specific part of my role was running after school reading classes



for gifted students. Giving the children their first opportunity to see English story books was amazing. Even better was seeing their English vocabularies grow along with their confidence in their own abilities. The children I taught were absolutely beautiful with their enthusiasm for knowledge and playful attitudes; I really think that I won the placement lottery.

With the endless opportunities to travel whether its popping up to Beijing for the weekend or hiking the Yellow mountains all of China proves to be more surprising the further away from the west you get. I return to the UK with the independence that I wished from my gap year as well as a great group of friends if I am ever in need of a holiday! The experience has been truly rich and I doubt that anything will ever replace Shanghai in my heart as a place that I actually grew up. Volunteering with Projects Abroad is something that will give you back everything you put in to it and more and I can't stress enough how much it will change your perspective on the world and on yourself. Happy travelling!



My time in Shanghai !

Kaan Tuncell

Shanghai business volunteer from the UK

I came to Shanghai to experience something completely different, and in that I wasn't disappointed. From its food to its people, Shanghai has a very different atmosphere and culture to it then most places in the West!

Whether its grabbing some dumplings for breakfast in the food markets or going to Hangzhou for the day to see its famed Pagoda, the best way to enjoy Shanghai is to sample as much of it as possible!

The aforementioned food markets are one example of this. I will always remember the market for raw foods right by our apartment, where one could see live eels and frogs to buy (and not for pets).

But go up the road a way at night and you'll get to a bunch of stalls who will cook great pork and beef for you right then and there. The most remarkable thing about these stalls is that they are there all night long, every night. It is the ultimate feeling of community in what can be a very urban jungle!

Even the most familiar part of China for Westerners, its goods, take on a whole new twist at the West Nanjing fake markets. The combination of lots of foolish tourists and ridiculously cheap goods gives the unique pleasure of bidding one vendor from 700 RMB to 49 RMB for a shirt!

Architecturally the only real advice can be to walk places. If one walks from Xintiandi to the river, you go from the European architecture of the French Concession to the modern district of Xintiandi and then the huge and impressive seaside Bund!

So if there is one piece of advice to give about your time in Shanghai, it has to be to take your time.

Leave the McDonalds by the metro alone and walk to a food market. Don't take a taxi everywhere, but walk. That way you will get to see the full depth of a really wonderful and completely different city.

VOLUNTEER STORY



MINJA CHENG VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW

Minja Cheng, from Stockholm, is a Projects Abroad business volunteer who is currently carrying out an internship at Eunacon Perfect Alliance CPA Partnership in Shanghai. In 2006 she received a Bachelor's degree in Science in Business Administration & Economics from Stockholm University and since then she has been working with accounting. 'I came to Shanghai with Projects Abroad because this was an opportunity for me to develop as a person, meet new people and make new friends from around the

world. I wanted to learn more about the Chinese culture and labor, gain skills and get some work experience in the field where I want to pursue a career.' Minja has now been with the team for three months and after finishing her internship will look for a job in finance/economy that is related to Chinese accounting.

Eunacon Perfect Alliance CPA Partnership is a firm that specializes in auditing, tax and accounting that is based in the Puxi area of Shanghai. The firm was established in 2006 and now it employs around 50

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employees that include real estate appraisers, cost engineers and lawyers. It has around 300 clients with around 30 of these being international.

During Minja's three months working at this placement, she has always had her hands full. 'It is a very busy period for auditing firms from March until the end of May, because they have to prepare annual and auditing reports and authorize the annual taxation consolidation reporting package. They are very grateful for all the help they can get from the volunteers.' She told me that as long as the volunteers properly understand the tasks then they can have a lot of responsibility. 'Around 80% of the time I am out of the office meeting existing and potential clients. I also collect and sort out accounting documents, prepare auditing reports and bank statements and reply to the emails of the international clients.' Minja's parents are from China so she can speak fluent Mandarin. This means she has additional responsibilities such as translating Chinese documents to English.

As well as having a busy schedule, Minja experienced the pressure of working with a successful business in China. 'At the start of my time here I was learning about the accounting and auditing practice in Chinese background and environment. When you get more comfortable and familiar, you will be expected to complete all tasks in time and with high quality under the manager's instructions and guidance.'



Minja is now coming to the end of her three month internship and we have had some great feedback about her from the Euracon supervisors. She told me that she has learnt about the Chinese accounting system and how to prepare auditing reports, and additionally she has made an improvement in reading and writing Mandarin. 'I think that this experience has been very useful for my future career if I end up working for a Chinese accounting company. I have also realized that this job is about taking your own initiative and not to expect to have a colleague explaining everything all the time, because they are also very busy!'

To sum up, Minja has been a great volunteer and she has responded perfectly to the pressures of working at Euracon Perfect Alliance CPA Partnership. She has made friends with other volunteers from around the world and has gained some first-hand experience with a Chinese accountancy firm.

FEATURE



PROJECTS ABROAD CHINA SHARK CAMPAIGN

The Projects Abroad team has set up a Global Shark Campaign in 18 of our worldwide destinations, including China. The purpose of this campaign is to raise awareness about the dangers of over-fishing sharks, the immediate need for shark conservation and to put pressure on the United Nations Environment Management Group to ban the global sale of shark-fin soup.

Shark-fin soup is considered a delicacy in many countries in Asia, including some areas of China. The price of shark fins is quite high so sharks are often being slaughtered by humans just for their fins. After their fin is cut off, the shark's carcass is thrown back into the ocean. Sometimes they are thrown back into the ocean while still alive and they sink to the ocean floor because they cannot swim without their fin! Waste of life, right!

Up to 100 million sharks are being killed every year, mainly for sport-fishing and shark-fin soup. To put this into perspective, around 140 sharks are being slaughtered every minute! Sharks are being killed faster than they can reproduce, ultimately causing a rapid depletion in the number of sharks worldwide. New figures suggest that a third of all





shark species are threatened to extinction! This includes sharks such as the hammerhead and white tip reef sharks. This is also having disastrous effects on the ocean's eco-system as sharks are a top predator and fundamental for the balance of the ocean's eco-system. If humans carry on over-fishing sharks at the current rate, the ocean's eco-system is in danger of collapsing, causing unnatural disastrous effects on our ocean! Therefore this is a serious issue that cannot be ignored.

In 2013 there was great news for the cause to ban shark-fin soup. This is because 27 countries banned shark-fin soup. However, despite this great step forward, recent studies show that the rapid depletion of sharks is being maintained. This is mainly due to the black market and the countries that sell most shark-fin soup are still selling a high number of these dishes. This just goes to show that there is still so much more to be done!

Everyone at Projects Abroad is disgusted with



how such an important fish and thus the ocean's eco-system is being threatened by mankind! We are doing everything we can to halt the rapid depletion of sharks to help save the ocean! We have made a petition that aims to ban the global sale of shark fin soup (please like our Global Shark Awareness Page below and sign the petition). The aim of this petition is to put increasing pressure on the United Nations Environment Management Group to take action on this crisis.

Within the 18 different destinations we have been teaching, infants, children, adolescents and adults about the importance of shark conservation and the immediate action to boycott so called delicacies such as shark-fin soup. The Projects Abroad China team had an awareness lesson with a third grade class at Zi Lou Lan School in Shanghai. Our care volunteer, Jackie, taught this lesson with the help of Pauline (Operations Manager) and myself. We started with a PPT about sharks that explained that they are not the man-eating monsters that is often displayed in Hollywood. We then showed pictures of different sharks explaining the names and then pictures of the sad sharks with their fins missing. We finished the class with shark drawing dot-to-dots and drawings on the blackboard. The children all wrote; 'sharks like their fins' on their drawings. Altogether, a fun lesson about a serious issue.

Please join our pages and do your bit to save the sharks from global extinction. TAKE ACTION NOW TO SAVE THE FUTURE.

The arrival of Ashanti and the boat trip social



During a recent social outreach programme, the Projects Abroad China team arranged a boat trip tour of the Bund on the Huangpu River. Our international group, comprised of people from South Africa, France, USA, England, Scotland, Holland, Denmark and Norway, had a delightful time admiring the architect's paradise that is Central Shanghai.

Shanghai is split into two sections, Puxi and Pudong, and they are separated by the Huangpu River, the largest river in Shanghai. The Bund is on the Puxi side of the river on the waterfront area. The architecture on the bund very much represents western colonialism, but what is perhaps the greatest spectacle is the Pudong side of the river, which has many futuristic looking skyscrapers with an abundance of neon lights. For those who haven't seen, have a look at the building that looks like a bottle opener with a hole in the

middle at the top of the building; this is the World Financial Tower and we have a law placement in this building! To the right of this (the building that isn't lit up) there is an incomplete building that will be completed in 2015. This is called the 'Shanghai Center' and it will look like a bottle next to the bottle opener. Genius architecture right! Now that things are warming up in Shanghai, the team thought it would be perfect to arrange a boat tour on the Huangpu River. The day before this social we had the pleasure of welcoming Ashanti, our volunteer advisor for China who was visiting from South Africa, so it was the perfect time to have an amazing view of what is arguably Shanghai's biggest attraction.

Ashanti speaks to every Projects Abroad China volunteer prior to their arrival and gives great advice and feedback about the placements across China. She used to work in China for six months



and she really immersed herself into the culture and grew to love the unpredictability of every day life in the country. She is a bubbly people's person and the whole office was inspired by her 'bright up the room' cheery self. Projects Abroad China is often expanding by working with more placements so one purpose of her visit was to see these new placements so she can give accurate up-to-date information to future volunteers. As well

as a great chance to see the city, Ashanti met all of the Shanghai volunteers during the boat trip and then she had a trip to Chengdu to see all of our volunteers there.

Anyways, back to the social. It was a fun day admiring the futuristic metropolis with an inspirational group of people. Looking forward to our many exciting times ahead!

PHOTO PAGE



SOCIAL CALENDAR

HELLO JUNE

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Day at Shanghai, Beach & Picnic TBD
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Dragon Festival
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Dirty Day - World Cup Morning, meet at East ZhouPu (Line 16, Exit 1)
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	Propaganda Museum Afternoon, meet at Changshu Lu (Line 7 Exit 2)
29	30						
Tianzifang Tour & Dinner TBD				Badminton TBD			

* Times to be confirmed. Contact Rich, on +86 (0)18221063387, for more info.

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