

## 复旦大学

Over the summer of 2015, a small group of LSE students ventured to Shanghai to study at Fudan University courtesy of the LSE language department. A beautiful, overwhelming and somewhat manic city home to over 24 million, it was an unforgettable summer.

The course was intelligently designed, with beginners joined three weeks in by more advanced students, including myself, for a further five weeks. With over 20 hours of intensive language classes a week as well as cultural activities and lectures on Chinese history and economics, our language skills were greatly improved in all dimensions and what I learned has served me incredibly well in my studies since. Focussing on learning Chinese for such a long period of time enabled me to progress far faster and much further than I would have been able to otherwise. Furthermore, the intensity of the weeks we spent in Shanghai, living and studying together, brought us all together as a tightknit group. Despite not knowing most of the other students there before I arrived, our shared love for learning and for Shanghai itself enabled us to form bonds of friendship that have lasted ever since.

As well as the excellent teaching we received at Fudan, the experience of living in one of the most vibrant cities in the world was incredible. We explored everything that Shanghai had to offer, from watching early morning dances and Tai Chi to late night explorations of Shanghai's incredible underground nightlife, equipped to do so by our constantly improving language skills which were reinforced by the day- to- day conversations we had in taxis, shops and KTV bars.

The weekends further provided us with the opportunity to explore the country using a transport system so efficient and inexpensive that it managed to make British National Rail look even worse than usual. As a group we climbed (and got stranded at the top of) the striking Huangshan mountain range, before travelling to the historic and picturesque Hangzhou. Somehow managing to arrive in the middle of a major flood, we were forced to desperately cross a city inundated with water, a feat that again would have been impossible without what we had learnt in the classroom and the help of an online Chinese dictionary. In addition, we travelled to Yangshuo, and followed the path of the Li River, cycling across rice fields and through rural villages in the shadow of vast limestone peaks, a cultural experience that no classroom could ever provide.

The graduation ceremony at the end of the course enabled us to reflect on all we had learnt, as well as providing us with the opportunity to display to the faculty of both LSE and Fudan our appreciation for Chinese culture by performing a dance to hit Chinese song '小苹果 (Little Apple)' as well as a poor but nevertheless enthusiastic rendition of '对不起，我的中文不好'.

I am unable to begin to describe or do justice to the truly wonderful experience in such a short article, but we are all undoubtedly incredibly grateful to the LSE Language Centre (who also fund your place on the course), Fudan University and in particular Catherine Xiang for

making our brilliant experience in Shanghai possible. I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to go to do so- what an amazing and unrivalled way to spend a summer.

AF, Bexson