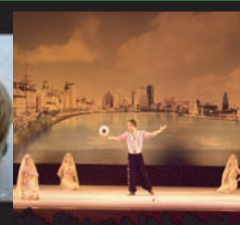




February 2011 Edition: Issue 51

ProjectsAbroad

中国



Contents

Page 2: Contents

Page 3: Notes from the Editor

Page 4: News and Update

Projects Abroad in Chengdu, China

Page 6: Feature

Briefing Introduction of Chengdu

Page 7: Volunteer Article

Words from Johanne Villumsen

Page 9: Volunteer Article

Xangai: Uma Experiência de Vida by Carlos Barbosa Cavalcanti Jr

Page 11: Photo Page

Page 12: Miscellaneous Page

Lantern Festival

Page 14: Upcoming Social Events for March

Page 15: Staff Page

Page 17: Volunteer Contact Details

Page 19: Social Media Links

Hi there readers,

So that's February done then. Went kind of quickly no? We had so much to keep us occupied and so many things going on, I barely noticed the time pass. Firstly, it was the Chinese New Year, which meant the whole of China came screeching to a festive halt with fireworks and all types of seasonal madness. On top of that we had loads of events on; dinners, martial arts, quiz's etc. Even the famous US singer, Kelis dropped by at Shanghai to sing to the volunteers...

In this past month we also 'lost' quite a few people due to their time being up and their return home which kind of broke up a community that was becoming evermore close and familiar. Although this is, of course, quite sad to witness, it's always followed by the inevitable new friendships and social dynamics that take place afterwards. One such old friend that returned home in February was Hassan, a volunteer who had been here for a whopping 15 months! There was a dinner to mark the occasion which was a lot of fun. I will talk more about that event later on in the newsletter.

So as we look forward to March, we'll have 19 new people coming to Shanghai to begin their projects. In this coming month, we'll be joining the regular Clothes Sorting Party where we help a local Shanghai charity sort and distribute donated clothes from the city to be delivered to the poorer countryside spots in the country. There'll be bowling, the next spring quiz, and we'll also be looking to hold a Chinese calligraphy session. Next month will also see me flying off to the west of China to start the new Projects Abroad, Chengdu location. I'll talk more about this later in this newsletter.

Enjoy your March in China!

Kevin

Projects Abroad in Chengdu, China

Kevin Dennis

In mid-March 2011 Projects Abroad, as part of its ever widening reach around the world, will expand the locations offered to volunteers to include the city of Chengdu, located in the west of China.



As China becomes ever more prevalent on the world stage we have seen demand for it as a destination increase a great deal. More and more people are hoping to come to see life here; gain working experience, and/or contribute to the communities. It is for this reason, and many others, we have chosen the city of Chengdu as an ideal place for volunteers. We felt that, as a destination, it has many attractive features as it combines a scenic and inviting homely environment with high modernity and thriving city-lifestyle.

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Projects Abroad in Chengdu, China(Continued)

As a city, Chengdu has been voted the third most livable in the country and has a reputation for the fulfilling lifestyle it offers in terms of natural beauty, pleasurable standard of living, cuisine and opportunity. Amongst local Chinese people it is often referred to as the 'Chinese Italy' due to its surrounding beauty and strong food culture. There is even a saying here in China that 'once you stay in Chengdu, you will never leave'. Sichuan people have a reputation in China for focusing heavily on a pleasure based life style. This is reflected in the number of teahouses, parks, bars and restaurants that decorate the leafy streets with their neon lights.

At the same time as being an attractive place to live it is also developing rapidly. In some respects it is like a young Shanghai, a Shanghai in its more developmental stages. Chengdu is a rapidly developing city which is anticipated to reach great heights as attention turns toward the potential of Western China. Today, the city is attracting more and more of the world's biggest multinational companies with over 30 fortune 500 companies having a presence in the district. These companies include industrial giants such as Intel, Sony, Microsoft, IBM, Motorola and Dell, to name just a few. It's a place that, due to its excellent location, travel links and business infrastructure, is developing exponentially and offers a wealth of law, business and journalism opportunities.

Sadly there is, of course, a downside to the growth that is taking place within the city. There are many people, places and environments that suffer or are left behind in the fast progress; particularly as it is located in the west of China, where most of the poverty in the country can be found. For this reason there are also many places where our volunteers can contribute to society and already we are finding many places requesting our help.

So, I personally am looking forward to watching volunteers have a great experience in Chengdu and us being able to help out those who need it. It should be a great location that promises to provide a wonderfully worthwhile experience for the people who come here!

... oh, and I forgot to mention the Pandas :)



Brief Introduction of Chengdu

Orientation

The city of Chengdu is divided into five districts and 12 counties. The nucleus of the city, seated at the most central point is Tianfu Square. At the northern tip of Tianfu Square you will find the Science and Technology Museum and a large statue of Chairman Mao. Head further west and you will reach the People's Park. Slightly north of the Park there is the touristy area of Wide Alley.

Chengdu is not only an inroad for business but also for travellers exploring the west of China. The city offers a number of tourist spots in the city itself, within the province and across the west of China. Most famously within the city you can access the Panda Research Base, the largest and most advanced Panda sanctuary in the world, where you can watch the Pandas eat and play in an enclosed habitat. Outside of the city and within Sichuan province you will find the UNESCO protected Jiuzhaigou area whose turquoise transparent waters sit in the shadow of beautiful mountains. It is reputed to be one of the most beautiful areas in the world.

Climate

Chengdu has a subtropical monsoon climate. Due to its location, the city is often foggy and overcast resulting in humid and moist air. The seasons are well defined; in the summer the weather is normally pleasantly hot although muggy, with July and August averaging around 25°C (77 °F). These 2 months can also be subject to dense and torrential rain and are the wettest of the year. The winter weather is relatively mild (compared to countries in the Northern Hemisphere), but still uncomfortably cold, wet and cloudy. In January temperatures drop to an average of 5°C and is often foggy and overcast.

To summarise the weather in clothing language, you'll need to get your flowery Bermuda shirt and surf shorts out for the summer (and perhaps an anorak), and your mittens, scarf and giant jacket for the winter. For other months, a pair of jeans, t-shirt, jumper and perhaps a jacket.

People

According to the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics 2007, Chengdu has a total population of 12.58 million, in which 3.30 million live in the urban area and 1.46 million are floating. Of those, 51.35% were female, and 48.65% were male. In 2007 there were 3,500 expats living and working in Chengdu.

Words from Johanne Villumsen

(Denmark, Business, 3 Months)



Johanne, on the right

Mit navn er Johanne, jeg er 20 år og kommer fra en mindre by i udkanten af Viborg. Jeg blev student sommeren 2010 fra Viborg Katedralskole fra en samfundsvidenskabelig linje og skulle da finde ud af, hvad jeg ville lave i mit sabbatår. Jeg vidste, jeg ville ud at rejse, og jeg var fast besluttet på, at det skulle være til Kina, da jeg havde haft kinesisk gennem min gymnasietid og gerne ville blive bedre til at tale sproget. Ligeledes ville jeg gerne bruge mit sabbatår til at få noget arbejds erfaring for at finde ud af, hvilken vej jeg skulle gå i fremtiden. Alt dette har ført til, at jeg nu befinder mig i Shanghai med Projects Abroad, da de med deres Business-program gjorde det muligt for mig at kombinere mine krav for mit sabbatår: Rejse, Kina og arbejds erfaring. Jeg ankom d. 7/1-2011, og skal være her i tere 3 måneder. Det har været utrolig nemt at falde til, da alle er så imødekommende og det, at man deler lejlighed med andre frivillige, er bestemt et plus, da man hurtig kommer til at lære de andre at kende.

Jeg arbejder for et engelsk firma, der hedder De Gournay, som er mest kendt for håndmalet tapet, og jeg er utrolig glad for at arbejde der. Jeg møder mandag til fredag fra kl. 9.00 til 18.00, men jeg har en times pause midt på dagen, som jeg ofte bruger sammen med mine kinesiske kollegaer. De er rigtigt venlige og meget interesseret i at lære mig at kende og stiller mig ofte spørgsmål om den danske kultur og mit liv i Danmark. De lærer mig ligeledes om den kinesiske kultur. Når jeg får fri, tager jeg ofte ud at spise med de andre frivillige, og i weekenden tager vi i byen, spiser brunch sammen hver søndag, tager på sightseeing, shopping osv. Alle snakker med alle, og alle føler sig velkommen i hinandens selskab. Jeg er netop lige vendt hjem igen til Shanghai fra en skøn weekendtur til Beijing sammen med fire andre frivillige, og vi har allerede snakket om at tage en en-dags tur til Hangzhou, når chancen byder sig igen.

Continued on next page ...

Words from Johanne Villumsen (Continued)

(Denmark, Business, 3 Months)



Johanne, far right

Der er en verden til forskel, hvis man ser på den danske kultur i forhold til den kinesiske kultur, og det er det, der gør Kina så spændende, synes jeg, fordi alting er så anderledes. Shanghai er en storby med mange millioner af mennesker og mange forskellige områder, lige fra overvældende områder med skyskrabere til mindre områder med fede butikker og caféer til små beskidte områder med mange fattige – men uanset hvor man befinder sig, føler man sig tryk, for det ligger ikke til den kinesiske kultur at begå åbenlys vold mod andre, men de kan helt bestemt være meget nærgående. Maden er også meget anderledes, og det er selvfølgelig en smagssag, om man kan lide den eller ej. En ting, der er væsentligt anderledes fra den danske kultur, er måden, man taler sammen på. I Danmark er vi meget direkte, når vi stiller - og besvarer spørgsmål, hvor kineserne derimod kredser omkring det, de gerne vil sige i stedet for at sige det direkte. Det er altid spændende at opleve andre landes kulturer, og den kinesiske er bestemt alle pengene værd.

Min pointe er, at hvis bare man er åben over for nye udfordringer og nye mennesker, så er Projects Abroad den helt rigtige organisation at rejse med, da de giver dig muligheden for at få nye udfordringer på arbejdsfronten og ligeledes muligheden for at møde nye mennesker og derved skabe gode kontakter verden over. Jeg har været her i Shanghai i en måned, og indtil nu har jeg været rigtigt glad for mit ophold og glæder mig over, at jeg har to måneder endnu i denne fantastiske storby til at få flere spændende oplevelser og nye udfordringer, før jeg vender hjem til Danmark.

Xangai: Uma Experiência de Vida.

by Carlos Barbosa Cavalcanti Jr

(Brazil, Law, 1 Month)



Carlos with his colleague

Ao desembarcar no Aeroporto Internacional de Pudong, em Xangai, a primeira coisa que procuro são os caracteres chineses nas placas para certificar se, realmente, estava mesmo na China. Difícil acreditar. Pergunto-me se essa temporada no Extremo Oriente tinha sido a melhor escolha. Ato contínuo, sou tomado por sentimentos paradoxais. Estou ansioso, prestes a iniciar uma experiência profissional internacional tão sonhada, ao mesmo tempo em que me sinto infeliz e inseguro. Imagino nesse exato momento como seria bom estar no calor equatorial de São Luís do Maranhão – Brasil, ouvindo as chuvas torrenciais típicas da estação tocarem o chão e os telhados das casas numa sonoridade que, à noite, acaba servindo como uma verdadeira terapia do sono. Os buracos das ruas, a sujeira e todos os problemas sociais que grassam pela cidade onde resido e que me causam constante indignação não parecem mais me importar. Ah, como eu gostaria de estar em casa....

Sou recebido por um representante do Projects Abroad e seguimos de táxi para o meu alojamento. Enquanto conversamos vou tentando espiar pela janela embaçada do carro um pouco da cidade. Os incontáveis prédios residenciais ladeados por grandes viadutos servem como lembrança de São Paulo. Chegando no apartamento, sentamos na sala para que me sejam repassadas algumas instruções, bem como materiais importantes relativos à minha estadia em Xangai. Dinheiro para as despesas básicas, mapas da cidade, manuais e até menus em inglês dos restaurantes mais próximos são entregues. Despedimo-nos e sigo para o meu quarto. A temperatura negativa que fazia naquela noite, associada à forte gripe que me acometia e ao jetlag que experimentava naquele momento, faziam com que eu me sentisse indisposto e esgotado.

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Xangai: Uma Experiência de Vida. (Continued)

by Carlos Barbosa Cavalcanti Jr (Brazil, Law, 1 Month)

No dia seguinte, a visão de um supermercado Carrefour em frente ao bloco de apartamentos onde moraria é algo reconfortante. A existência de duas modernas estações de metro à leste e à oeste do apartamento também era uma boa notícia. No entanto, a quantidade de carros dividindo espaço com bicicletas e motos, as buzinas, as placas de neon em mandarim e os diferentes cheiros da culinária chinesa são mais do que o meu cérebro consegue processar nesse momento. Concluídas as primeiras atividades do dia, sou conduzido ao escritório de advocacia Joinway Law Firm. Descemos na estação de Changping Rd. e caminhamos por cerca de 15 minutos até a sede do escritório. Tento memorizar a rota. Vejo inúmeras instituições financeiras, restaurantes de culinária chinesa, lojas de confecções e frutarias.

Chegando no destino, olho para cima e observo que o escritório ocupa sozinho um prédio moderno e de pelo menos cinco andares. Somos encaminhados para uma das salas de reunião do andar térreo. Logo ingressa na sala a jovem advogada Yvonne Hu, assistente do sócio Aivin Du, responsável pelo setor de investimentos estrangeiros diretos do escritório. A causídica, num inglês britânico impecável, se apresenta como meu principal contato. Saímos da sala para que me fossem apresentadas as instalações. A estrutura onde trabalham mais de cem advogados é impressionante.

Entretanto, apesar de entusiasmado com o trabalho, passo ainda vários dias com o sentimento de que talvez não deveria mesmo ter vindo. Havia abdicado das comodidades que tenho em meu país do trabalho que tenho no meu escritório e da companhia da minha esposa, família e amigos.

Pois bem. Então cá estou eu, pouco mais de um mês depois da minha chegada, já concluído o meu projeto, prestes à deixar a China. O aperto no meu coração agora não diz mais respeito à saudade que tenho de casa, mas sim à saudade que vou sentir daqui quando for embora. Vou sentir falta dos bons amigos que fiz no escritório Joinway. Vou sentir falta dos *dumplings* e do macarrão de arroz que aprendi a gostar. Vou sentir falta do cheiro de comida nas ruas, dos templos, dos jardins, do sorriso acolhedor dos chineses quando eu tentava falar mandarim. Estou satisfeito, e penso que se pudesse voltar no tempo faria tudo de novo. Mais uma vez, constato como é gostosa a sensação de recompensa após o esforço e o sacrifício. Levo de volta para casa muito mais que alguns souvenirs. Levo uma experiência de vida que para sempre marcará minha vida pessoal e profissional.



Justin Abbott- Football Coaching



Volunteers' Dinner Night



Shaolin Kungfu Class

Lantern Festival

Date: February 17, 2011



Lantern Festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the 1st lunar month of the Chinese traditional calendar.

As the first important festival after the traditional Chinese New Year (Spring Festival), it is also the first night to see a full moon, and it marks the end of the two-week New Year holiday period. During Lantern Festival, people get together to celebrate the beginning of spring by watching lanterns and fireworks, and eating Yuanxiao (sweet stuffed dumplings made of glutinous rice flour served in soup).

Legend of the Lantern

Legend has it that long ago, there were many fierce, wild beasts and birds that greatly affected local people's lives and safety. In order to protect themselves, people had to kill those wild animals. One day, a sacred bird in heaven accidentally got lost and fell on the mortal world. An ignorant hunter thought the bird was a kind of fierce animal and killed it. The heaven emperor was very angry and ordered his soldiers to set fire and burn everything on the fifteenth day of the first month. The daughter of the heaven emperor was very kind and did not want it to happen so she secretly came to the mortal world and informed the people. People were scared and tried to think of a solution. An old man came up with an idea. He told every family should light up lanterns and fireworks on the 14th, 15th and 16th day of the 1st lunar month and maybe the heaven emperor would think that everything has been burned out.

Everyone agreed and prepared for that. On the 15th day of the 1st lunar month, the heaven emperor looked down and there was red fire and thundering cracks everywhere which lasted for three nights. He thought the folks had been punished; therefore people got to keep their lives and property. From then on, people light up lanterns and fireworks on the 15th day of the 1st lunar month in order to celebrate the success.

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Lantern Festival (Continued)



Food for Lantern Festival: Yuanxiao or Tangyuan

Another indispensable custom of Lantern Festival, in addition to entertainment and beautiful lanterns, is eating Yuanxiao or Tangyuan (sweet stuffed dumplings made of glutinous rice flour served in soup). It is believed that the custom of eating Yuanxiao originated during the Song Dynasty, and then became popular during the Ming and Qing periods. Yuanxiao or Tangyuan is made of glutinous rice flour and different fillings are stuffed inside, either sweet or salty, such as white sugar, brown sugar, sesame, walnuts, dried osmanthus flowers, rose petals, sweetened tangerine peel, bean paste, and jujube paste, or any combination of two or three ingredients. Yuanxiao can be boiled, fried, or steamed.

The Chinese name of Tangyuan is pronounced as similarly as Tuanyuan, which means the whole family gathering together happily. Yuanxiao is a symbol of staying together, because roundness has the connotation of wholeness and togetherness in Chinese culture. In this way, people express their best wishes for their family and their future life.

(Extracted from <http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/lantern-festival.htm>)

Upcoming Social Events For March

Mar
3

2011 Chamber Concerts - Giovanni Mirabassi Jazz Trio

The first concert of the 2011 Chamber Concerts series at the Oriental Arts Center is a jazz show by an Italian/Cuban jazz trio, The Giovanni Mirabassi Jazz Trio. Giovanni Mirabassi is a Paris-based Italian jazz pianist, and have previously shared the stage with Chet Baker and Steve Grossman, among other. His melodious style of jazz piano is featured on his 2008 release, Terra furiosa with Gianluca Renzi on bass and Leon Parker on drums.

Address: Shanghai Oriental Art Center, 425 Dingxiang Lu



Mar
8

Women's Day

Tree-Planting Day

Mar
12



USHER Live in Shanghai

One of the world's most famous, revered and Grammy-winningest R&B artists ever, Usher, plays Shanghai for the very first time. Coming off a massive concert last year in Beijing, Usher is spreading the love this year down south to Shanghai, kicking off Shanghai's newest stadium performance venue, the Mercedes Benz Arena. Expect all the hits as one of the biggest music stars in the world comes to town for the very first time.

Address: 1200 EXPO Avenue, Pudong





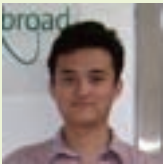
Kay Xu - Country Director

Kay studied at the University of London before joining our Projects Abroad team in Shanghai. She is originally from North West China. In her spare time she enjoys badminton and going to the gym.



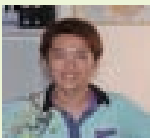
Kevin Dennis - Assistant Manager

Graduated in Marketing & Media Communications and came to China with the British Council as an English teacher in 2006. In his spare time, Kevin enjoys music, travel, films, books, shooting the breeze and trying his hand at new things.



Michael Meng - Project Manager

Michael has been working for Projects Abroad since June 2009. Michael's role is to help arrange each volunteer's project before they arrive in Shanghai; he then ensures that they are happy with their work and is available to offer any advice. Michael graduated with a degree in English and has worked for several years for local businesses in Shanghai; in particular he has experience in the field of marketing.



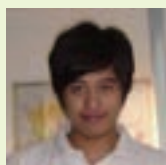
Teddy Lee - Desk Officer

Teddy began working for Projects Abroad in March 2008, having just graduated with a degree in English. Teddy will be the main contact for volunteers before they arrive, happily answering all pre-departure questions.



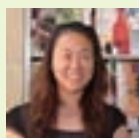
Leon Liu - Volunteer Coordinator

Leon helps out with everything! His main role is to collect the volunteers from the airport and help with visa extensions, but he also regularly visits the volunteers at work or at their accommodation.



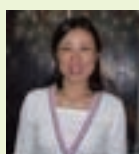
Danny Wang - Volunteer Coordinator

Danny began working for Projects Abroad in June 2009, having recently graduated from the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology. In addition to being fluent in English, Danny also speaks some Japanese. Danny will be on hand to assist volunteers throughout the duration of their time in China.



Wendy Wei - Administrator

Wendy has been working in the Shanghai office for several years. She is in charge of all the accounts, arranging the food and transport allowance and is also involved in allocating volunteers to their accommodation.



Lily Zhang - Accommodation Supervisor

Born and raised in Shanghai Lily is in charge of finding our volunteers comfortable flats to live in during their time in Shanghai. She is also a jack-of-all-trades and can fix anything from a blocked toilet to a broken light bulb!

Social Media Links

Join our official Facebook Group: Projects Abroad China – The Official Group

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=15816381194>

Read our monthly newsletters.

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/china/newsletters-from-china/>

See what is going on with Projects Abroad! Read our Country Blog!

http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=2859