

# Go Global with Fisher

Peking University - Beijing, China: From a Student's Perspective



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## Peking University - Beijing, China: From a Student's Perspective

This booklet is designed by past Student Exchange participants in order to share their experience and knowledge with students participating in the Fisher International Student Exchange. Items in this booklet are not endorsed by the Office of Global Business at Fisher College and information contained in this booklet is subject to change.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

#### Campus Housing

- While there is on campus housing, past students have not recommended it. Typically, the accommodations are not what Ohio State students are used to are not worth the hassle to apply and to get assigned.

#### University Off-Campus Accommodations

- Zhongguanyuan also known as Global Village, is a great option. This is the International student apartment complex ran by the school. It is near campus across from the East Gate of Peking University (PKU). It is also in close proximity to the nightlife and subway. The rooms are large and spacious in buildings 4 & 6. There is a bathroom shared by two people in each room.
- Every other floor of the building has two washing machines and a dryer. The price of use is minimal. There is also a community kitchen for each or every other floor depending on the building. There is a cleaning service every other day that will clean the common room, bathroom, and take out the trash.
- Each two-room apartment comes with a television in the common room as well as a table and hot water pot. All bedrooms (whether single or double) come fully furnished and have linens provided.
- All in all Global Village is a good place to stay for your four months at PKU. That being said, this accommodation is a common choice among students, so book early. Some students have had to pay a deposit before they arrive; others pay when they arrive to Zhongguanyuan. Be prepared to pay at either time.

#### Home-stays

- Past students have not stayed in homestays but have heard good things. The process seems to be relatively easy. When you find an organization that helps with homestays make sure you validate the organization with the Peking University's International office, as there are some scams.

#### Apartment Search

- If students choose to live in an apartment, they can either work with an agency or find one on their own. Past students have not had the best of luck with the agency recommended by the university. Students have had better luck investigating into other agencies. In general people look in the WuDaoKou or HaiDian area of Beijing, since it is near the campus.
- Students have recommended living in Wudaokou or near this area in the past. (2012)
- Students have had difficulty in choosing an apartment on their own (without the help of an agency.) Rent can

be cheap but never agree to an accommodation without seeing it first! You may get yourself into a binding agreement that you wish you wouldn't have!

- Unless you are willing to spend a significant amount of money on rent, know that most of the accommodations are not going to be up to the U.S. standard of living. There are some nice accommodations, but will take a lot of time searching prior to going on your study. (2012)
- Facebook Marketplace can be a great way to find a sublease for the semester. Just as Fisher students are travelling abroad during the fall, so too are students from China.
- Beware of Craigslist. There are a number of scams out there and it has happened to Fisher students in the past. If you are unsure, ask for help from the Fisher International Programs Office staff.

### How to validate housing opportunities

- The easiest way to validate a housing opportunity that is not offered by the university is to either make a trusted connection in Beijing or book a hostel for a couple of weeks and search for an apartment upon arrival. This is the safest and most reliable way.

## DOCUMENTS

### Passport

- Passports should be secured as soon as possible. They are required for not only travel overseas, but also for application to PKU among other things.
- Check the expiration date. In the past students have failed to realize that their passports expire during their trip which can cause serious issues with reentry to the United States.
- It is a good idea to keep several copies of all relevant documents on you at all times: licenses, residency cards, passports, visas, enrollment verifications, whatever has been issued to you. This is not required but you may find yourself in a situation in which these things would be extremely helpful to have and save time.

### Student Visa

- Depending on where you are from in the country, getting a Visa is relatively simple and easy. The process for some students has taken about four days. Everyone may not have as much ease getting their visas as quickly, therefore plan for at least two weeks to four weeks processing time.
- If you plan to travel outside of the country then get multiple entries on your visa.
- To get a multiple entry visa, you will need to use the Washington D.C. consulate. You can also go through a third party provider to obtain this visa, but it will cost you significantly more. (2012)
- Make sure you secure your visa early. Past students have recommended starting the visa application process in April if studying in China in the fall and June if studying in China in the spring.
- If students have any questions about obtaining a visa, Travel Solutions can help. Found here: <http://controller.osu.edu/travel/travel-agencies.shtm>. Or call Travel Solutions by phone at 877-678-8785 or 614-750-4020, ask for a Visa Expert.

### Proof of Enrollment

- When traveling, some situations require a proof of enrollment or student identification card from your host institution. Ask the exchange administration and they will point you in the right direction if either of these are necessary.

## Health Insurance

- Ohio State requires that outgoing students purchase the HTH Supplemental Insurance, this will cover the student's time while studying. However, if a student decided to travel before or after specific program dates, the HTH supplemental insurance will not cover any illness or injury. It is recommended that students contact their health insurance providers before traveling. In the case that a student requires medical attention out of the HTH time period, it is important to know how to deal with copayments, insurance, etc. Specific questions about health insurance can be directed to OIA (Office of International Affairs).

## FOOD AND DRINK

### Grocery Stores

- There are a number of large groceries stores in the area as well as small convenient stores. After a couple of weeks you will know exactly which grocery stores fit your needs.

### On Campus Dining

- There are a lot of on campus options that taste great and are cheap.
- Students have the option of purchasing a reloadable meal card at orientation and this option is recommended.

### Dining Customs

- Learn to use chopsticks; chances are you will need them.
- Water is usually served without ice and a little warm.
- Never stick your chopsticks in your food so that they are sticking straight up, it's insulting (usually represents funerals).
- People eat in a way that westerners may think is rude, but this is the norm for the Chinese.

## MONEY

### Using an ATM

- Students have found that some banks charge a percentage of the amount that you withdraw internationally. Some charge a flat fee when money is withdrawn and this usually proves to be a better option. Talk to your bank about the different options they offer.
- While cash is the only form of payment taken at many places, be smart about the amount that you carry at any given time. Carrying an excessive amount of money makes you more vulnerable in certain situations. The stores that have high price tags will most likely take credit cards.

### Establishing a bank account in your host country

- Students may save money on credit card service charges by opening an account at a local bank. The university may be able to help in this process. Some students have found that it may not be worth the time and effort to do so, they would rather utilize their American cards despite the fees. Others have found the process to be simple and money saving.

### Credit and Bank Cards

- If you plan on shopping in pricey areas, you can use a major credit card but double check the receipt to make sure the vendor processed the card correctly and you are not being double charged.
- Again, make sure you check bank fees. If students choose to use their card for minor purchases the fees can accrue quickly. It is a better idea to carry some cash around with you for this reason.
- Students are encouraged to write down the customer service numbers on all credit cards and keep the numbers with them in case cards are stolen and cancellation is necessary.

### Travelers Checks

- Though travelers' checks may have once been the safest way to manage money while traveling, they may not be the best option. Traveler's checks are only good once converted. In addition, China does not have many places to convert traveler's check. It is advised to use other options.

### Other

- Past students have recommended having backup solutions to problems you might face in advance. For example losing your credit card. Come up with a backup plan to what you would do if this were to happen because it takes a while to get a new credit card to be sent overseas. (i.e.: have a second credit card stored in a different place, pay for the entire group dinner when going out and then have everyone pay back in cash, etc.) (2013)
- Past students have recommended making a rough budget for your expenses abroad to avoid missing out in activities at the end of the semester. For example, one student limited her expenses to \$2000 a month while abroad. (2013)

For more information about using credit cards and ATMs abroad and the related fees, visit [http://www.flyerguide.com/wiki/index.php/Credit/Debit/ATM\\_Cards\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Exchange](http://www.flyerguide.com/wiki/index.php/Credit/Debit/ATM_Cards_and_Foreign_Exchange)

### PHONE AND INTERNET

#### Using a phone from home

- If planning to use a phone from home, do homework with respect to cost. In the past students have realized that using devices such as smartphones with international capabilities can be much more expensive than planned.
- An international SIM card will be necessary, and usually is easily purchased from a nearby cell store.

#### Buying a phone

- Students can go to phone providers and purchase a cheap phone along with prepaid minutes. Talk to university friends about the best place to buy a reliable phone. A cell phone is recommended for coordinating plans, handling business, and safety reasons.
- Getting a cheap cell phone is very easy, cheap, and reliable. You can get a phone, SIM card, and 400 minutes of talk time for less than \$80. That may sound expensive by US standards until you think about how much a standard phone bill is in America. The trick is to either learn Chinese or make and take friend who can. It may help you get a lower price. Remember in china, almost everything is negotiable.

#### International Communication

- When calling home, Skype video use is free with wifi access! This is a great option for keeping in touch with friends and family from home as well as those met while traveling.
  - o Help parents and friends set up and learn how to use Skype before traveling.
  - o Purchasing Skype credit allows students to call a landline or a cell phone back home at a lower rate. When internet is available this can reduce the hassle involved with international calling cards. Users can also pay \$6-\$10 for a month of unlimited calls to any landline or cell phone in the U.S. from their computers.
- G-chat is also a favorite channel of communication for students. It has a G-Video option as well. It can be more convenient than Skype because it is more user-friendly. The modes of communication are ultimately up to the preferences of the student. It is recommended to explore both programs before departure so you can inform family members which you will be using.
- If you want friends to be able to call you, leave voicemails, or leave text messages like a regular cell phone, you can sign up for Google voice. You will need to use a VPN (virtual private network) but students have said that it is well worth it. With Google voice, you receive a US telephone number that works like a landline. If you have to make

business calls while abroad, this can be great too!

For more information go to: <http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html>.

### SAFETY TIPS

- As with any foreign area, be aware of all your surroundings. When possible walk in groups, and keep all your belongings close to your body. If staying in hostels it is advised to bring a lock to protect your valuables. Avoid bringing anything of extreme sentimental value.
- Pick pocketing can be an issue, especially in crowded areas (this is most areas in China.)
- Keep emergency numbers specific to your host country with you at all times.

### TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

#### Public Transportation

- Past students have said to use public transportation, and use it often as it is a great resource. The subway goes everywhere in the city and is a mere \$0.20 a ride. The buses cover the subway stops and some additional stops for the same price (if not less.)
- The taxis and cabs are also very cheap. The driving is a little scary at first but you get used to it. However the rush hour traffic is extremely heavy no matter what method you travel by, so be sure to allow yourself plenty of time.
- For inter country travel use the train. You can either spring for a sleeper car or tough it out in the regular seats. Either option is much more affordable than the Amtrak and Gray Hound in the US. The key is to plan ahead. As soon as you know where you want to go, look for people to go with you and then purchase tickets. You can buy train tickets no more than 10 days in advance.

#### International Travel

- If you have multiple entry on your Student Visa be sure to plan ahead and get the most for your money. Traveling to nearby countries can be quite affordable if you plan accordingly.
- Keep in mind that Hong Kong is viewed as a separate entity in terms of your visa so traveling there will require an extra visa entry.
- For American's in 2010 the cost of an extra entry was approximately \$180. This is after you have the initial visa.
- When traveling between countries make sure to follow and complete all visa requirements for all countries you plan to visit.
- Students in the past have traveled a great deal more than originally expected. Keep this in mind when budgeting and packing. Many students over pack. Appliances such as straighteners, hair dryers, electric shavers, etc can be bought in country; as well as toiletries, bedding, and many other bulky items. This will save room in your bag as well as solve any wattage conversion problems you will encounter.
- For the flight over to your destination and back, utilize StudentUniverse.com. Students have had great luck with affordable prices. Consider this when comparing prices, but do not assume that they always provide the best offers.
- With affordability comes the possibility of delays and cancellations with these airlines. They will rebook you it may just take time. Take situations in stride.
- If possible print out any boarding passes prior to arriving at the airport or you may have to pay an additional fee. Also, double and triple check your bag measurements. These airlines are very adamant on their luggage regulations and will impose hefty fees for any passengers that bags do not apply.
- There will be a week or two in October where you do not have class. This is a great opportunity to travel. However, this is not just a break for Guanghua, this is a break for the entire country. So pick where to go wisely as major cities will have obscene numbers of people on top of their regular populations.

## UNIVERSITY TIPS

### Application Process

- It is simple, apply through Fisher and everything else is taken care of.

### Courses

- You will get an email from the school over the summer about choosing classes. It is relatively straightforward, so just follow the directions given.
- Textbooks are relatively cheap compared to what you are used to paying in the U.S. (2012)
- OSU language courses are typically post-evaluated for equivalency. If you are planning to take language courses abroad, keep that in mind. If you are in a language minor, talk with your academic advisor regarding taking language courses abroad.

### Campus Life

- Because PKU is one of the most renowned universities in China, there are a lot of fun opportunities there. The campus is usually pretty active. They have the equivalent of the involvement fair. However many of these organizations are for Chinese speakers. If you cannot speak Chinese, ask Peking students what organizations would be international friendly.
- Be patient with the operations of classes and the school, things are not as fast paced as you are used to at Fisher and aren't done in the same manner. (2012)

## MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

### Shopping

- Bargain, bargain, bargain. If you like markets, shopping can be quite tiring with all the negotiations but never assume that the first price is the real price. There is usually inflation when the vendors give their initial price. These inflations are even larger for foreigners.
- For more traditional shopping, there are malls everywhere. The trick is to not shop too much, as it is hard to get all the stuff back to the US. However if you do need another suitcase, it wouldn't be too hard to find.
- In markets be aware that there are counterfeits (even if they say that the products are authentic.) The major shopping neighborhoods are SanLiTun, WangFuJing, and XiDan.

### Nightlife

- Clubs are free and entertaining. The music is more American than you may imagine.
- KTV or karaoke is big in China. If you make any local connections you will go at least once. Belt it out and have fun, there is nothing quite the same in the U.S!

### Language

- Your experience will be more rewarding if you know Chinese. The people are more willing to help and interact. Through PKU you will find fliers for language partners, do not hesitate to contact them. In the western and tourist areas of the city you will find a decent number of English speaking people. To get the most out of the city, especially when bargaining, try to use Chinese (even if just a little.)
- Taxi drivers rarely speak English so if you do not speak Chinese have a written Chinese character name of your destination to show to the driver.

### Tidbits

- It is advised that you be very open minded and patient when you are on exchange. Not everything is going to go

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your away while abroad and you will hit major road blocks that you've never encountered before, but its best to just keep an opened mind and don't let things get you down. The times that don't go exactly as planned are going to be the biggest learning experiences. (2013)

If there are further questions or concerns, different resources are available that students can utilize. The Office of Global Business will be a resource throughout the entire trip. Past students have also volunteered to be a contact if additional questions would arise.

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