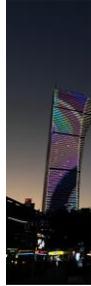


31.01.2024

My Exchange Semester in China

Personal Report



Preparation

In preparation for my exchange semester in China, the most important points were obtaining a Chinese student visa, getting in contact with the International Office of the NJU, and collecting as much information as possible.

Thanks to the International Office of the University of Freiburg I got all the information regarding organizational matters. The application process went smoothly.

Since I am a Polish citizen, studying as an international student in Freiburg, I applied for a Chinese visa at a Polish Visa Application Center in Warsaw, Poland. Having an official invitation from Nanjing University, obtaining a student visa for up to 180 days was not a big problem.

After arriving in Nanjing I was taken care of by the NJU International Office during the registration day. On the spot, I got all the information on accommodation, paid and obtained the required health insurance, received help with organizing a Chinese SIM card, and obtained my student ID card which granted me access to all university facilities. After all the formalities and meeting other international students in the meantime, the shuttle bus took us to the Xianlin Campus, where we could instantly check into the International Student dormitory.

The accommodation in the student dorm on the Xianlin Campus, although quite far from the city center and the Gulou campus, where my classes were held, was comfortable and very accessible in terms of rent fees. Being surrounded by other international students, including my roommate who happened to also be a girl from the University of Freiburg, made adapting to the new situation much easier. Apart from that, Nanjing University assigned every exchange student a “Buddy”, a Chinese student from NJU whose task was to show us the ropes around campus and make our time in China easier. My Chinese Buddy, Sophie, was the kindest, most helpful person I could wish for anyone in a similar situation. Apart from becoming my dear friend whom I hope to keep in contact with, she went far and beyond to help me in all sorts of situations.

Experiences

My main aim during my stay in China was not only to significantly enhance my Chinese language skills but also to truly get to know this fascinating country with over 5,000 years long history. Thanks to the scholarship I was granted from the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM, I could get to know various aspects of Chinese culture, learn the differences and similarities between provinces, and meet new people from different cities from all around China.

During my almost 5-months stay I got the opportunity to visit cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Chongqing, Chengdu, and Wuxi, as well as discover many hidden gems of one of the most important and culturally abundant cities in China, my host city - Nanjing.

From modern city vibes in Shanghai, through breathtaking views over the Great Wall, greenery and peacefulness of the tea plantations in Hangzhou, majestic architecture in Beijing, playfulness and cuteness of pandas in Chengdu, grand Buddha monument in Wuxi, futuristic city planning in Chongqing, to the city of Nanjing where tradition meets modernity, the experiences I gained during my exchange semester will stay with me and I am looking forward to share them with others who, like me, are fascinated and intrigued by a country one of a kind, China.

During my exchange semester, I decided to focus on significantly improving my Chinese language skills, therefore, I took up an intensive language course at 中下 class (equivalent of the B2 level). I was very satisfied with both experienced teachers and the intensity level of the class. As a result, I acquired fluency in speaking which was my main hope and a goal that I managed to meet and exceed. Right now, after receiving the official certificate with very satisfactory results, I'm in the process of preparing to take the HSK 5 exam which will further conclude my language achievements during the semester in China.

Personal Conclusions

Although sometimes challenging, my time spent in China was a wonderful time that I will remember for the rest of my life. Now, with friends from not only China but also many places all around the world, enhanced language skills, and great memories I can't recommend more such an opportunity to anyone.

I would like to thank everyone from the International Offices in both Freiburg and Nanjing for all the help and advice I received during the application period and my stay in China. To make such a different and far-away country feel like home is not an easy task but thanks to all the people I met during this whole experience I can think of Nanjing as my third home that I am looking forward to visiting again in the future.

My exchange semester would not be possible and definitely not so full of newly gained knowledge and experience without the support from the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM. Both financial support and becoming a member of this lively community of inspired and motivated people from all sorts of majors and Universities have enriched my stay in China significantly.

