



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD CHINA

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Editor's Note

After few sunny days (30 degrees) at the end of May, rains start in early June. The air is usually of average 60% humidity and always leads to the downpour. In Chinese, we call this period of raining time: 梅雨 (Mei Yu, Mei in Chinese means both plum and mildew. Mei Yu means the rainy season with ripening of the plum as well as growing of mould on the clothes). I bet some of you have experienced the heavy rains. Please don't forget to bring an umbrella with you when you are out.



In this June issue, we are going to share two great volunteer stories: one is from Yurika Oshio – Japanese volunteer who participated in the Business Project in Shanghai, and another one is the story from Raphaela Ring – German volunteer, she shares her living experience in Shanghai with some awesome photos. Moreover, if you would like to know the story behind the Dragon Boat Festival that is widely celebrated in China, you can find a piece of article in our newsletter about it.

We hope their experiences will provide you with a bit of the variety of projects available here in China, and we sincerely hope these stories will encourage people to join us here too! Meanwhile, if you are interested in what's going on here, you can always check out our Facebook Group, 'Projects Abroad Shanghai, China – The Official Group' or 'Projects Abroad Chengdu, China - Official Group' for more photos or stories; or email any queries and comments to china@projects-abroad.org.

If you would love to share your story and experience in China, you can also get in touch with me at suzieli@projects-abroad.org

Have yourselves a great June in China! ;-)

Suzie Li
Information Manager

Volunteer Story

Yurika Oshio (Japanese, Business Project):



Twenty-year-old Yurika Oshio, an English major from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, decided to take time out during her spring break. Being interested in the Chinese language, culture and economics, she decided to volunteer in China at Projects Abroad's Business Project for one month.

"My major is in English, but I have a minor in marketing as well. Volunteering at the Business Project is a great opportunity to provide me with some ideas about the Chinese way of doing marketing, and it is also an opportunity for me to prepare the material and information for my graduation assignment," Yurika said. "I have learned marketing knowledge from the class, but at the project I learned by doing."

"I worked as a marketing department officer in an international company which is focusing on online social media platforms in Shanghai," Yurika said. "I worked on drafting the marketing strategy and promotion plan in Tokyo for an online product. I also assisted my supervisor with large scale events that were held."

Yurika was aware of the different working styles of Chinese, Western, and Japanese by doing working at the international company. "In general, Chinese people are more active during meetings than Japanese, but not as active as Western. Even though there are similarities between Japanese and Chinese culture, however, I can still feel the differences between them. What I learned from this period of time will be definitely useful to my future career."

This unique experience is not only beneficial to Yurika's academic knowledge and, but also beneficial to her intercultural knowledge. "As this is the first time I have been alone in a different country, I feel that I have become stronger. Since I am going to England for a year exchange programme, it is very useful for me to have a testing phase," she laughed.

Yurika likes the food and people in Shanghai. "If my future company offers me a chance to work in Shanghai, I will definitely come back!"



Volunteer Story

Rapheala Ring (German, Business Project):



Rapheala Ring (right)

I have to be honest Shanghai never used to intrigue me enough to consider it for travel plans or any 100-places-to-visit-before-you-die lists. Only when it came to planning my gap year I knew that I wanted to do an internship in China and that way I ended up in Shanghai. I bought my travel guide on the airport and started circling, bookmarking and googling pretty much as soon as I opened page 1.

Shanghai seems to have it all. Where else can you start your day with a delicious brunch (including world's best pancakes) in the most Western setting possible and end it with a bowl of noodle soup at that little hole in the wall just around the corner? Where can you find a man dressed in three different, all equally disturbing, patterned pieces of clothing followed by an old couple in Snoopy pajamas? And the best thing: no one but you will even notice. Getting overtaken by a guy on a bicycle carrying a sofa or twenty chairs or a giant bird cage is as common as a poodle with pink ears and turquoise tail.

Shanghai is one of those cities you should live in and not just pass through and doing a placement did exactly that. It made Shanghai my home for three months and presented me with the opportunity to discover its secrets. Living and working in the city gave me the time to really get to know the place, feel comfortable in exploring it and finding as many hidden gems as possible. Sometimes it will just be a new cafe, tucked away in a little lane between old style houses and over towered by one of the many skyscrapers, other times it is a local flower market. You never know what Shanghai has up its sleeve and it is sure to always surprise no matter what you have expected.



Rapheala Ring (left)

I know that I will be sad once my time here is over but I also know that I will come back. Come back to go on exploring the lanes and alleys of Jingan, to relax in one of the many parks, to eat the delicious baozi. For me Shanghai is about all of those things, the markets and little boutiques, the secret art galleries and cozy cafes and not just about the Bund and skyscrapers.

Dragon Boat Festival:



Dragon Boat Competition (photo by XEgg)

The Dragon Boat Festival is one of China's traditional holidays, but is also celebrated throughout other Southeast Asian countries as part of the process of cultural sharing with China. It got somewhat forgotten (and banned) during the chaos of the Second World War and the madness of Cultural Revolution, but after China's political reforms in the 70's and 80's, its popularity has been on the rise and in 2008 the Dragon Boat Festival got recognized as an official holiday in mainland China.

The festival occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar (which is based on the lunar calendar), so that means this year the Dragon Boat Festival will be celebrated on June 10th. Celebration involves preparing and

eating rice dumplings called zongzi (粽子), drinking xionghuangjiu (雄黄酒, realgar wine) and racing dragon boats.

A number of theories exist about the origins of the Dragon Boat Festival, but the best-known (and generally accepted) theory relates to the suicide of Qu Yuan, a well renowned poet in the third century BC. Popular legend has it that villagers tried to save him after he hurled himself into the Miluo River because of fatuous emperor and corrupt politics; they rushed to him by boat, but it was too late and he had drowned already. In order to keep evil spirits away, the villagers beat their drums and splashed the water with their paddles. They threw rice in the water as an offering to Qu Yuan's spirit and to keep the fish from scavenging his body. One

Dragon Boat Festival



粽子 (Rice dumplings), photo by suziedepingu

night however, his spirit appeared before his friends and asked them to wrap their rice into three-cornered silk packages (zongzi) to ward off the dragon.

The act of racing to search for his body in boats gradually became the cultural tradition of dragon boat racing, which is held on the anniversary of his death every year. The boats can be up to 40 meters long, and they are shaped like dragons and are brightly painted in black, white, red and yellow. Several dozens people try to get the boats moving in cadence with drumbeats and under the coordinating eye of a captain. Before the race starts, a ceremony is held to worship the Dragon King.

Another purpose of the festival is to dispel disease and drive out evil; midsummer is getting closer and the hot weather usually brought various diseases with it. Children used to be extra vulnerable to diseases so extra attention is paid to the little ones: they'd wear necklaces or bracelets made of colourful threads and carry around pouches with fragrant herbal medicines in it. Children were also made sure to bathe in water boiled with herbal remedies. Realgar is believed to be most effective to drive away evil spirits and kill insects so everyone would drink realgar wine during the Dragon Boat Festival.

Photo Page



Social Calendar

