Letter From the Editors

Congratulations on being awarded the Light Fellowship! An amazing adventure awaits you in China; you will learn and experience more than you could ever imagine. From standing triumphantly atop the Great Wall to having your first conversation with a real local friend, each experience will be new and exciting in its own way.

As you prepare for your summer abroad, we hope that the tips provided in the guidebook below will help you on your journey. China is a large and foreign country, and any reading you can do beforehand will only help you to get the most out of your experience. In this book we have compiled the advice and experiences of many different Light fellows over the past years -- their recommendations are sure to be of value to your experience.

So go forward with an open mind and a willingness to take in all that awaits you. And read carefully! Many tips below that may seem trivial now will be life-savers when you are actually living in China.

Best wishes for your travels!

Editor: Stephen Tang


Note: The opinions expressed in this Unofficial Guidebook do not reflect the opinions, comments, or suggestions of Yale University, the Richard U. Light Foundation, or any of their respective employees. Neither Yale University nor the Richard U. Light Foundation, nor any of their respective employees, is responsible for the accuracy of any of the information supplied in this Guidebook.
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SECTION I
PLANNING YOUR TRIP

A. Packing and Flying

Packing Checklist

**Essentials**
- Passport
- Cash (Renminbi)
- Debit card to withdraw cash
- Laptop
- USB flash-drive
- Computer / electronics chargers
- Adapter or converter for power outlets
- iPod touch or electronic dictionary (highly recommend Pleco app)
- 1 pencil, 1 pen (buy the rest there)
- Backpack
- Smaller bag for day trips
- Sturdy, comfortable clothes
- 1 waterproof jacket
- Umbrella
- Nalgene or similar
- Sunscreen/bug spray
- Deodorant/Toothpaste/lotions
- Tums or equivalent
- Band-Aids/Neosporin
- Allergy medicine, cough meds, prescription meds etc.
- Small Gifts
- Camera

**Supplementary**
- Sunglasses
- Guide book (Lonely Planet has good maps/advice)
- Nutritional supplements (if you’re not a meat eater)
- Chinese pocket dictionary (if you don’t have an electronic one)
- Two sets of nicer clothes (a tie, nice dress, etc.)
- Tampons (not sold in China)

**Better without**
Paper and bulky school supplies
Towels, sheets, pillows
International ID card (most places don’t recognize it)
Shampoo/conditioner
Detergent and bulky liquids
**Note**

Check airline weight limits for baggage, most flights originating in US have 50 lb limits, but others may vary.

Most toiletries and other necessary items can be bought at the Chinese equivalent of a superstore, but if you need a specific brand buy it in America. Do bring small travel-size toiletries to last until you settle in and get to a store!

You can afford to pack lightly! Keep in mind that you will likely acquire souvenirs or clothes in China that might put you over the limit for the return trip. Try to “underpack” your suitcase for the trip there.

**B. Health and Safety**

**Pre-departure Medical Issues**

**Check with Yale Travel Clinic**

For vaccinations, you will need to visit the travel clinic at Yale Health. Two common vaccinations given to students traveling to urban China are Hepatitis A and Yellow Fever. Be sure to indicate if you intend to travel to any remote area where additional disease risk may be a factor. Anti-malarial medication is not necessary for those staying in Beijing; however, there are parts of China that are at risk. So, if you plan on travelling outside of Beijing, you should consult with Yale Travel Clinic to see whether you might want some anti-malarial medication.

While at the travel clinic, you will likely be given a prescription for two medications, ciprofloxacin and loperamide, in case you suffer from traveler’s diarrhea. Both drugs have important side effects so you should ask the nurse in the travel clinic or a doctor if you have any questions about when, how, or whether to use these medications. Cipro, in particular, can lead to tendon issues, so this matter may be important to consider if you engage in a lot of physical activity.

**Medications**

It is prudent to procure any drugs, vitamins, or other medications you will need in advance of your trip. You may find it difficult to acquire the appropriate drugs in China.

**While in China**

**Prudence**

Exercising prudence is vital to health. Proper attention to food, drink, and activities can prevent a number of accidents and illnesses. Immediate medical attention and English care may be harder to come by in many regions of China. Care should be exercised while hiking,
traveling, or working out in hot weather. Needles should be avoided whenever possible. Excessive alcohol use is strongly discouraged. Illicit drug use is dangerous and could lead to far more than health related issues.

**Hospitals**

Many people survive their time in China with only minor stomach problems, but in case something terrible strikes, you can consider one of Beijing’s hospitals. If you are ever faced with something your OTC medications and cough syrup cannot handle, go to one of the places listed below. The clinic on your university campus, as well as most local Chinese hospitals, will be very crowded and will have doctors and nurses who speak only Chinese. For referrals, you can call UHC Global before or during your time abroad at the numbers below.

If you are in dire need of treatment, it will probably be faster for you to grab a friend and hail a taxi rather than call for an ambulance. Ambulances in China generally respond much slower than ones in the United States and carry much less medical equipment. Please keep this information with you, in addition to your UHC Global health insurance and travel assistance cards, and information describing any medical allergies you may have. Also, be sure to alert the administrators of your program, since they may have more updated information on the closest medical facility with English-speaking doctors.

**Emergency Contacts**

1. **Beijing International SOS Clinic**
   Suite 105, Wing 1, Kunsha Building 16 Xinyuanli, Chaoyang District Beijing 100027, China
   Tel: +86 (0)10 6462 9112 / Emergency Hotline: 010-6462-9100

2. **Beijing United Family Hospital and Clinics**
   2 Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang District Beijing 100016
   Tel: +86 (10) 5927 7000 / Emergency Hotline: +86 (10) 5927 7120

3. **International Medical Center (IMC)**
   (Formerly known as German-Sino Lufthansa Center Offices)
   Suite 106, 50 Liang Ma Qiao Rd, Chao Yang District, Beijing 100016
   Tel: 010-6465-1561/2/3

4. **UHC Global**
   - Health Insurance – provide your **individual** health insurance number:
     - 24/7 Emergency Response Center (call collect): +1.410.453-6330 or email assistance@uhcglobal.com
     - China (northern) 108888 800 527 0218
     - China (southern) 1081 1 800527 0218
- Travel Assistance (e.g. emergency evacuation services) – provide Yale’s Group ID #: 364416
  - 24/7 Emergency Response Center (call collect): +1.410.453-6330 or email assistance@uhcglobal.com
SECTION II
LIVING IN CHINA

A. General Information

Money

Cash – US currency will generally not be accepted by stores (they do not like foreign bills because they have difficulty spotting counterfeits), but the Bank of China will exchange the cash for you. Although you will typically get a worse exchange rate, you should go ahead and get a few hundred Chinese RMB in the US before you leave. This way, you can get through the first day or two in China, which are always pretty stressful. Save a few of your receipts when you exchange money if you plan to exchange Chinese RMB into US dollars when you leave; the banks will refuse to do this without receipts.

ATM card – The easiest way to change money in Beijing is to just use an ATM machine. Bank of China ATMs accept foreign ATM cards, and they are probably the most reliable. ATMs are convenient, but sometimes risky; they may occasionally be out of service, eat bank cards, or even reject foreign cards despite signs advertising the contrary. If you choose to use ATMs in China, do ask around for the location of a reliable one, and if you can help it, try to use the machines only during hours when the bank itself is open (just in case the machine does choose to eat your card). After you’re done using the machine, always remember to get your card back out of the machine. Many machines have a 30 second timer, after which you will not be able to eject your card.

Bank of America has an agreement with China Construction Bank (CCB) which allows you to use CCB ATMs without paying for a transaction fee (though you will still be charged for currency conversion). If you’re planning to use an ATM card in China, definitely consider getting a Bank of America account if you don’t have one already, as you can save a lot of money by avoiding transaction fees!

Credit card – Although China is a much more cash-based society than U.S., nowadays you can use credit cards in upscale restaurants, department stores, movie theaters, and some coffee shops. Places that do not accept credit cards are small shops, noodle stands, underground clothes shopping centers, etc. Chinese Walmart and Carrefour stand in the middle of these two categories—they do accept credit card, but chances are that the clerk has never accepted payment with a foreign credit card, so she may take some time to figure
out how to make the transaction. If you don’t want to waste any time, it is safer to have the cash ready.

**Daily Needs**

**Bathrooms**

Public bathrooms in China are an experience. In some cases you have to pay a small fee in order to enter (these are typically more sanitary), so always be sure to have some loose change on you during your excursions around the city. Soap is not generally found in public bathrooms; you can bring your own, but most exchange students either carry hand sanitizer or just don’t bother. Also, most bathrooms do not provide toilet paper, so get into the habit of carrying some around. Most public bathrooms are squat toilets. They are difficult to get used to, but they make the experience more sanitary.

**Laundry**

Washing laundry in China is quite different from in the U.S. Try not to bring all your favorite outfits, especially if they are delicate or hold sentimental value. Most programs will have laundry machines inside the residential building. Laundry detergent can be readily purchased at a grocery store, but washing machines can be a more difficult mystery to unravel. Be careful of mixing hot water cycles and red clothing; also be aware that washing machines will probably not have a delicate cycle, and will treat clothing much more harshly than you are accustomed to. When in doubt, ask someone who has used your washing machine before.

Most people in China do not use dryers. Clothes have to be removed from the washing machine and then hung out to dry. Upon arrival, try to acquire a folding laundry rack or nylon clothesline and hangers to ease this process. They can be found at Walmart or Carrefour at a cheap price. In addition, you might consider purchasing a basin and some soap for simple hand washing. Even if you have never hand-washed clothes before, you might find it necessary for some less sturdy clothing or at times when all the washing machines are being used.

**Sending / receiving packages**

If you wish to send or receive packages, ask your program leader to direct you to the nearest post office. They may ask you what is inside (documents, souvenirs, etc.), so you may want to look up how to basically describe the package. Make sure your package doesn’t contain
food or liquids since they won’t ship those! Overall, sending packages back to the U.S. can be very expensive and most people don’t do it unless it is an emergency.

**Electronics**

Electric outlets in the United States supply 110V electricity, but in China they supply 220V. Remember this when packing appliances such as hair dryers, alarm clocks, whatever. Most laptops and cell phone chargers are equipped to take both voltages, but most other appliances require a transformer. A transformer is different than an adapter: a transformer will actually step down the voltage from 220V to 110V; an adapter will generally only ensure that the plug fits in the outlet. In general, it will be easiest if you avoid transformers entirely and instead purchase new any cheap electrical items that you might need while in China.

In any case, you should have an adapter and perhaps a surge protector. This is especially important for laptops, camera, and cell phone chargers. You can buy the adapter in either the United States or in China (psst, it’s cheaper over there and you can make sure you are buying the right product—but if you do wait to purchase these items in China, don’t forget about the voltage difference and ruin your electronics on your first jetlagged day). Note that outlets in China are often not grounded, though most can accommodate the third prong.

**The Internet**

Chinese Internet is censored. For example, you won’t have easy access to Facebook, blogging sites, Youtube, and other sites. The best way to get around the censorship is by using Yale Virtual Private Network (VPN). This can be downloaded from the Yale software download website for smartphones and laptops. Do it before you get there!
**Food and Drink**

**Useful terms**
- **烤**  kǎo – roast (Běijīng kǎoyā = Beijing roast duck)
- **炒**  chǎo – fried (chǎofàn = fried rice)
- **烧**  shāo – steamed/baked (shāomài = steamed dumpling)
- **鸡肉**  jīròu – chicken
- **牛肉**  niúròu – beef
- **猪肉**  zhūròu – pork
- **羊肉**  yángròu – lamb
- **鸡蛋**  jīdàn – chicken egg
- **西红柿**  xīhóngshì – tomato
- **茄子**  qiézi – eggplant
- **白菜**  báicài – bok choy (Chinese cabbage)
- **青菜**  qīngcài – greens
- **蔬菜**  shūcài – vegetables*
- **米饭**  mǐfàn – white rice
- **面条**  miàntiáo – noodles
- **包子**  bāozi – steamed stuffed bun
- **饺子**  jiǎozi - dumpling
- **串**  chuànr – meat kebab
- **煎饼**  jiānbing – stuffed pancake
- **汉堡包**  hànbāobāo – hamburger
- **薯条**  shǔtiáo – french fries
- **番茄酱**  fānqiéjiàng – ketchup
- **可乐**  kělè – Coke
- **雪碧**  xuěbì – Sprite
- **百事可乐**  bǎishìkělè - Pepsi

*If you are a vegetarian:

Wǒ shì chī sù de.
I am a vegetarian.

Wǒ bù chī ròu, zhǐ chī shū cài.
I don’t eat meat, only vegetables.

**Restaurant etiquette**

Calling for a fúwùyuán: Don’t be afraid to yell out “Fuwuyuan!” to get a server’s attention. It’s not considered rude, and may be the only way you’ll get service in many places.
Figuring out the menu: When in doubt, ask if they have a picture menu (照片菜单 zhàopiàn càidān). Otherwise, use the terms provided earlier in the section to search out familiar characters. Sometimes, asking the waiters and waitresses for suggestions works.

Do not provide a tip: There is no tip culture in China. Waiters will usually not accept tips unless they are working at very Western restaurants.

**B. Mindset**

**General Advice**

As a Light Fellow preparing to go abroad, you've already heard about "the U curve" for adjusting to life in a new country. As Light Fellowship alumni, we'll tell you that it's true! But even if your transition is not smooth one hundred percent of the time, there are definitely some attitudes and practices that you can adopt to make the adjustment easier.

1. Prepare to be flexible, in ways both large and small. Bad weather or traffic jams can unravel even the most well thought-out plans, and if you're stressed or homesick, something minor like not being able to find the kind of shampoo you like might unravel you more than you would think. The ability to adapt might be your most important asset for getting the most out of your time.

2. Remember that you're going to be in China for a significant amount of time—during which you'll be engaging in intensive academics—and you should pace yourself. While you may be energetic and eager to do everything when you arrive, you don't need to know Beijing like the back of your hand by the end of your first week. Take the time to get sufficient sleep and become accustomed to the Chinese time zone, so that you'll still be enthusiastic and eager to explore several weeks into your stay.

3. On the other hand, do get out! Your immediate reaction to a foreign environment might be to spend a lot of time talking with family and friends back home, or watching English language television. Try not to do these things excessively so you can minimize the time it takes you to adjust. Whether you've been to China multiple times or this is your first experience abroad, the language-learning environment that you'll be in will make your experience particularly memorable. Enjoy it!
SECTION III  
BEIJING

A. Transportation

Getting In

For the directions to get to your program, please refer to “how to get to the program” under each specific program section.

There are, however, a number of ways to get out of the airport (Beijing Capital) and into the city. One of the cheapest ways is to take the subway, which has connections at Sanyuanqiao with the blue line (line 10) and at Dongzhimen with the brown and yellow lines (lines 2 and 13). The Beijing subway system, as you’ll find out, is vast—so be careful about taking it if you don’t quite know your way around the city yet.

The most convenient way to leave the airport is by taxi. Be careful! Stationed in the Arrivals lobby is a number of opportunists that might accost you to take their taxi. Do NOT take these. They charge up to 400 kuai for a trip out of the airport, anywhere between four and ten times the cost of an official taxi. Instead, follow the signs to the official taxi stop outside of the arrivals lobby—look for the man in uniform assisting passengers. Do know your destination in Chinese. If you have it in characters, so much the better. A cab ride from the airport will run you from sixty to a hundred kuai.

A few important notes: it’s better if you have cash before arriving in China—exchange centers at airports charge expensive fees (up to 10 USD!), and cabs take nothing but cash. Stock up on a few hundred kuai before you go. There are a number of ATMs in the airport, though—use those instead of exchange centers if you can. Another caveat: in order to access the Internet in the airport, you either need a Chinese number or to scan your passport in one of several information stations throughout the terminal. Don’t expect to get online before exiting into the arrivals lobby.

Getting Around

Walking - As you’ll quickly realize, when you’re walking in Beijing, the traffic rules and laws that Americans generally abide by are pretty much entirely ignored. Be extremely careful when crossing streets and understand that there is usually an entirely separate but equally busy and dangerous lane for bikes and three-wheeled vehicles. As far as directions go, Beijing is huge but relatively well organized. It’s built on a cardinal axis—in other words, on a north-south east-west basis. That means that you’re usually walking in one of four directions: north, south, east, or west. Know where on the map your program is and try to memorize a few landmarks. The Forbidden City is easiest since the entire city radiates
from that center point, but you can also consider the Olympic Park (at the northernmost point) or Sanlitun (in the east) as points of reference.

**Bicycle** – For getting around the local area, a bicycle can be incredibly useful. It can also be very intimidating. A bicycle is best for people who want the convenience of getting around their large campus or neighborhood quickly. The price ranges according to where you buy, but you can get a decent new bike for ¥300-400; a cheap used bike will be more along the lines of ¥50-100. You will likely not need anything more than a single speed to putter around town, but make sure to get a strong U-lock to lock up your bike wherever you go, and a bell to warn people you’re about to run them down. Another option is to rent a bike at one of the Beijing City Bike stands; a two-month rental will cost around ¥100. Be EXTREMELY careful when riding a bike. Some programs prohibit their use entirely. The concept of right of way in Beijing is tenuous at best.

**Bus** – The Beijing bus system is incredibly thorough; you can literally get anywhere. The only challenge is figuring out which bus goes where. If you are unfamiliar with the area you are going to, use the official website www.bjbus.com to plan your trip, or use Google Maps. If you plan on using the bus frequently, invest in a transportation card (available at subway stations) and save ¥0.60 every trip. This card works for subways as well, and it is convenient because you don’t have to prepare 零钱 (loose change) each time for the fare. Sometimes, street names and stops can be confusing. Know where yours is and the one before and after. It’ll make things much easier!

**Subway** – After the improvements made to the Beijing subway system for the 2008 Olympics, getting around Beijing has never been cheaper or faster. For ¥2 per trip, you can go from one corner of the city to the other. The entire subway system is English-friendly, and the trains are very regular. Check www.bjsubway.com for train times; depending on where you are and what direction you are going, the subway can close any time between 10:30 and 11:30 PM. At closing, they will eject you from the train regardless of your location. Because the subways close after around 11:30PM, remember that when you go out you will most likely have to take a taxi or Uber home. Sometimes subway stops are a little out of the way: on ring roads or in the middle of nowhere. Know where you’re going in relation to the subway stop: it’s easy to get lost in a city like Beijing! Don’t forget to give arrival some time—it takes an hour to get to Sanlitun from Wudaokou, for instance, and that only requires one subway line change.

**Taxi** – Taxis are ubiquitous around Beijing, but are often hard to find on Friday and Saturday nights. Typically speaking, taxi drivers know the major destinations in Beijing, but if you need to get to a particular location it helps to have a map on hand, and you should always have the location’s address. Taxi drivers generally do not accept tips. Enjoy becoming familiar with the infamous Beijing “errrr,” and try to engage your driver in conversation. It’s great practice. Make a habit of taking the receipt before you leave the cab - you’ll want to know which cab you were in when you wake up the next morning and realize you’re missing your keys/wallet/phone/friend. In most cabs make sure the meter is running while you are driving. There will be a standard starting base price when you get
into a taxi. Normal base prices for taxis are 8 kuai, but during the night and popular hours starting fares for taxis will be around 14 kuai. A cab to Sanlitun will run you ¥50-80 from Wudaokou—and that’s about as far a distance as you can go in Beijing.

There is one important caveat with cabs, though. Very rarely, they will try to scam you. Don’t be scared; taxis in Beijing are for the most part 100% safe and all scams will be completely harmless to everything but your wallet. You probably won’t run into one that does try to scam you. BUT if you do, remember one trick. Every time you’re about to pay a cabbie, especially with ¥100 bills, check the serial number. The most typical trick is that they’ll change the bill without you noticing and return a fake to you, claiming the original was a fake. Tell them that, no, the serial number does not match, and they’ll almost surely accept the original. This happens (again, very occasionally) on Friday or Saturday nights, expecting you to be…less than sharp on your way home.

Train – For travelling outside of Beijing, try taking a train if you have enough time. Getting a ticket can be a challenge – you have to wait until 6-10 days before your desired departure date for the office to release the tickets, and on that day you have to wait in line early in the morning at the local office to ensure you get a ticket before they all sell out. The best deal is a hard sleeper (6 per compartment), although the more roomy choice is a soft sleeper (4 per compartment). For hard sleepers, there will be a choice between the top, middle and bottom bunks. Top bunk is almost against the ceiling, so it can be very uncomfortable for taller people. Middle bunk is a good compromise. Bottom bunk is culturally accepted as the group seating area, so you will have strangers sitting at the foot of your bed. “Soft seat” and “hard seat” are also decent options for shorter train rides, with standing tickets selling for the same price as hard seats once the latter have run out. For more information, including schedules and connections with foreign rail systems, visit www.seat61.com.

B. Places to Go

Wudaokou

Wudaokou is located near many universities in Haidian district, and does a pretty good job of catering to the tastes of college students. If you ever are in the mood for some “authentic” western (or Korean) food, you’ll have a lot of options here. It’s also a center of nightlife and houses a variety of bars and clubs, with prices catered to college students. On any given Friday or Saturday night you’re more than likely to run into your fellow Yalies from any of the programs here. Wudaokou is basically a big shopping complex with 6 or 7 floors. The basement is the grocery store and bubble tea shops. The 1st and 2nd floors are for men’s and women’s clothes, the 3rd floor is for electronics and other miscellaneous goods, and the 4th and 5th floors are primarily where you will find restaurants.

Sanlitun

Located in the heart of the Embassy area, Sanlitun has a very strong cosmopolitan feel. Though the restaurants are on the more expensive side as the area has more tourists, it
probably has the best selection of non-Chinese food in the city. Home to a movie theatre and Apple Store, Sanlitun is known for its bar street. The more fanny packs and sock/sandle combinations you see in a given venue, the lower the quality and higher the prices everything in that venue will be. Look to the back bar street for some great kebabs and Uighur food. Sanlitun is also home to a number of high-end clubs that charge more than those in Wudaokou—try Elements or Vics for the best time.

Restaurants

老北京炸酱面 (lǎoběijīng zhájiàngmiàn) Located on Qianmen Dajie, this place is famous for old Beijing style Zhajiangmian. What you must try here though is their 印度饼 (yìndùbǐng), a naan-like bread that was brought to China during the Tang period by Indian merchants traveling on the Silk Road. Not quite like naan, but also not quite like Chinese bread, you will be pleasantly surprised!

全聚德 (quánjùdé) – The most famous Beijing Kaoya place in Beijing. There are many locations, but the original restaurant (founded in 19th century) is on Qianmen Dajie. Nearly every famous individual visiting China also visited this place, including Fidel Castro and Kim Jeong-II. Funny story goes that a few years ago, Kim requested to rent out the original quánjùdé location for a day, only to be politely rejected by the manager. Service was particularly memorable here; in bathroom, a waitperson waits for you to finish and gives you wet towels to wipe your hands.

天福茗茶 (tiānfúmíngchá) – A famous franchised tea vendor located throughout Beijing. Biggest locations are in Qiánmén Dàjiē and Wángfǔjīng. Their tea selections are huge, and quality is exceptional. Try some! Make sure you sit in the shop and act like you know what is going on, and the 服务员 will let you try sip of every single tea that you want. Get some 普洱茶 (pǔěrchá) which is produced only in Yunnan province and is good for diet (risk free)! Their 茶饼 (chábǐng) are delicious as well.

Parks and Scenery

鼓楼和钟楼 (Drum & Bell Tower) – Ancient timekeeping towers which stand directly north of the Forbidden City and Jingshen park along the vertical axis of Beijing.

北海公园 (Běihǎi Gōngyuán) – Arguably Beijing’s most beautiful park, Beihai features a tall island with the giant White Pagoda perched on top. One can also paddleboat around the lake or simply walk around and take in all the greenery. The north entrance is across the street from the south entrance of the Houhai area, which makes Houhai a convenient evening stop.

后海 (Hòuhǎi) – Houhai Lake, located immediately south of the Drum & Bell Tower area, is beautiful day or night. It is packed with bars, restaurants, and vendors who charge exorbitant prices for their wares. Buying souvenirs around here is discouraged, but buying
Food or drinks is suggested. During the day paddleboats are available, and in the evenings, all the bars light up and put couches outside for patrons to relax.

圆明园 (Yuanmingyuan) — Located a convenient fifteen minute taxi ride from Wudaokou, Yuanmingyuan was once the summer palace of the Qing Dynasty. It was built by Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century, but after the Second Opium War, British and French soldiers raided it and burned it down, spiriting many of its treasures away to London and Paris. All that remains is the park grounds and a few pedestals where buildings once stood—palimpsests of the once great Qing Dynasty. The park is beautiful, framed by mountains, and a great escape from the city.

Cultural and Historic Sites

Changcheng (The Great Wall) – The major sections of the Great Wall in Beijing open to visitors are Badaling, Simatai, and Mutianyu. While Badaling is perhaps the most picturesque, it’s generally very crowded, so Simatai or Mutianyu might be a better option. It might be difficult to get to the Great Wall because it’s so far from the city, but it’s worth the trouble. Many of the study abroad programs in Beijing organize group trips to the Great Wall, so it should be easy enough to visit.

Yiheyuan (The Summer Palace) – Located in the northwest corner of the city, Yiheyuan was built in the Late Qing and therefore, is still in very good condition, despite some damage incurred during the Cultural Revolution. Old-style structures stretch around the perimeter of Kunming Lake for a variety of political and religious purposes but mostly just for leisure.

Yonghegong (Lama Temple) – At the Yonghegong (雍和宮) subway stop. There are also several interesting places of historical and cultural importance. The namesake of the Yonghegong stop is Beijing’s largest lamasery, and nearby is a famous hutong alleyway—between the Chinese and Tibetan style buildings, the religious art, and general historical significance, anyone studying in Beijing should pay a visit.

The Forbidden City – Now incorporated into Palace Museum, the Forbidden City has a lot to see, including imperial gardens, the former residences of Cixi and various emperors, and the place where the highest round of the imperial examinations were carried out. But the Forbidden City also has a number of art exhibits in addition to displays ranging in topic from Qing technological developments to courtesan life in the imperial palace.

The Temple of Heaven – Traditionally, the emperor would come here annually to pray to heaven and perform rites. The temple is located in Tiantan park, yet another relaxing park in Beijing where people go to partake in activities such as taijiquan, ballroom dancing, cards, dominos, Tibetan dance, fan dancing and a host of other activities. If you’re lucky, a generous local might explain the game to you and let you have a try. Beijing also has a Temple of Earth, Temple of the Moon, and Temple of the Sun, each located in a different direction from the Forbidden City, but the Temple of Heaven is by far the most important.
**Peking University and Tsinghua University** – Besides being the leading universities in China, they are also important historic places in their own right, playing a prominent role in the May Fourth Movement and in Late Qing intellectual thought. Peking University is famous for Weiming Lake (未名 means “No name” or “not yet named,” which I understand sounds more poetic in Chinese) and also contains the Boya Pagoda and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology. Tsinghua is famous for its astronomical observatory and another lake, a lake described in prose by Zhu Ziqing in Hetang Yuese—a piece of writing that all fourth year HBA students will have to memorize.

**Ming and Qing Tombs** – These are much farther away from the city and require a combination of subway and bus rides, but if you have time it makes a good Saturday or Sunday excursion. The Ming Tombs are bigger, and more frequently visited, but the Qing tombs should also be good. One should note, however, that many of the structures and tombs have been excavated, heavily restored, and nearly all of the important relics in the tombs have been cleared away and sent off to museums.

**中华民族园 (Chinese Ethnic Culture Park)** – This giant park has exhibits for all 56 of the nationally recognized minorities living in China. One can learn about the different dwellings and clothing found all over China, and even watch some traditional performances.

**Beijing Urban Planning Exhibition Hall** – Located at the southeast corner of Tiananmen Square, this hall features the development of Beijing from center of an empire to capital of a booming nation. One giant room has basically taken Google maps and placed a bird’s eye view of the entire city on the floor.

**C. Alcohol and Safety**

Though Beijing is safer than most cities of its size, its relative security does not give you a right to do stupid things. It is a big city. The Yale Shuttle isn’t waiting to pick you up and take you to DUH. Common sense and moderation are critical.

Never go out alone, and never break off from your group when going out. Do not drink excessively. That 4 kuai bottle of bottom shelf baijiu may mean you can afford several, but does not mean you should drink several. At the end of the night, you still have to hail a cab home, and drivers are more likely to scam a group of inebriated foreigners who are tired and want to get home. Also, beware of watered-down or “fake” alcohol. Many clubs will sell this to make a bigger profit margin. If you are going to drink, do it safely and from a reliable source.

Be kind and sociable. Some foreigners in China do embody the creepy/arrogant foreigner stereotype. Try to lay that to rest.
SECTION IV
PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Harvard-Beijing Academy

Getting to the Program

You will receive specific instructions from HBA as to how to get to BLCU from the airport. Generally, you will either take the program shuttle from the airport or take a taxi to 北京语言大学 Bēijīng Yǔyán Dàxué (BLCU) on the corner of 学院路和成府路 Xuéyuàn Lù hé Chéngfǔ Lù. (Xueyuan road and Chengfu road).

Living Situation at HBA

BLCU Conference Center (会议中心 Huìyì Zhōngxīn) provides single, air-conditioned bedrooms furnished with a low bed, a desk, a chair, a dresser, a TV, an electric kettle, and a closet. Bed sheets are changed a couple times a week by the staff. It also provides one washcloth, one hand towel and one bath towel that are exchanged every day by the staff. There are two laundry rooms in the building, which require you to buy a refundable laundry card at the front desk. The electric kettle will be very useful for cooking late night ramen. If you’ve left something at home, it can probably be bought at the “Friendship Store” which is located right across from the basketball courts. You’ll also be able to get a Chinese SIM card there.

As for internet access: internet access is slow at HBA. You will want to download two VPNs - both on your laptop and your cell phone. Download Betternet and AnyConnect (this one is through Yale). If you so desire, you can buy a wireless router at the friendship store for 100RMB. For withdrawing money: there is an ATM on the first floor of the cafeteria located under the staircase. There is around a 5% conversion fee for withdrawing Chinese money from an American bank account, but if you have Bank of America there is no conversion fee. There is also an ATM right next to the Conference Center, you can’t miss it. If you have any question at all, just talk to Alex Lopatin (program director). Where possible, use cash rather than credit card while in China. You will probably want to withdraw around 1000 - 2000 RMB every 3 weeks or so. This way you will not lose money by frequently withdrawing money from the ATM.

Eating, Shopping, Exercising

Groceries

For groceries, school supplies, soaps, cosmetics, and other supplies, your best bet is the Chaoshifa, a supermarket at the intersection of Xueyuan Lu and Chengfu Lu. To get there
you can go out the east gate and take a right, or go out the south gate and take a left. While you’ll be able to get the best prices there for snacks, baked goods, drinks and dairy, if you want fruit you ought to look elsewhere. Litchi, peaches, apples, cherries, waxberries, watermelon and other seasonal produce can be bought off of carts on the street (safe, generally, to eat once washed; however, be sure to buy a peeler at Chaoshifa for those apples and kiwis); another good place to look might be the BCLU 水果店 located by the north gate of campus. In a pinch, cold drinks, snacks, and other small sundry items can be had in the 会议中心 lobby, as well as various stalls throughout campus. If you are looking for a larger selection, do go into Wudaokou to the Hualian shopping complex where there is a larger grocery store.

Dining on campus

For breakfast food, there are a few options on campus. If you walk from the Conference Center out the west gate, you will see some small shops and stalls. Also, for breakfast, the Conference Center restaurant serves a buffet breakfast with steamed buns for 10 kuai per day. The cafeteria on campus also provides traditional, low cost Chinese breakfast.

For lunches and dinners, there are a number of good options on or immediately adjacent to campus. The BCLU cafeterias proper are fine; you’ll need to purchase a 饭卡 in order to pay, though. You can eat pretty well and for very, very cheap in the cafeteria. Housed in the same building are a number of slightly pricier, more upscale sit-down restaurants. Always be actively aware of what you’re eating. Also, if you are out late at night or you just want a midnight snack, there are usually some kebabs being grilled right outside the south gate or directly outside the conference center.

Dining off-campus

Just out the east gate, if you take a right you’ll find another block of restaurants. There’s a generic, cheap, noodle place, a small bakery, as well as the aptly-named “Beijing Beef Noodle.” But if you continue on past this row down to Chaoshifa you’ll find 杭州小吃 – Hangzhou Xiaochi – the definitive hole in the wall lunch / dinner spot for HBA students. For a mere four yuan you’ll get a big plate of steamed xiaolong bao, jiaozi, or a huge portion of fried rice or noodles. The youyishangdian (friendship store) and surrounding restaurants also provide some meals and snacks at relatively low prices.

Wudaokou

If none of this is particularly appealing, walk out south gate to Wudaokou – plenty of good Chinese, Western (Lush, Pyro’s Pizza), Korean, and other fare. As well as having an excellent food court with a top notch Korean place on the 5th floor, the Hualian shopping complex should be able to satisfy most of your material needs. But you should just do whatever exploring you can in not only Wudaokou, but in Beijing. After all, you are in Beijing to explore the city as well, not just to learn Chinese in the classroom setting. Go down alleyways, buy street food, and do your best to see what you can of “real” China.
Exercising

The gym on campus is called Fusion and the usual summer fee is about 1,000 yuan. However, like most prices in China, that can be dramatically reduced if you are skilled in bargaining. Last year, the teachers and students were able to bargain for 500 yuan a person for two months, which is relatively inexpensive. Within Fusion there are a range of cardiovascular options (elliptical machines, treadmills, bikes, a couple of ergs for rowing) as well as a weight room and dance studio in the basement. There are classes that are free with membership throughout the week such as cycling and dance. Some people even signed up for a personal trainer, which was a great way for them to interact with a local on a regular, one-on-one basis.

If you would rather be outside, the BCLU campus also has a track and tennis and basketball courts. The field inside the track is sometimes occupied by student groups playing soccer or whatnot but it is also a great place for HBA students to start a game of soccer themselves or ultimate Frisbee, which can be easily organized by email a few hours before. The best times to be exercising outside are in the early morning or late evening after the sun has set. This is when the levels of different types of air pollution, especially ozone, are the lowest. This is also when the locals and other foreign students are playing sports or practicing tai chi so it is the perfect time to strike up a conversation with them if you are so inclined. If you would like to venture outside of BCLU and get a real Chinese experience, rent a bike for about 10 yuan an hour. There should be some bikes you can rent at the front of the South gate as well as locations throughout the city.

Academics

Classes

Classroom time is one of the best parts about HBA! From Monday-Thursday you will have about 5 hours of class a day in addition to 2-4 hours of homework (which is not as bad as it sounds, trust me!). A typical schedule will look as follows:

Monday - Thursday:
8:00am - 8:50am (大班课) = big class with 8 or 9 students
9:00am - 9:50am (大班课) = big class with the same 8 or 9 students
10:10am - 11:00am (小班课) = small class with 3 or 4 students
11:10am - 12:00pm (小班课) = small class with the same 3 or 4 students
*Lunch*
Either 1:25pm - 2:15pm or 2:30pm - 3:20pm (单班课) = 1 on 1 with a teacher to just talk and chill and improve your Chinese skills.

Friday:
8:00am - 9:45am (written test)
10:00am - 12:00pm (oral exam)
Afterward you are free. There is usually a field trip or options to go to a park, a shopping center, or a food market.

The purpose of 大班课 (big class) is to go over the material from the textbook that you studied the night before. The first 10 minutes of 大班课 are set aside for 听写, Chinese for listen and write, a mini quiz you will have Monday-Thursday in which the teacher will read out loud one sentence a couple of times and you have to write it down in Chinese (characters). The purpose of 小班课 (small class) is to go over the grammar from the textbook that you studied the night before. The purpose of 单班课 (1 on 1 with teacher) is to just talk about anything and work on your tones and speaking/communication skills. Each week you will cover 3 lessons from the textbook. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are days that you will go over the material and grammar from each lesson. Thursdays are big review days. Friday is test day. First semester (first 4 weeks) you will have to learn about 40 characters a night (40 characters per lesson). Second semester (last 4 weeks) you will have to lean about 45 characters a night (45 characters per lesson).

On Mondays and Tuesdays there are often afternoon activities starting at 3:30pm - Tai Chi, face painting, calligraphy, tea tasting, opera, paper art, learning popular songs, etc.

In the evenings the Chinese teachers hold office hours if you have any questions or just need help in general.

The material and content you learn at HBA is comprehensive and relevant to everyday life.

Social Study Project

There is one unique aspect of the HBA experience worth mentioning – the 5th week 社会调查 or Social Study Project. Somewhere between legitimate work (you do have to write a paper of varying length, depending on your year based on your “research”) and a glorified vacation, the week of study gives you the opportunity to travel to Inner Mongolia, Shaolin Temple, Shanghai, Qingdao, the Yellow Mountain, or a few other locations to study some aspect of the region’s culture or history. Alternatively you can opt to remain in Beijing and study art, education, economics, or other similar fields. In every instance HBA sets up a schedule of interviews, outings, and other activities: these can range from an utter waste of your time to a genuinely interesting experience. Ultimately the best solution is to do your best to read through the itineraries before committing to anything; it’s a great opportunity to bond with a select group of your classmates and teachers. The point of the Social Study Project is to get exposure to other places in China. You are expected to write a report about your trip, interactions, and experiences.
B. Princeton in Beijing

Getting to the Program

PIB program is conducted at Beijing Normal University campus (北京师范大学, also called 北师大), which is located in the Northwestern corner of Beijing. It is a key school in training teachers in China, and the school has in recent years expanded its research fields into other fields of academia as well. As one of the most prestigious institutions in the country, the campus is very famous, well-known nationwide, so if you get lost, you just have to say “北京师范大学” and you should be set.

Free PIB shuttle

If you are going to arrive in China on normal date as specified by PIB, make sure you sign up for the free airport shuttle that runs from the airport to the campus. Otherwise, the easiest way is to take taxi. From the airport to the campus, the fare should be 80-120 RMB. Ask the driver to drop you off at 北京师范大学 东门 (East Gate of Beijing Normal University).

Subway

If you are a brave soul, you may also consider taking subway to get to the campus. Take the airport express train, and transfer to Line 2 at 东直门 (dōngzhímén), take the train in 雍和宫 direction, and get off at 积水潭 (jīshuǐtán). From here, you just have to walk up north for about 15 minutes on 新街大口街 (xīnjiēdàkǒujī), and you will arrive at the East Gate. You may also take a cab from 积水潭 station, and it should not cost more than 10 RMB.

Living Situation at PIB

PIB students are placed in the fanciest dorm that the university has to offer: 新松公寓 (xīnsōnggōngyù). Most students will have a roommate, who is most likely going to be from Princeton; in past years, Princeton students have comprised roughly 40% total students. Rooms are fully air-conditioned, and equipped with western toilet and shower facilities. Every day, 服务员 comes and cleans your room and changes your towel, one small caveat being that they do not change hand towels, so wash your own if you are inclined. Students have expressed mixed opinions and feelings about the overall service, but generally, they are very nice. There are laundry washers and dryers on ground level at 新松公寓, but be cautious about their usage, as students have reported some issues with these facilities in the past, especially the dryer. Many students hand-wash their clothes. There is also a small kitchen — most people ignore this room, but it’s a great opportunity to cook and chat with the 服务员.


A note about Ethernet

新松公寓 front desk offers a one-month wifi pass for 60 RMB that will allow you to connect to any on-campus connection; however, before paying for Internet as directed by PIB handbook, try connecting the Ethernet cable first. Because connecting to the Internet is a must for finding and completing daily assignments, it is important that you ensure a stable and working method.

Eating, Shopping, Exercising

Eating

There is a whole range of options out there. Of course, if you want to save money, the best option might be to explore cafeterias or food carts at 北京师范大学 campus. About a five minute walk from 新松公寓 is an unavoidable cluster of food stands and cafeterias. Selections from these food stands come in generous portions and are generally below 10 RMB, while the cafeteria allows you to choose from a large variety of dishes from a window and pay as you go. Although these places may not offer the tastiest meals, they are more than satisfactory and will provide opportunities for you to get to know other students.

If you are willing to spend ~10 RMB for each meal, you may also explore 太平饺子馆, 包子店 and 成都小吃 near the East Gate. In fact, there are multiple 成都小吃s in the close vicinity, so it would be an exciting project to go to all of them, eat all of their dishes, and compare their style and taste. Right next to 太平饺子馆 is an extremely tasty 陕西菜 restaurant, and right by is also a great 桂林面 place.

If you are feeling exquisite, you may also consider fancier options. Many of these, you will be naturally exposed to, via weekly meals with teachers (paid for by PIB!).

Really famous spot for PIB students was a small “饼” place under the bridge right next to the East Gate. They have some of the best Chinese street snacks we have ever tried, so make sure you try it with 辣椒!

MAKE SURE you explore hole-in-the-wall restaurants, as they are often the most well kept secrets of Beijing. Near the campus, try these restaurants on the small street right next to North Gate. Their 麻辣烫, 麻辣火锅, and 朝鲜菜 were fantastic. The small Chinese style bakery on this street has the BEST egg-vegetable bread EVER.

*Note: the area around BNU is constantly changing — stores would be open one day and demolished the next, without any warning. Always try out new places, but also beware some places mentioned in this guide may no longer exist.
Shopping

The easiest way to change money in Beijing is to just use an ATM machine. Conveniently, there is a Chinese Construction Bank ATM near the East Gate. Just cross the bridge and walk toward your left until you see the Chinese Construction Bank ATM sign. Be wary that some ATMs in the area are notorious for sucking up cards and not properly dispensing money; ask around to verify which ATMs are trustable.

You can buy water and food at various 超市 that you can find inside and outside of the dormitory. The farther the market is, the cheaper the goods may be. But this is not a definite rule, so investigate, and bargain your way out the busy Beijing markets.

Exercising

Beijing Shifan Daxue’s Gym – Somewhat expensive and unconventional. There are no treadmills or weight machines; rather, they have basketball courts, volleyball courts, and a swimming pool. The gym also offers classes such as Tae Kwon Do, Ping Pong, Tajiquan, etc.

Pulsation Fitness Club – It is an alternative to Beijing Shifan Daxue’s Gym, but a little far away. Leave the East Gate and cross the bridge then turn left until you run into a large four way street. Cross the street and there is a building complex called 城建大夏. The gym is located inside the building. When you go inside you can sign up for a couple month’s membership. The gym has a wide assortment of aerobic exercise and weightlifting machines. HOWEVER! Before buying at the set price try bargaining, you can usually reduce the price. Buying in large groups also works as powerful persuasive tool for lowering membership price. PiB seems to have also negotiated a deal for its students with the gym, so take advantage of it if you so choose to sign up for membership. Also, major key — group classes are included in the payment. Take full advantage, it’s a fun way to learn chinese and get sweaty.

Exercising outdoors – In addition to their lovely gym, Beijing Shifan Daxue has an outdoor track, basketball court, soccer field (it’s not grass), volleyball court, tennis courts, and weight machines. Although the New York Times reported that living one day in Beijing is equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes, it’s not so bad. Your body is an amazing thing. You will adjust quite quickly. Also, by playing outdoors you will meet many Beijing Shifan Daxue students. Play basketball with them! Practice your Chinese!

Academics

PiB academics may seem tough. Yes, it is true that PiB attempts to be the most difficult summer language program in Beijing. In some ways, this may be true with daily 听写, weekly 考试, 口头报告, and 作文。Some teachers often sleep 3-4 hours a night to prepare for classes, and they stay on campus until late hours holding office hours. Princeton
also has the famous grade-deflation policy, which could create an ambience in which students get stressed and get obsessed with grades.

**TIP:** Your teachers at PIB are not much older than you! Be sure to take full advantage of this fact and spend time with them outside of the classroom. Eat meals together! Go karaoke together! They are not only smart, but also friendly and energetic, and more likely than not you will find that over the course of the program, you will have developed a relationship that extends beyond instructional with many of your teachers.

So PIB students, do NOT succumb to the horrible peer pressure of stress and self-denunciation, feel free to enjoy learning and exploring. After all, you are in China, not in 新松公寓, so truly take advantage of opportunities to go exploring and making invaluable memories. Go on those weekend trips to nearby venues and historical sites, recommend that really tasty-looking restaurant to your teachers for your weekly meals, and get to know your fellow students, many of whom hail from outside of the Ivy League Bubble. Be adventurous!

**C. Duke Study in China**

**Getting to the Program**

DSIC organizes group shuttles from the airport that accommodate the majority of students. If you will be arriving at a time when these shuttles are not available, you will need to use a taxi service (your destination is 对外经济大学 duìwàijīngmào dà xué). Resist the illegal (and often persistent) taxi drivers and line up at the designated taxi queue. Waiting is better than being overcharged! You will be reimbursed in full upon arriving at the program.

**Living Situation at DSIC**

At UIBE, you will be living in the International Students Dorm. DSIC students are spread out across three floors but there will always be other DSIC rooms on your floor. Each room is furnished for you and a roommate: two twin beds and two desks with shelving. DSIC attempts to match you with a roommate one language level either above or below you and, if possible, from a different school. For example, a third level student from Yale might be matched with a fourth level student from Duke. The difference in language level is not large enough to hinder communication and often ends up being beneficial for both students.

The dorms themselves are pretty nice, more or less equivalent to a three or four-star hotel room in the U.S and much nicer than the regular university student dorms. There is a weekly cleaning service that includes a sheet change, and towels are replaced every other day. (Make sure not to stain them because you are charged if they are too dirty.) The rooms have air conditioning which you will definitely appreciate after your first full day out in the Beijing heat. Each floor has an open kitchen with a dispenser for drinking water (hot). Duke provides a wireless router for each room but honestly Wi-Fi accessibility seems to
vary from room to room. There is a café on the first level of the International Students Dorm with fairly reliable connection.

The bank that most students used was China Construction Bank. There is a CCB bank with several ATMs across the street outside of Xi Men. CCB is an international partner with Bank of America, so if you have a Bank of America account you won’t have to pay any extra ATM fees. Bank of Beijing also has a few ATMs fairly close to the dorms but you may incur fees for withdrawals.

**Academics**

Students are divided into three levels: second-year, third-year, and fourth-year. You will be given a temporary placement based on your coursework history, however you will take a placement exam the first weekend to confirm your level.

Monday through Thursday, there are four sessions of classes: Da ke (big class), Xiao ke (small class, drills), Tao lun (small class, discussion), and Yi dui yi (one-on-one sessions with the teachers). Every Friday there is an exam covering the week’s lessons (three or four depending on the week). The exams consist of both a written test and a one-on-one assessment with a teacher. After the exam period concludes, students regather for a discussion of the movie watched that week that is followed by Chinese Table. There is a midterm in the middle of the session and a final at the end.

The program is as rigorous as you make it. If you make an effort to carve out time, there is plenty of opportunity to get out and explore the city. All of the teachers want to see their students grow more confident in their language ability, and whether you are struggling with a certain lesson or just want to practice your conversation skills, take advantage of office hours!

**Eating, Shopping, Exercising**

There is a wide variety of food options around campus, (even American-style restaurants for the homesick), and the weekly food allowance can easily cover meal costs. Restaurants and small convenience/grocery stores are concentrated near each of the four school gates (Xi Men, Dong Men, Nan Men, and Bei Men). There are also two cafeterias about equidistant from the dorm and the building where classes are held.

**Xi Men**

Outside of Xi Men, the closest gate to the DSIC dorm, there are Chinese fast food places, food carts, and restaurants. Restaurants outside of Xi Men are generally cleaner than most other food places, so if you are worried about your stomach the first few weeks, the fast food places and restaurants here are a safe(r) bet. Highly recommended is Hui Xian Canting, which offers home-style Sichuan food; Dui Wai Jing Mao students frequent this place because the food tastes home-cooked while remaining relatively inexpensive, and the
space accommodates a larger group of people. Other highlights include Shou’er, a Korean barbeque place; Qinlong, a great noodle place; and Sculpting in Time Cafe, which offers western food like pasta, salads, and sandwiches.

There are also three Chinese fast food restaurants outside of Xi Men—Yong He Da Wang, NZBM, and Niu Da Wan—all of which offer pretty tasty options and are good for a quick meal. NZBM and Niu Da Wan are both open 24-hours, so if you need to do some late night studying or want a midnight snack, these are great choices. If you happen to be near Ximen around 10 pm, be on the lookout for a husband and wife frying jiaozi at a stand: the couple is super sweet and their jiaozi is pretty yummy too.

Dong Men

Dong Men has lots of xiao chi places and small restaurants - most Dui Wai Jing Mao students eat here when they eat off campus. Dong Men places are probably less clean than Xi Men places, but the food is much better and cheaper than the fast food places by Xi Men. Almost all the outdoor xiao chi places are worth trying out, especially Huang Jin Zhou Jiao Zi Wu for their jiao zi which is both tasty and cheap.

Bei Men

Bei Men has some high end and more expensive food options – weekly Chinese Table will take you to most of these places, but if you are willing to spend more, there are some good options, such as Yourenju, a hot pot place, and Bazhen, which offers jiaozi. Across the street from Bei Men there is a fruit and vegetable market. Mangos, lychees, grapes, cherries, peaches, and others are widely available for cheap, though definitely look around the entire market first because some sellers have fresher fruit than others.

On campus

There are a number of food options, including a few food carts and student cafeterias, which are very cheap and convenient but maybe not as good as off-campus options. DSIC students can buy a ‘cafeteria food card’—you personally can decide whether it is worth the added expense. Once domestic students begin to leave campus for the summer, the options at the canting become limited, however lunch breaks vary in length depending on your schedule for the day. If you don’t want to commit to a meal card but still want to occasionally eat on campus, you can use cash at the second canting and the fourth level of the first canting. There is also a Halal canting on campus that caters to students with dietary restrictions.

Grab a meal with your language partner

Do it! Your language partner will know where all the good food is, and in addition to enjoying a delicious meal you’ll gradually develop a friendship with a local student (and sometimes their friends).
Shopping

On campus, there are several small markets to buy basic home goods, snacks, and toiletries. The convenience store located outside the International Students Dorm has food, water, toiletries, school supplies, etc. For snacks, there is also a 24-hour Seven Eleven outside the Xi Men gate that offers everything one can expect in a convenient store, and the prices are slightly better. Modern shopping centers and more touristy shopping streets are easily accessible by bus or subway (you can find such places in the Lonely Planet guide provided).

Exercise

There is a gym in the basement of the International Students Dorm; go to the basement to buy a 2 Yuan ticket for one hour of exercising (though they are not particularly stringent about kicking people out on time). The gym offers weights, benches, and cardio equipment.

In the middle of campus, there is a large field and outdoor gymnasium, with basketball courts, soccer pitches, and outdoor gymnasium, all of which are open free of charge to students. There is a park across the street from Bei Men which is great for running and other outdoor activities.

In addition, there is a more high-tech gym a few blocks off campus – accessible either from Xi Men or Bei Men. Membership cost can usually be bargained down from the initial cost, particularly if a group of students go together. It has more machines than the school gym, offers exercise classes in the afternoon and evening, and is air conditioned.

Extra-curricular Activity & Travel

The Duke program offers several extracurricular classes on Friday afternoons after Chinese Table, the weekly lunch with the students and teachers of your level. They are taught by teachers with a special interest or training in the subject. A well-attended class is Chinese calligraphy, which covers basic principles like the different brush strokes. Other classes include Chinese knotting, Chinese painting (国画), and Chinese singing and dancing. Some students choose to exhibit their new skills at China Night, the talent show at the end of the program. The program director asks for suggestions/feedback throughout the course, so if there is something you would like to see, definitely ask about it.

The organized travel consisted of a day trip every Saturday, and a midterm trip to Xi’an. Destinations for the day trips were places outside the city because the program assumed (correctly) that students would utilize free afternoons to see important sites within the city. The trips were generally fun and usually lacked a rigid schedule; upon arriving at the destination, students were often free to explore to smaller groups. In order to get the most out of each trip, do some research before you go or maybe on the ride there. Walking shoes are also highly recommended, as hiking is often a main feature.
The midterm trip occurs over a long weekend after the end of the program’s “first term.” Students take an overnight train to Xi’an where they participate in such highlights as biking the city wall, visiting the terracotta warriors and attending a traditional musical performance.

**D. Inter-University Program (IUP)**

**Living Situation at IUP**

Students at IUP have three options: host family, dorms or off-campus housing. The pros and cons of each are listed below. Some students who are staying in Beijing for an academic year choose to spend half of their time with a host family, and half in off-campus housing.

**Host Family**

**Pros**
- Host families live on Tsinghua grounds within walking distance to the IUP building
- A healthier environment to exercise and practice Chinese
- Cost ranges from 1500 to 3000 RMB per month
- Hosts are often retired professors of universities in the local area (Qinghua, Beida, Beiyu, Dizhidaxue, etc.)

**Cons**
- There may be curfews and other restraints
- You might be forced to wake up early in the morning to the sounds of the television or a crying baby, or the scents of breakfast dumplings

**Dormitory**

**Pros**
- Singles and doubles available
- Daily rate about 80 RMB for a double, 160 RMB for a single
- Five-minute bike ride away from IUP
- Many school cafeterias nearby
- Easy to find Chinese/international friends to play basketball, speak Chinese or learn about different cultures
- Very close to the northeast gate, where you can take the bus to the commercial area just south of Tsinghua

**Cons**
- The bed mattress is about three inches thick and hard as a rock
- Although getting maintenance and repair on various little objects in your room won’t be difficult, the quality is questionable
- Far from subway/nearest coffee shop (about a 10-minute bike ride)
- In a noisy area of Tsinghua campus, with trains and cars constantly passing by
- Some dorms only have hot water during certain hours of the day

**Off-campus housing**

**Pros**
- The apartments close to Tsinghua (ex. Huaqing Jiayuan) come with basic furniture as well as those left by former residents
- Generally, apartment quality decreases as you get farther from Tsinghua, but no stark differences
- The neighboring universities, like the Forestry University and the Language and Culture University also have decent furnished apartments for reasonable prices
- You have the experience of learning to rent an apartment in China. This could come in use in the future!
- For prolonged stays in Beijing, it can be important to have a clean, tranquil space of your own.
- Have the possibility of sharing a flat with other IUP’ers

**Cons**
- You are on your own: apartment maintenance, utilities, rent, food, etc. (IUP provides a handy guide that will help you negotiate your lease with the landlord as well as register with the local police station)
- Your bargaining skills will be tested
- If you decide to get an apartment-mate, you’ll have to deal with their needs
- Often slightly more expensive than the dorms, depending on location
- Also, leases for shorter time periods (like two months) generally have higher monthly rent rates

**Recommendation**

If you’re looking for independence and want to get as close to having a “real” experience abroad, live off-campus. Don’t be daunted by the tasks of finding an apartment, negotiating rent and registering with the local police. If you need help, have your teacher help you. You’ll save money by living off campus, learning to cook fried rice and scrambled tomatoes and eggs, and inviting people over for small get-togethers and parties. Before the beginning of every semester, departing IUP students are looking to pass on their apartments to incoming IUP students! This makes the process extremely smooth – there are some apartments that have been passed down by IUP students for years.

**Academics**

IUP’s strength is in its low teacher-student ratio. For group classes, the ratio is set at one teacher per three students. As far as individual classes go, you’ll have at least one hour of independent tutorial each day. You can use this time to practice your grammar, experiment with vocabulary and joke using Chinese idioms without worrying. Each semester, you will
have a maximum of an hour of one on one classes, and three hours of three on one classes. As you become more advanced, you will tend to cut down on the three on one classes, and have more one on one classes. Typically, once a student reaches a higher Chinese language ability, they will have two hours of one on one classes per day.

IUP has a set of 5 core reading classes. If you have finished two semesters of level 5 Chinese at Yale, you will typically be placed into the 1st or 2nd level of these core classes. Once you have completed the 4th or 5th level of core classes, you will be as literate as a well educated Chinese. There are 4 core listening/speaking classes, of which you will typically be placed in the 1st or 2nd level.

In addition to core classes, there are electives in various topics. These include, but are not limited to: Classical Chinese, Idioms, Newspaper Chinese, Business Chinese, Modern Chinese History, Basics of Chinese Law, and Ancient Chinese History.

Finally, once your Chinese is strong, you will be able to take a one-on-one “材料课”。 In these classes you will work with a teacher and design your own curriculum. This may involve reading through a book, working with selected essays or articles, or reviewing previously learnt Chinese. As an example, a previous IUP student’s 材料课 was about the history of quantum mechanics. Every day he read around 15 pages, created vocabulary lists, explained key physics experiments, and discussed various concepts with his teacher. Another student used his 材料课 to study about the law system in China and where it stood in comparison that of the United States.

Outside of IUP, you also have the option of enrolling in or auditing Qinghua courses. This can be a great way of improving your Chinese, meeting Chinese students, and understanding more about the Chinese education system. For some students, it has even provided an opportunity to conduct physics research in one of Qinghua’s physics laboratories. Qinghua is the leading university in China (along with Beijing University), and it can be a very enriching place academically.

IUP also has a very extensive alumni network. The average age of its students is 25. Although Light Fellows are usually among the youngest in the program (being undergraduates or recent grads), hanging out and talking with classmates who have already had crazy life experiences is amazing. IUP’ers range from PhD students thinking about being historians to NGO leaders, consultants, investment bankers, public health researchers, musicians and professors. You’ll be in good company.

**Miscellaneous**

Cafeterias at Qinghua – Qinghua is renowned for its affordable and excellent cafeterias. For as little as 5-10 RMB, you can get yourself a relatively nutritious, tasty, and filling meal. It can, however, be challenging for those with allergies or dietary restrictions.
Extracurriculars – At the beginning of the fall semester, Tsinghua hosts its own extracurricular fair in the north side of campus. IUP will usually notify students of when that takes place. The groups at Tsinghua are quite diverse, ranging from archery to a cappella, from breakdancing to volunteer work. Joining a group can really help you make some close Chinese friends and improve your speaking/listening skills!

Language pledge – IUP’s language pledge applies only within the wall of 文北楼, the classroom building. Though it’s more relaxed than other programs, it’s 1) necessary because of how many professionals attend the program and thus would be unable to keep the pledge at their internships or jobs and 2) much easier to keep in this manner, since usually it only applies from 8am to 2pm. On field trips, the pledge is all-encompassing.

Teachers – The teachers at IUP tend to be very open-minded and always willing to spend time with students outside of classes, schedules permitting. This can be a great way to improve your Chinese and learn more about Beijing.

E. Associated Colleges in China (ACC)

Getting to the Program

To get to Minzu University, you can take a taxi from the airport to 民族大学 东门 (Minzu Daxue Dongmen). If the driver doesn’t know where the East Gate is, say that it is at 中关村南大街 (Zhongguancun nandajie). It's a 45 minute 120 yuan ride, but it's pretty convenient. The location of the actual dorm is right next to the East Gate--literally the first building to your right when you enter. Don’t get off at the West Gate, because the dorm is very far from there.

The other option is to take the subway to Guojiatushuguan (国家图书馆, Line 4), take Exit A, and walk straight (north) about 400 meters; the university is on the left.

Living Situation at ACC

The set up is a 4-star double twin bed hotel room setting. The rooms are equipped with a bathroom, TV, telephone, heating / A.C., outlets, and safes. Sheets and towels are changed weekly by the 服务员. Laundry facilities are available for free on every level. WiFi is available but extremely slow, especially with VPN. Some students opt to stay in an off-campus apartment rented by ACC. Benefits include the possibility of sharing the place with a Chinese roommate, having access to a kitchen, and living more independently. Unfortunately, the apartment is far from campus, requiring a 25min walk or 10min bike ride.

The Neighborhood
The Central University for Ethnicities (中央民族大学: zhōngyǎng mínzú dáxué) is located in the sprawling Haidian (海淀) district of Beijing. Among other things, Haidian is known for its universities - Minzu, or “MinDa” (民大) is within easy walking distance of the Beijing Studies University and the Beijing Dance Academy; People’s University of China and Peking University are both just up the road, a few subway stops away. 民大 is also just a few stops away from some key Beijing destinations: Zhongguancun (中关村, Beijing’s tech Mecca), the National Library, the Beijing Zoo, Yuanmingyuan (圆明园, sometimes known as the “Old Summer Palace”), and Yiheyuan (颐和园, the Summer Palace).

Most of student life at MinDa seems to revolve around 西门 (Ximen), not merely “the west gate” but also a road that boasts an incredibly varied array of edibles from all parts of China. The street food - barbecue in all its glorious forms - is especially popular in the evening, and makes for a good, cheap outing with friends. Ximen and its offshoots also boast grocery stores (I recommend 超市发 - Chaoshifa, located on an E-W street that branches off of Ximen), “everything” stores (tiny retail outfits marketing every imaginable daily necessity), multiple fruit stands, Kodak, a sandwich shop, smoothies, tea, porridge/congee (粥; zhou), board games, used books, one-room copy shops, and everything in between.

**Money and Shopping**

China Construction Bank has a branch just north of campus, which is right across from KFC and can be reached by exiting the “little east gate” 小西门) on the northeast end of campus and walking about 200 meters north. There is a Bank of China branch across the main road, just south of the university’s east gate; branches of ICBC and China Merchants Bank are only a short walk to the north of the east gate.

Most daily shopping can be done at the nearby supermarkets (see above), or in the university’s on-campus supermarket. Larger, higher-quality, or more unusual items can be found in the much larger Carrefour (家乐福/Jialefu in China) supermarket across, which is near the Beijing Zoo and is arrived at most easily by bus (白石桥/Baishiqiao station).

**Dining and Entertainment**

**Coffee shops**

Cindy’s Café – located right across Minzu Daxue Dongmen. With your ACC student ID card you will get a 15% discount off the bill. The only downside to Cindy’s Cafe is that their free WiFi is slow and the cafe is pretty noisy at times because of all the fuwuyuan chattering.
Let’s Coffee – Our dorms have slow internet and when you use VPN, it's even slower. If you need fast internet, fast enough to download videos, etc., I would recommend Let's Coffee Cafe. Let's Coffee is about a block away from Cindy's Cafe and it's close to Weigongcun Ditiezhan. Let's Coffee is a great place to go to study because of the quiet atmosphere. Also, their internet is awesome! They have a password secured network whereas Cindy's Cafe has slow unsecured WiFi.

Old Bike Café – There is a coffee shop called Old Bike Cafe near Minzu Daxue Ximen. You have to walk at least 6 minutes though. It's owned by a British guy and there are ‘buy 1 get 1 free’ deals (like burgers, etc.) for students every weekday night starting at 6pm. Remember to take your ACC student ID with you! Old Bike Café’s internet is slower than Cindy's Café’s, though.

Zoo Coffee
Zoo Coffee is a Korean Style coffee chain that is expanding rapidly throughout China. It is a 10 min walk from Ximen.

Starbucks
A Starbucks is located in a fancy looking office-complex across the street from the athletic fields near Dongmen.

Restaurants
There is also a restaurant at Ximen called Chengdu and it tastes great and is very cheap! Near Ximen there are lots of Muslim restaurants. My favorite is the second restaurant down perpendicular from Ximen. They have great customer service, whereas the bigger Muslim restaurant next to it fails to match up in service and taste.

There is a restaurant serving Korean food on Minzu University campus but their prices are on the expensive side. I would go to the restaurant across Old Bike Cafe or the one next to the Japanese restaurant (there is only one Japanese restaurant near Ximen). Or for the best Korean food, Wudaokou would be a good place to start. Wangjing, which is the Koreatown of Beijing, has the best Korean food.

The Japanese restaurant near Ximen is pretty delicious. You have to walk past the Zhou restaurant on Ximen and make a left at an alley. You can ask anyone where the Japanese restaurant is because there is only one near Ximen.
No 5 Café on campus, which is open during the school year, is a cheap, convenient, and delicious place to stop for breakfast. There are also two bakeries across from Dongmen. Bakeries (面包店) are great for desserts as well as snacks and breakfast food items.

Another restaurant worth mentioning is the Tube Station, which is about an 8-minute walk north of the East Gate. In addition to having some of the best pizza in Beijing, they have all you can drink 15 RMB Beer/Soda specials on Tuesday from 5-8.
Zhongguancun

If you want to go somewhere but don't feel like taking a trip too far, I would go to Zhongguancun. You can actually walk there by walking straight toward Weigongcun. Or you can take the subway and it’s only three subway stops away. Zhongguancun is known as the electronics center of Beijing, but it also has lots of malls and restaurants and is more lively than Minzu University's surroundings.

If you want to go to Carrefour, all you need to do is take the Bus 205 and exit two stops down near the Beijing Zoo.

The National Library

Three minutes walk from the dormitory. While you need a library card to study there, use the WiFi, etc., you don't need a card to enter the library and check out their very impressive-looking reading rooms!

Academics

Associated Colleges in China is one of the most intense study abroad experiences that you can choose while on a Light Fellowship to China. ACC remains steadfast in its belief that the only way to genuinely learn Chinese is by bombarding its students with the language. If you choose this program, expect to have some activity going on every moment that you are there. This certainly is fun and gives you a great opportunity to learn a lot about Chinese culture, but it can also be very exhausting. The teachers are very passionate about your language learning and think the best way to do that is by making every moment of your time there into a language learning experience.

Language Pledge

Just like other programs, ACC has the “language pledge,” which is applicable at all times and places until the program ends. This may not seem intimidating for students in higher levels, but it can be a nightmare for some second years. While the language pledge is very helpful, I would strongly advise students to learn as much as they possibly can at ACC and then get out into Beijing and only speak with Chinese people. You will often find that at higher levels the language pledge isn’t all that helpful and can even be a negative influence because other students speak with mistakes or use incorrect words.

Language Practicum and Table

On some Fridays, after your exams, you will be expected to participate in a class outing to a place in Beijing that deals with the topics you are discussing in class. This is a mandatory activity and sometimes is accompanied with an essay assignment. After your outing, you will eat with your teachers and other students at a restaurant of ACC’s choosing. ACC also provides everyone with lunch on these days.
Extra Curricular Activity & Travel

Class Trips

ACC’s semester includes one or two breaks. During these times, ACC organizes class trips to various parts of China. (Last year, the fall trip went to Xian; in the spring we visited Chengdu.) While these trips are optional, they can be very rewarding and you should definitely go on some of them. The trip fees are also included in the tuition and usually include breakfast and dinner. While these trips are rewarding, they can be very exhausting at the same time. You will be constantly on the move and will be taking many long train rides on your way there. In some cases, you may choose to rest up on your break instead of participating in a trip.

Chinese Host Families

While ACC doesn’t offer a live-in option for its students, it does provide them with a network of host families. The host families usually invite students every other weekend for dinner at their homes. They are extremely friendly and hospitable. Be sure to bring them gifts when you come as a nice gesture. Also, don’t be upset if your host mother tells you that you have gotten fat since the last time she saw you. This is considered a nice gesture.

Chinese Carnival

This was probably one of my favorite activities at ACC. They do it once per semester and it spans the whole length of morning classes. Students are divided up into teams that include every year. You then participate in a large competition with multiple mini-games that test your knowledge of China and Chinese. The winners get a prize.

Tip: choose any Chinese pop song you like and memorize the lyrics beforehand, and you will have a chance to sing and earn a few points for your team!

China Night

At the end of every semester, ACC puts on a variety of acts that students are required to participate in. They invite the host families to watch. Afterwards, they will usually take people out to dinner.

F. CET Harbin

Getting to the Program

Students travel directly to Harbin, where you will either be picked up or have to call a taxi to make your way to Harbin Institute of Technology (哈工大 or 哈尔滨工业大学). HIT is about 40-45 minutes away from the airport. Once the taxi drops you off at the
main gate, it is about a 10 minute walk to the student dorms. For detailed information, refer to the program orientation booklet.

**Living Situation at CET Harbin**

**Room configuration**

You will be living in the International Student Dormitory #6. You share a double with your Chinese roommate from Harbin Institute of Technology. There are bed sheets but they changed monthly, and towels and toilet paper are not provided. The room is furnished with two beds, two desks with attached book shelves, two stands, and a fan. Two rooms are connected to one bathroom, and these two rooms are called a ‘suite.’ The corridors are cleaned by the fuwuyuan, but you must clean the room and bathroom yourself.

**Classrooms**

You will take all of your classes in the International Student Center 留学生中心, which is centrally located on the main drag of campus across from the cafeterias. There is a lobby and a study hall room (with AC) in which you can study. You can also try to study at your dorm or at the HIT Library, which has some nice reading rooms on the upper floors, although you have to leave bags at the front. At the Library, just explain that you are an international student and they will let you in.

**Laundry**

There are two laundry machines, on the 1st and 3rd floors. Buy a special coin (3 yuan) from the front desk to operate the machine. Before doing your first laundry, however, buy a clothesline and plastic pincers. The new supermarket 学子超市 in 学苑楼 is super convenient, extremely well stocked, and should have everything that you need. You should also be able to buy a SIM card for your phone here with your passport. However, there is also often a box of donations of useful items left in the hallway by the previous semesters’ students, so check to see whether you can take advantage of that. The easiest way to set up the clothesline is tying the ends to the curtain pole in your room.

**Multi-purpose room**

There is a multipurpose room on the third floor, which was always filled with students studying or holding small events. The study breaks are held here as well. This room is also not cleaned by the service, so if you frequent the room then use it neatly and clean it voluntarily once in a while. (You will understand what I mean after two weeks or so pass without anyone stepping up to clean the room). There is also TV and potable water here.

**Eating, Shopping, Exercising, Entertainment, Local Travel, Banks**

学生食堂
The school cafeterias are cheap and convenient, with a good variety of food. 学苑楼 and 学士楼 are the buildings right across from the classroom building (留学生会议中心), and inside there are the two large cafeterias. Nearer to the dormitory is the 方便食堂 (Convenient Cafeteria), which is good for breakfast. There is a dumpling cafeteria (饺子馆) that is at the end of the main road across from the Library. Also, the old supermarket, now called 黑市 (Black Market) has been converted into an arcade of food stands very similar to the cafeteria, but they accept cash. There are also a greater variety of snacks available here.

**Restaurants and cafes**

There are numerous Korean restaurants around campus, first due to the large number of ethnic Korean minorities in the Dongbei area, and second due to the Korean students coming to Harbin to study Chinese. Go straight right from the dormitory building, exiting the campus through the small East Gate. Keep on walking until you hit the railroad and turn right—there is a row of Korean restaurants. The first one on the street, named 热风, is run by a Korean immigrant and has the best food. There is also a place with some fantastic 芝士拉面 called 阿喆囍韩国芝士年糕料理. There are also two coffee shops down the road (one of which, named Provence, is run by a French couple) that are worth exploring. Corner Coffee is another place right outside the small East Gate.

There are also great Hong Kong, Muslim, hot pot, and other restaurants near campus. For the specific direction to these places, please refer to the orientation booklet distributed at the beginning of the program.

**Exercising**

There is a big gym on campus (with a swimming pool), which you can use by creating a membership and paying a small fee - you can ask your roommate about this. CET can also help you set up a membership at a nearby private gym. Some years there may be group jogging informally arranged by the RA and the students in the program every night. Near our campus there is a separate campus for graduate students in Sciences, called 科学院. The place used to be a zoo, so it has beautiful scenery with trees and lakes, and is far less crowded. Many students come here to run, play badminton, practice taijiquan, etc.

**Entertainment**

There is a nice, but slightly pricey KTV place out on 西大直 Street called Gaga. There is a movie theater at the 学府路 subway station on the top floor of the mall. There are a number of bars nearby, on which the CET handbook should give you more information.

**Local Travel**
Travel around Harbin can be a little bit tricky because the subway line does not reach the main tourist destinations (yet!). If you want to go downtown to the main shopping street called 中央大街, hang around the Songhua River bank, or get to St. Sophia Cathedral, you will need to take a bus or a taxi. For greater local travel, CET Harbin arranges weekend outings that you can sign up for in advance, for instance to Hot Springs or Mt. Fenghuang.

**Banks**
There is a Bank of China if you turn left heading out from the international dorm before you hit the 方便食堂. If you go further down that same street, there is a China Construction bank in front of 黑市.

**Academics**
Your academics are comprised of your Independent Research class (twice a week for two hours each class), your One on Two, which is your recitation and pronunciation drill, and two electives of your choice. Electives include Business Chinese, Newspaper Chinese, Literature, Literary Chinese, Composition, and Conversation. Electives are split into different sections by Chinese level.

**Independent Research (1:1)**
The independent research is a unique strength of CET Harbin. The program finds a professor from the field of your research topic to be your adviser, so your research can go deeper and more specific. You meet twice a week with your adviser for two hours each. Think in advance on how to format your research, as professors often respect students’ opinion in designing the course. Without your specific requests, however, some professors may just find arbitrary articles related to your topic on the web and make you study and present the materials back in an Oral Report. If you are a beginner or an intermediate in Chinese and want to focus on the language aspect, this format will be a good exercise in terms of reading and vocabulary. But if you are confident about your Chinese and want to be more content-focused, make specific suggestions and work toward building your own project from the beginning. For example, ask your professor to cut down on vocabulary quiz, spend more class time on discussion, and propose finding articles yourself. The more initiative you take, the more academically stimulating the class will become.

**G. UVA Shanghai**

**Getting to the Program**
The living quarters for the program are located about a 10 minute drive from Fudan University, near the Jiangwan Stadium stop on line 10 of the Metro. It is about 45-60 minute drive from the airport so you should take a cab. The program will create a document
where students can input their flight details and find other people who will be arriving at the airport around the same time for carpool purposes. It is a bit hard to find the turnoff for the Tonghee International Student dorm, but the UVA program provides step by step instructions in their guidebook that are very helpful.

**Living Situation at UVA Shanghai**

**Room configuration**

Students live in the Tonghee International Student dorm. It is a typical apartment building, and they group students from the program on two or three consecutive floors. Each apartment has a common room with a dining table, kitchen, washer, one full bath and one half bath, and 3 individual rooms. Every individual room has a bed (with sheets and a pillow), desk, chair, lamp and dresser. Every room is air conditioned and there is a TV in the common room.

There is an internet router for every suite that is decently reliable. If not, there was very strong internet connection in the lobby of the apartment building and many students would congregate there before and after class to check their phones.

**Classrooms**

Our classroom location changed twice during the program. The first location was about a 15 minute walk from the dorms; the second was closer to a 25 minute walk, but was located in Fudan University campus. While this wasn’t ideal in the July heat of Shanghai, there are many snack carts and restaurants along the way which is convenient for breakfast.

**Laundry**

Every apartment has a washer. Every floor has a dryer, but students often use dryers on any floor depending on what was available.

**Eating, Shopping, Exercising**

The area immediately around the dorms is pretty empty, but a ~10 minute walk in any direction will get you to rows of restaurants. The closest subway station is a 15 minute walk and is right across the street from a huge mall.

There was an office building right next to our apartment building that had an ATM inside. It was extremely convenient! There are also a number of banks within walking distance of the apartment, specifically one right next to the subway station that a lot of students used.

The price of food and items ranges greatly. If you are in center city Shanghai, everything is more expensive and pretty touristy. But the area where the dorms and classrooms are located is at least 20 minutes outside center city (by subway), and food at least is relatively
cheap. Lunch from one of the small restaurants or carts is usually 10-15 kuai. We typically ate dinner family style at a sit down restaurant which would be 20-25 kuai.

**Dining On Campus and 学生食堂**

When we started attending classes on campus, some students ate at the student cafeteria. It is very cheap and has a variety of options. But there are so many food options in the area and food is normally so cheap that students preferred to eat at establishments off campus.

**Exercising**

There was a “gym” inside the Tonghee apartment where the students stay. It is comprised of 2 treadmills, a spin machine, a 15-in-one weight machine, and 2 yoga mats. UVA in Shanghai students were typically the only people that ever utilized the Tonghee gym. It is 100 kuai a month for a membership. There are also two, larger, better equipped gyms within walking distance of the apartment, but they were closer to 600 kuai a month. Those gyms are really nice, but it’s just a matter of balancing the cost.

**Entertainment**

There are tons of options for going out in Shanghai. With the city center only 25 minutes away by subway or taxi, clubs, bars, KTV, and general nightlife is very accessible. While the situation varies night to night, Shanghai establishments are typically very welcoming to foreigners. This includes no cover fees for clubs and free drinks. Shanghai expat websites such as Smart Shanghai and Time Out Shanghai are very helpful in finding cool places.

**Travel**

Travel is one of the best parts of the program. It's a small program, and everyone goes on our trips together, so students get many opportunities to mix outside their Chinese year. We spent almost 4 days in Beijing and 3 days in Xi’an. Both are great cities and the program arranged visits to all the major tourist attractions. You are also given plenty of free time at night and during the day to explore on your own with friends.

There is typically a one day homestay (not overnight). This happens in Shanghai.

**Academics**

**Language Pledge**

The language pledge is one of the biggest challenges of the program, primarily because of the living arrangements. Students must be diligent and dedicated to the pledge in the dorms when there is no supervision.
Academics are tough but manageable. There is a sizeable amount of homework, but it is doable and even enjoyable if you get together with other students in the program. As with Yale’s program, there is an emphasis on character memorization. But the UVA program and teachers allow for much more fluidity of thought and expression. They encourage students to use new grammar structures and vocabulary to discuss current events and pressing cultural issues, rather than just the topic of the book. The teachers are excellent resources about the cultural, political, and economic climate in China and do a wonderful job of giving students enough freedom to discuss those topics while guiding us through new vocabulary and grammar.

The program moves at a pretty brisk pace, with a new chapter every day. As long as you don’t fall behind, it’s not so bad and you get used to it.

**Extracurriculars**

The teachers offer a slew of extracurricular courses. Many students find them fun and interesting, though they do cost extra. It is a great way to structurally build in some cultural immersion, though that happens quite naturally as well. Enrolling in at least one activity, especially if your friends are doing it, can be very worth it.

**H. CET Kunming**

**Getting to the Program**

The CET Kunming program is located at Yunnan University, which is in central Kunming and right next to a beautiful lake. There is very little air pollution, especially in comparison with the larger cities like Shanghai, Beijing, etc. The city has a new subway system, but only a couple lines are open, and it is not especially convenient to campus. Buses are convenient and relatively easy to use, though, and trains will get you out of the city. The airport is brand new and was just completed a few years ago; it has flights that go all over China. The airport is about 20-30 minutes away from the school by taxi (taxis are very cheap and easy depending on where students want to go, but they must barter with them and set the price before they start the journey). CET will arrange to have students picked up from the airport. I walked from the dorm to the school building every day and it was about a 5 minute walk. The campus is across the street from the student dorm.

Of course, Kunming is still a large city, with a population of 10 million (about half the size of New York City). One of the best things is that one does not have all the mess of the big cities, but there are still a lot of conveniences, like international restaurants, an international airport, and other amenities. Also, there are amazing hiking trails and outdoors parks within walking and bus-ride distances.
Living Situation at CET Kunming

Room configuration

The program has a dorm system. Students will live with a Chinese student that attends Yunnan University or one of the other nearby universities. They are extremely helpful and kind. Some roommates will travel with students and participate in many of the activities that CET offers. The dorms are very nice, with one foreign student and one Chinese student in each room with a private bathroom. Students are actually staying in a hotel right across from the campus entrance. The building is full of international students either from the CET program or other summer immersion experiences.

Each room has western bathrooms, were cleaned once daily (hotel staff make students’ beds!), and had two single beds. As far as the weather goes, it doesn't get better than Kunming! It is called the city of four spring seasons (春城 or 四季如春). It really is 70 degrees and sunny. There is some rain, but in the summer, the weather is perfect. Some rooms had an air conditioner, but they are not used often. I would recommend bringing a light jacket and sweater for cooler days and evenings in Kunming. Beijing and Shanghai, on the other hand, are very hot during the summer.

Laundry

There was a laundry machine in the CET Activity Room on the 6th floor of the dorm and detergent is readily available at the supermarket. The dorms are about a 10 minute walk from the classrooms. There is no dryer available, which is typical for China. Just hanging clothes will suffice (the weather is beautiful most of the time). You can buy detergent at the school store (which is about a 2 minute walk, there is also a convenience store right across from the dorm).

Eating, Shopping, Exercising

The neighborhood around campus is great. It is very collegiate with cafes, bookstores, and clothing stores within a block from campus. There is an international grocery store just two blocks from the dorm and plenty of Chinese supermarkets (and bubble tea shops!) closer than that. There is an ATM next to the dorm outside the pharmacy. Everything students needed was in walking distance, but if you needed something hard to find, students just took a bus to the city center, about a 10-minute bus ride away.

Dining On-Campus and 学生食堂

There is a dining hall about 3 minutes away from campus. You can buy meals there since you will be a registered student at the college. It is the cheapest way to eat. They always serve Chinese cuisine. There are also plenty of international cuisines available (Indian, American, French, Burmese, etc.) - most of these restaurants are located on the street near the dorm. For a small fee, CET provided many of the lunches - the food was great and there
are many authentic places to eat ethnic cuisine in the city, like 过桥米线 (Over the Bridge Noodles).

**Eating Options Off-Campus**

There is a huge night market on weekend nights in the street a block up from campus (the same street with the bookstore/cafes). It is named Wenlin or Wenhua. There is an international supermarket and the number of Chinese supermarkets closeby. Fresh produce can be found in the carts of street vendors who set up at the campus gates or at the park by the lake.

Many students visited the night markets at the Bird and Flower market, but that district has since been demolished. It is recommended to ask your residential advisor, also your roommates will know of the best places to visit. Night markets tend to move around, but there used to be one right on "Wenhua Xiang," the street that is incredibly close to the dorm. This street also had a ton of wonderful places to eat. Kunming is one of China’s most populated minority regions - it also boasts the best minority food.

**Exercising**

For students, there are many opportunities to run around the campus in the morning. The weather is great for outdoor exercise, and there is no noticeable smog. The only thing students should be careful of is the altitude gain. Kunming is quite high up in the mountains, and if you’re not used to the thin air, it can be taxing on your lungs to go for extended runs. Several students from liked to play basketball with some locals that often came to play on campus. The outdoor basketball courts are also on the way to school and are impossible to miss - locals are usually very willing to play.

There is also a large park in the center of Kunming, and it is walking distance about ten minutes away from the dorm and from school. It is beautiful, they often have various dance classes and tai chi, among other martial arts programs. Tai chi often is a morning exercise that is taught by the teachers of CET and is free.

**Entertainment**

Life at CET in Kunming is really what you make of it. There are some people interested in hiking who went to parks on weekends. Others were interested in nightlife so they went to Kundu, which is the clubbing area in Kunming. Unfortunately, Kundu is not particularly safe; the program director will tell you not to go there. However, it is not strictly prohibited, so if you want to go, you can. Bars around Kunming (not in Kundu) are much safer and can be really fun.

CET offers classes in cooking, tai chi, calligraphy etc., so many people made that their hobby. For some, the best part was hanging out with their Chinese roommate and friends.
Because the college is nearby, there was quite a bit of nightlife right next to the school. Many of the cafes are converted to bars at night. There are also clubs at the city center, a short taxi ride, and my roommate took me to some lesser-known bars in other parts of the city. ATMs are very easy to locate.

**Travel**

In terms of travel, CET Kunming takes several trips off the campus and outside of Kunming. They vary year to year. Some have gone to the Stone Forest, Yi Zu minority towns, and Dali, among other places. The program usually offers a long weekend trip in the middle of the semester. Many students traveled by themselves because Kunming was easy to travel from. Some have gone to Lijiang, Beijing, Shanghai, Changchun, Nanjing, Puzhehei, and Chengdu. All of these travels were during breaks and after the program, although it is possible to travel to some of the closer places over the weekend if you’re organized. If you have time after the program, I would strongly recommend traveling around Southwest China - it’s an incredible area not as many people get to see, and it’s definitely different from the usual big cities foreigners travel to in China.

**Academics**

CET is famous for their Chinese language instruction. I went to China knowing only a few words of Chinese and after 2 CET programs, students’ progress to advanced proficiency. The instructors are very knowledgeable and really care about students and their learning as an individual. Class size is very small, so teachers can easily cater to student’s individual learning styles. For example, they were able to tailor lessons to heritage and non-heritage learners in the one-on-one sessions students had every day. The professors are young, so they can teach slang and other fun grammar! It is common to become very close with your teachers.

Every day is essentially the same: four hours of class in the morning, a half-hour tutorial in the afternoon with one of your teachers, and then a few hours of homework each night. By the sixth week, students usually have no trouble with the academics; it feels like second nature. That security and stability with the language and with the academics makes it really easy to go away for a weekend.

Grammar and vocabulary are the focus of the sessions in the morning. However, modern Chinese culture, politics and social phenomena are also covered. Tutorials are meant to encourage students to explore specific topics in which they are interested--anything from Chinese history to modern-day dating norms in China.

The teachers are incredibly warm. They want to sit with you at lunch and talk to you as much as possible. They are curious about you and are also open to answering any of your questions.

The language pledge is strictly enforced and it is absolutely worth it. People who broke the pledge did not improve with the rapidity of their peers, and they left the program so
much the worse for it. CET is good for independent learners who can bear the difficulties of the language pledge and are willing to put in the time each night to memorizing vocabulary, but still have a sense of adventure and fun that allows them to put the books down from time to time in order to explore and enjoy the city. I was actually very impressed with how many students truly upheld the language pledge the whole summer - it made for a great Chinese environment (although obviously this will depend on the group of students each year).

Extracurriculars

Many extracurriculars offered from cooking, painting, taichi, etc. They depend on the teachers and the interests of the students. Several students enjoyed the cooking class and taichi class immensely. They are relatively relaxed environments and a nice break from the academic side of China.

I will say that CET doesn’t set up a lot of excursions around the city. However, I don’t doubt that if you asked the director of the program, Alex Nickley (Niyi Fan), he would be more than happy to help you find whatever you are looking for.

I. CET Beijing

Getting to the Program

CET Beijing is located at Capital Normal University (Shŏudū shǐfàn dàxué) in Haidian Qu. CET provides a free bus from the airport to campus that students can sign up for, but this option is only available if you arrive within a certain time frame, so be sure to coordinate your flight’s landing time with the shuttle information given by the program coordinator. If you miss the pick-up time, getting a taxi to the campus is pretty easy and costs ~150 RMB. The closest subway station is Huayuanqiao on Line 2.

Living Situation at CET Beijing

Students share a room with a student from CNU. In the summer of 2016, two buildings were used, 中国房子 on the main campus, and an international dorm/hotel at 北一区 (north campus). Placement decisions were roughly based on language levels, with L3+ students located on the main campus, and below-L3 students located on north campus. Both buildings function like hotels and provide wi-fi, air-conditioning, and shared laundry facilities, with each room containing its own bathroom and basic furniture (a desk, lamp, wardrobe, and bedside table come standard with each room, while refrigerators and other appliances can be rented from the front desk of the dorm building). The University is conveniently located near subway and bus stops as well as many restaurants and small markets. Returning students often cite living with a Chinese roommate as one of the most valuable parts of their experience. Roommates provide an additional resource and opportunity to learn and practice your Chinese. My roommate was a native Beijinger who
showed me more local aspects of Beijing. If you don’t hit it off with your roommate, try befriending other roommates too.

**Eating, Shopping, Exercising**

**Eating**

On main campus, there is a restaurant right across the street from 中国房子 that has very tasty and affordable dishes. There are also small noodle, and fruit vendors along the street that leads to the dorm. On the north campus, there are many restaurants across the street as well including a Biang noodle house, pizza place, and a Café Bene. Both campuses have their own dining halls, where most students eat lunch before heading over to afternoon 1:1 sessions. There is also a kitchen in the basement of 中国房子 and kitchens on each floor of the dorm building on north campus. Dining hall food is safest, cheapest, and pretty convenient options, but it is also worth going out of your way to explore other restaurants in the city such as 南京大排档 (Nanjing cuisine), 那家小馆 (Beijing cuisine), 西贝面村 (Inner Mongolian cuisine), etc.

**Banking**

There are a few banks and ATMs on or near campus. Right across the street from the dorm building, there is a conveniently located Bank of China ATM. There is a China Construction Bank ATM near the 中国房子 as you walk toward the classroom buildings. It’s kind of tucked away, so don’t be shy to ask a CNU student how to find it. There’s also a large bank that’s walking distance from the dorm building. The CET program takes everyone there during the first few days of the program to give students the opportunity to convert money or make withdrawals.

**Shopping**

There are a few grocery stores and stands where you can get fresh fruits and vegetables right near campus. There is also a large supermarket, shopping complex that is a ~10 minute walk from the dorm building.

**Exercising**

There is one gym on campus and another that is a ~15 minute walk away from the dorm building. There are membership fees for both, but more details about gym information can be found in the CET student handbook. CNU also has an outdoor track and basketball court on campus, available for students to use, but due to the heavy smog in Beijing, some days, this isn’t a good option.

**Extracurricular Activity & Travel**
CET offers a variety of excursions throughout the duration of the program. Every week, there are organized trips to most of the tourist destinations in Beijing - the Great Wall, Peking Opera, the Summer Palace, Chinese acrobats show etc. In addition, there will be an overnight trip during the latter half of the summer to a city of historical significance in China. The trip destination changes every year, but it usually serves as an opportunity to see another side of Chinese culture that is different from Beijing.

Weekly Wushu, calligraphy, and Chinese painting classes are offered to students. CET is also very open to requests and suggestions for activities; this past summer we had a ping pong contest, sunflower seed eating contest, and chopsticks skill contest.

**Language Pledge**

CET has a well-enforced language pledge where upon the first warning, your school might be notified and after 3 warnings, you face the risk of being dismissed from the program. CET takes the idea of creating a proper, immersive experience for every student very seriously. There are teachers who live on each floor of the dorm building and will give warnings to anyone caught speaking English. The language pledge seems pretty annoying in the beginning, especially if you only have a year of Chinese under your belt, but sticking to it is definitely worthwhile in the end! It helps to befriend and hang out with people who will take the pledge as seriously as you do so definitely make an effort to befriend your local roommate and your friends’ roommates.

The handbook CET gives out at the start contains a lot more information, so don’t worry that the section for this program is so short. Do some preliminary research on places to visit, download 高德地图 (map/yelp app) and use your afternoons to explore!