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The Asia Culture Shock Experience

Judith Lin

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THE ASIA CULTURE SHOCK EXPERIENCE

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Graduation with Honors from the
South Carolina Honors College

May, 2017

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Introduction

Since the introduction of the Internet, globalization has connected the world and transformed the way cultures are able to interact. This connectivity has increased international interest, in particular in higher education. Each year, around 300,000 students study abroad, a figure that increases each year (Klebnikov, 2015). Out of those students that study abroad each year from the United States, more than half study in Europe in cultures that are more familiar. Many students have typically traveled to these countries due to the similarities in those cultures and the idea that these environments may be safer or more comfortable. Students going to Asia and South America account for a smaller percentage of study abroad locations— China itself accounts for 5% of study abroad (Klebnikov, 2015).

While students go abroad to learn about new cultures and advance their language skills, there is typically an initial culture shock when entering these unfamiliar environments. It is important to understand the causes and effects of culture shock, in particular experiences in Asia, a region whose culture is significantly different from the individualist cultures in the United States and Europe. While being exposed to new cultures is increasingly important for our interdependent world, it becomes more important to observe reactions to that exposure and understand how those reactions form or how to handle them. In particular, students who study abroad may experience culture shock in a different way than others due to personal factors and the purpose of their trip. Culture shock has been traditionally studied on a cultural level, but as study abroad locations become diverse, it is important to understand other dimensions – economic, geographic, and administrative to better assess culture shock in different areas.

Methodology

Students from the University of South Carolina studying International Business and studied abroad in Asia (specifically China, Japan, and Korea) were chosen for this study. The purpose of these interviews was to collect qualitative data and provide insights for future students in the program who are looking to study abroad in the Asian region (Exhibit B). Students in the International Business program were chosen instead of just students who studied abroad to see how individuals who were more prepared given their curriculum might experience culture shock. One student per partner school was chosen for this study. Furthermore, students from different backgrounds were selected to capture personal factors – in state and out of state students, as well as students from different ethnic backgrounds. Interviews were conducted in similar fashion to see differences, but were also adjusted based on the city or country they studied abroad in. Students were first asked their personal information such as their specific functional major, hometown, and career aspirations. Next, they were asked about their experience on campus – where they lived, what courses they took, etc. Students were then asked to provide their experiences in the city they were in; suggestions for dining, transportation, and activities were provided. Using the CAGE Framework, they were then asked specific questions in regard to the country they were in, requiring them to think about the distance they experienced on a cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic level. Finally, interviewees were asked about their culture shock experience, what they found hardest to adjust to, what they missed the most when abroad, and how they felt once their study abroad experience ended. These insights were collected and put into a cohesive study abroad guide to help prepare future students in the program who attend these universities.

Limitations

Because students from a specific program and study abroad location were selected, there was very limited students to interview. For example, only one student was available for South Korea as she was the only student from the university to attend Yonsei University that semester. The small group of students also limited variations in demographics or personality traits – these limitations make it hard to draw overall conclusions, but can only provide specific, relatable insights, relying a great deal on previous studies. Furthermore, because student experiences vary a great deal, it can be hard to compare the culture shock experience in Asia to that in Europe, as most students do not spend such long periods of time in both regions.

Understanding Culture Shock

The following section seeks to provide a basic foundation for understanding culture shock. First, understanding the symptoms or effects of culture shock will help explain the general phases of culture shock. Because culture shock varies in level from person to person, different theories regarding individual factors will be explored. Using these factors and environment analysis, culture shock, specifically in Asia, will be further analyzed on a collectivist – individualist relationship level.

Defining culture shock

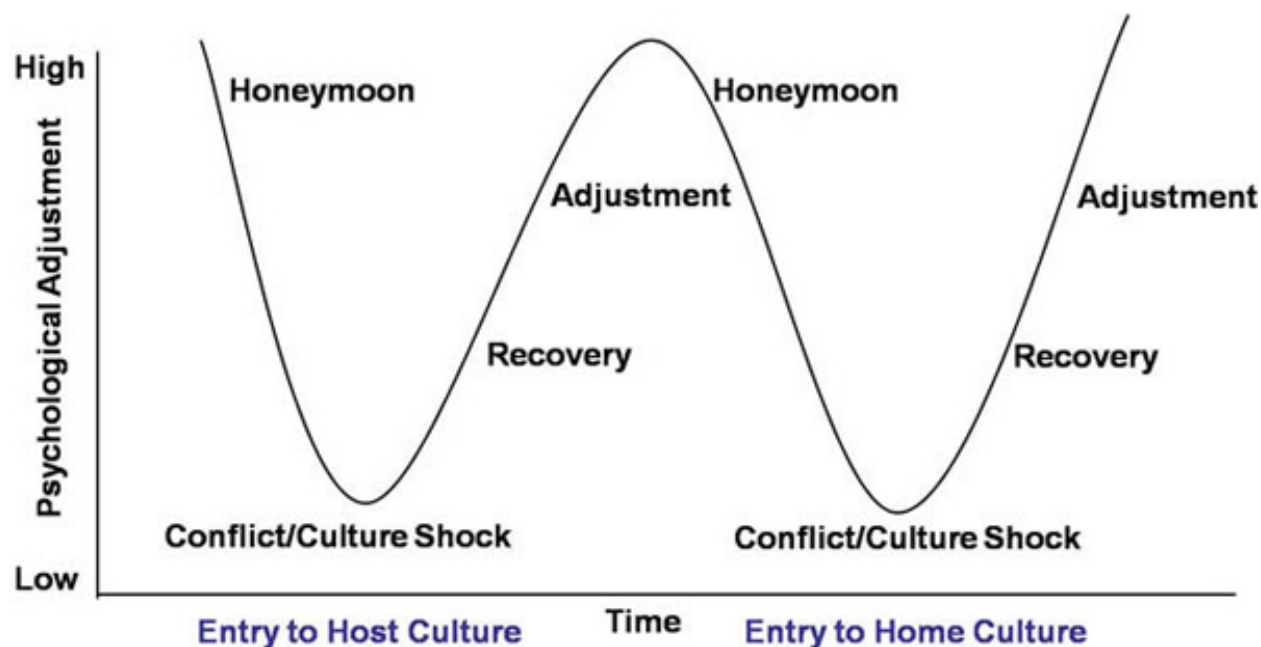
Culture shock can be defined as the “sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation” (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Preparation may help alleviate the effects of culture shock; however, psychologists argue that even with adequate preparation, culture shock can still be experienced. Culture shock is such experienced so differently with each individual, it cannot be uniformly defined. While there is not a standard definition, there is agreement on different symptoms of culture shock, first explored by Kalervo Oberg. These include concern over the immediate living environment such as bedding, water, and food, fear of physical contact with locals, dependence on residents of the same nationality, or a refusal to learn the host language (Oberg, 1960). However, these symptoms vary in depth based on factors such as the purpose of the trip, the length of the trip, how involved the individual is in the new culture, and the nature of the stranger – host relations. This can be seen with students who studied abroad in Asia from the University of South Carolina – those who joined student organizations found

themselves to be more accepted by local students and felt that the experience was a good way to integrate themselves on campus.

Phases of Culture Shock

Oberg, along with Gullahorn and Gullahorn, also proposed several stages of culture shock. These included the honeymoon period, conflict or culture shock, recovery and adjustment as seen in the figure below. The first stage, the honeymoon period, usually involves excitement or interest in the new environment, a feeling that occurs especially with short term trips. The second stage will occur when individuals have trouble adjusting, developing hostility as a result of these frustrations. For students from the University of South Carolina, many felt that the hardest adjustment was getting used to the transportation, especially coming from Columbia, South Carolina where public transportation is not heavily utilized. Students had to use public transportation in crowded cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Seoul, which also forced crowded interaction with local residents. This conflict stage is extremely critical in determining the individual's impression of a culture or nation in the long term. Not being able to recover from this stage can result to nervous breakdowns or continued difficulties. However, recovery is possible, and is made easier as individuals understand how to get around and may be more integrated into their environment by learning some of the language. Individuals will typically be less critical of the country they are in and more critical of themselves when it comes to difficulties. The final stage of culture shock is adjustment – individuals are accepting of the new country and may even feel attached to it. With this attachment, it may be difficult to readjust to returning to the home country, which can lead to reverse culture shock. Reverse culture shock

then is the inability to adjust to the home country and goes through similar stages as culture shock as seen in the graph below (Communications, SUNY-ESF):



Peter Adler went even further to propose more detailed stages of the “transitional experience” – contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and independence. Contact, similar to the honeymoon period, shows attachment to the home country, but excitement and interest for the new environment. Individuals have a positive outlook at this point because they tend to draw similarities between their home and the new location. Disintegration and reintegration indicates the realization that the new environment is different and the inability or discomfort of trying to adapt, possibly to the point of rejecting the new environment. Similar, to Oberg’s model, there is feeling of hostility, that if not overcome, could lead to overall negative impressions of the country. Adjustment occurs in the autonomy stage in which the individual

begins to understand the culture and is able to function comfortably. Finally, Adler takes his stages one step further to independence, that individuals are “fully able to accept and draw nourishment from cultural differences and similarities” (Adler, 1975).

Effects of Culture Shock

For many students, their study abroad experience can be their very first time in another country, which was the case for several interviewees. Culture shock deals with anxiety and feeling uncomfortable in new environments, but can lead to serious consequences if not properly handled. Studies have found that the effects of culture are mostly psychological – students who experienced intense culture shock tended to hide their problems; instead of seeking psychological help, would excessively seek physical medical assistance for “hypochondriacal symptoms” (Ward et al, 2002). Many students can become paranoid and or show symptoms of depression. If unable to overcome the culture shock or conflict stage, students could experience a breakdown. However, overcoming the conflict stage usually allowed students to have positive views of their study abroad experience that overcome negative culture shock.

The ABC Framework and Culture Shock

Students, in particular, may have circumstances exclusive to them that makes culture shock more easily experienced. Furnham and Bochner explore the idea that students must often become emotionally independent for the first time – making culture shock harder felt, especially with a lack of a direct support system while abroad. The way individuals deal with culture shock has been viewed popularly through the ABC (Affect, Behavior, and Cognitive) Framework in psychology. ‘Affect’ refers to the significance of life changes during transition, or how anxiety is dealt with upon going to the new environment. ‘Behavior’ is how individuals change their behavior to manage shock, or cultural learning. The inability to communicate effectively due to differences in communication styles causes culture shock and makes it difficult to form interpersonal relationships. Finally, ‘Cognitive’ refers to social identification. (Ward et al, 2002).

Affect – Stress and Coping

This framework deals with the physical changes seen with going to a new country and how that corresponds with psychological health. These changes can be personal, such as keeping in touch with family members, or part of everyday routines, such as understanding public transportation systems. More importantly, the way individuals interpret these changes and go about adjusting to them may affect how someone is affected by culture shock. The framework involves understanding individual’s expectations and actual experience, and how that individual’s personality or coping methods handles the difference between the two.

Coping methods can be categorized into two main strategies; the first, deals with direct actions or actions that the individual takes on to alleviate frustrations or stress. The second

strategy is more intrapersonal in how the individual changes their perceptions or attitudes towards that stress (Cross, 1995). While personality traits such as flexibility and tolerance play a role in coping, another strong factor is the presence of social support, specifically one provided by the host country (Ward et al, 2002):

“Having host national friends has been associated with a decrease in psychological problems in immigrants (Furnham and Li, 1993), and satisfaction with host national relationships has been positively related to psychological well-being in sojourners (Searle and Ward, 1990; Stone Feinstein and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993a). Comfort and satisfaction with local contact have also been associated with greater general satisfaction in foreign students, including both academic and non-academic aspects of their overseas transfers (Klineberg and Hull, 1979).”

Behavior – Culture Learning

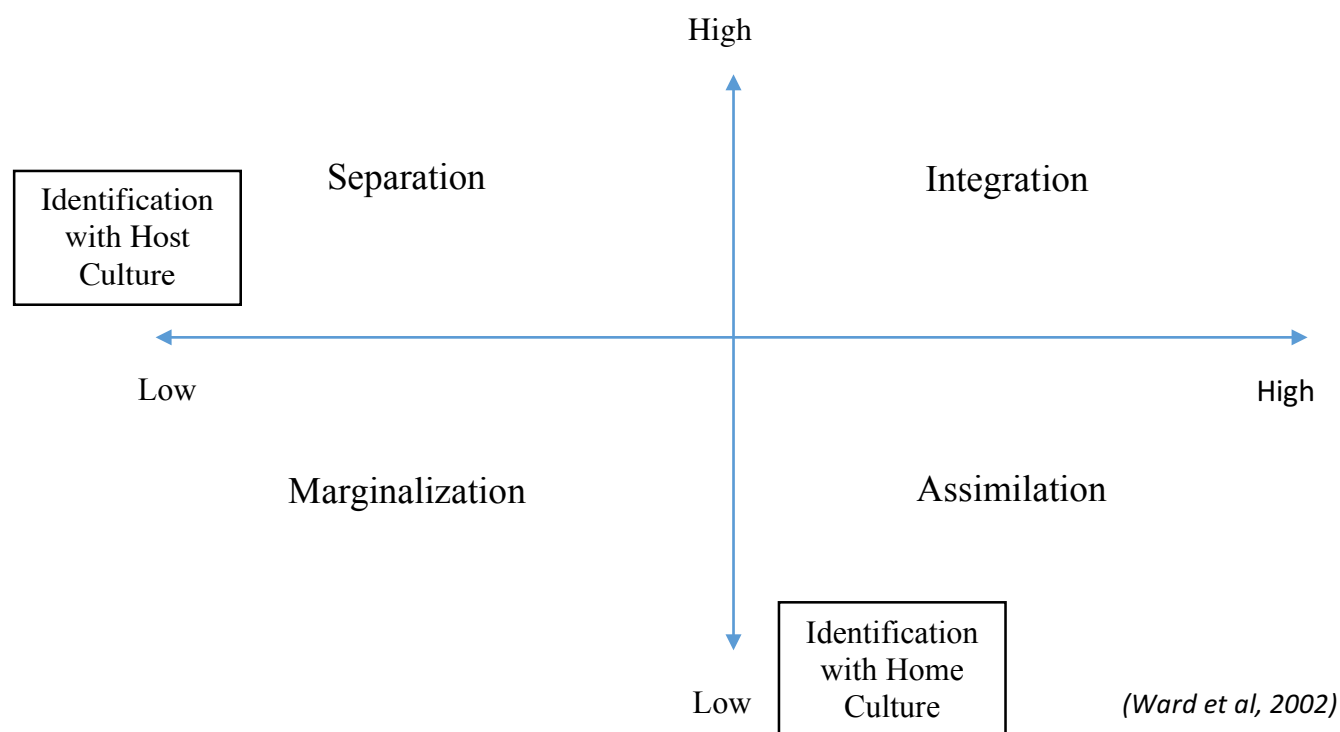
Culture learning is where individuals “acquire culturally relevant social knowledge and skills in order to survive and thrive in their new society” (Ward et al, 2002). Individual factors revolving around communication – gestures, touch, speaking style all play a role in how individuals develop relations while abroad. For countries in Asia, where communication is not as direct, there can be more misunderstandings or difficulty speaking with locals:

“In many Asian countries the word ‘no’ is seldom used, so that ‘yes’ can mean ‘no’ or ‘maybe’. Rules surrounding invitations and how these are to be extended and accepted are highly culture-bound. There are many stories of Westerners extending an invitation to an Asian acquaintance, receiving what they consider to be an affirmative reply, and then becoming angry when the visitor does not show up” (Brein and David, 1971).

As a result, individuals who are more sensitive to these differences may experience more initial shock, but their awareness of differences may help them adjust their behaviors and develop more successful intercultural communication. The understanding of both direct and non-direct communication allows individuals to better navigate and adapt.

Cognitive – Social Identification

The last framework is harder to understand because it deals with “internal mental processes rather than external, observable behaviors” (Ward et al, 2002). It focuses on how individuals deal with group situations and how it affects their self-esteem. To understand social identification, two different identifications are observed: cultural identification and self-identification (Phinney, 1992). When referring to cultural identification, this refers to the relationship between the home culture and host culture, or rather, how the individual places themselves between the two, which can be seen with the figure below:



High identification with both the host and home culture can help alleviate the effects of culture shock and allows individuals to reach the recovery and adjustment phase. Individuals with stronger identification with either the home or host culture are less likely to be able to adapt to change, going back to the stress and coping framework. Self-identification can be seen as a “sense of affirmation, pride and a positive evaluation of one’s group, as well as an involvement dimension, relating to ethnocultural behaviors, values, and traditions” (Phinney, 1992). The Social Identity Theory breaks this down into three main parts: individual characteristics, group characteristics, and emotional significance (Tajfel, 1978). Overall, there is strong identity found in an individual’s groups and relationship to the host or home culture. Relationship with the group helps determine self-esteem as well as feelings towards certain a culture.

Summary

Across the ABC Framework is a strong emphasis on building relationships in new environments. These relationships play a significant role on an culture shock and how to individuals reach the recovery phase. Other studies have found that many students have three main networks of relationships they have while abroad. The primary network consists of close friends who are typically other study abroad students; they are in similar situations that make it easy to connect and develop a relationship. The secondary network is made up of individuals from the host country, including local students, faculty, and advisors that can help the transition phase of culture shock. Finally, the tertiary network consists of acquaintances and friends who are there for recreational events and companionship (Bochner et al, 1977). Because relationships play such a large role in how culture shock is experienced, it is important to observe how relationships are developed and managed in different regions.

Collectivist and Individualist Cultures

On an overarching level, many cultures can be identified through several dimensions, including whether the culture is individualist and collectivist (Hofstede, 1980). Collectivist societies have a heavy emphasis on the group, and it can be where they derive their identity. Collectivists have a limited number of relationships; social groups are more intimate or tight-knit, and members are very loyal to the group. In many cases, the needs of the group come before the individual and therefore, the dynamic of the group is very important. In order to maintain this dynamic, confrontation is avoided and it may be hard to accept new members into a social group. Asian countries, such as China, South Korea, and Japan have more collectivist cultures. On the other hand, countries such as the United States have a more individualist culture. On his individualism index, Hofstede scored the United States with a score of 91, while Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore scored less than 50 (Hofstede, 1980). In individualist cultures, individual needs typically come before the group and interaction among members are much more direct. Individualists tend to belong to many groups, but relationships within these groups may not be as intimate as relationships in a collectivist culture.

Collectivist and individualist cultures are very different in how they handle relationships, social interactions, or even individual identity. Therefore, the movement from an individualistic society to a collectivist one can make it harder to adapt, and culture shock may be felt on a deeper degree. When social interactions are hard to develop in new environments, it can be hard for individuals to develop the social networks, in particular, secondary and tertiary ones (Bochner et al, 1978).

The CAGE Framework

Culture shock, naturally focuses on cultural distance as it can make integration more difficult to achieve. However, the CAGE Framework, as proposed by Ghemawat sees four different types of distance – Cultural, Administrative, Geographic, and Economic – that could attribute to the effects of culture shock. Because there may be interlap among these dimensions, there may be a better understanding of a country's overall culture and therefore, a better preparation for possible culture shock. By understanding these four dimensions, a more in-depth analysis can be performed to prepare students better for their new environments. Cultural distance includes different languages, ethnicities, religions, values, norms, lack of trust, etc. It may also look at how traditional or insular a culture may be (Ghemawat, 2001). As previously explored, going from an individualistic society to a collective society has great cultural distance, which ultimately could lead to greater culture shock. Administrative distance refers to the laws, policies, and even institutions that are in place. When looking at a country to country relationship, this may also refer to historical ties or governmental relationships (Ghemawat, 2001). Administrative distance becomes very important when it comes to coping and adapting to local regulations or institutional norms when they are significantly different. Geographic distance includes the physical environment of the country – weather, time zones, climates, infrastructure, and borders (Ghemawat, 2001). These factors also affect the significance of life changes, or in this case, physical environmental changes. Finally, economic distance refers to differences in cost, size of the economy, and economic class structures (Ghemawat, 2001). Looking at these dimensions, we can not only understand the culture shock that is experienced in the Asian region, but possibly the differences within the Asian region when it comes to culture shock experiences.

In-Depth Country Analysis

Using the CAGE Framework, along with the ABC Framework and individualist – collectivist relationship, and insights from students abroad three main countries were analyzed.

China

Using the CAGE Framework developed in Exhibit A, notable dimensions – cultural and administrative – were noticed among those interviewed. Students who went to China felt it difficult to adjust to cultural aspects such as the language and found it difficult to develop relationships with local students. In particular, the inability to communicate effectively made it difficult to approach on another. As a result, most students had a strong primary network of relationships with other international students, but found it harder to establish secondary networks early on. However, several students were offered “buddies” at their prospective universities, that allowed one-on-one relationships with local students. Students found these students especially helpful when dealing with local institutions – the registration office, visa registration, or even the local bank. Many interviewees also found that the curriculum was more difficult, more math-driven in China and having those relationships with local students helped them adjust.

Administrative distance was especially important on a national level for students when choosing where to study abroad. Respondents felt that the Communist regime or administrative distance was an area to be wary of. They chose to go to Korea or Japan because they felt that their values or morality did not line up with the Chinese administration. Most notably, one respondent had a family member who was hacked by the Chinese government. While she was still learning the Chinese language in school, she still had negative feelings towards China, as did

her family, and therefore opted to study abroad in South Korea instead. As a result of the administration, some respondents may have felt more uncomfortable when studying abroad. Students who ended up studying abroad in China found it certain administrative aspects, such as increased police force in tourist areas such as Tiananmen Square and web censorship, especially inconvenient, but most were able to prepare themselves for that aspect and tended to download more local apps to adjust.

Geographic distance was also a factor many students were concerned about before their study abroad, in particular, the air quality. However, many interviewees noted that it actually was not as bad, and when it was, they were well prepared with masks. Having these expectations ahead of time or the right mechanisms to cope with these changes helped students adjust. A more favorable measure of distance for students who studied in China was economic distance. Many students noted the difference in costs for living expenses, such as transportation, food, and recreational activities that made it easy to enjoy the city they were in.

Japan

Students who studied abroad in Japan found the cultural distance to be the largest distance they felt, especially when it came to the language and subtle norms. Communication was especially difficult, as Japan has different forms of Japanese. Students noted that local students did not approach them because of their insecurity in English-speaking abilities. In order to better engage with local students, some students joined student organizations or sports teams. However, within these dynamics, while they learned a great deal about different Japanese norms, found it difficult to navigate at times. Groups are very carefully defined, most of the time by age or year in school. However, by having these defined groups, students found it difficult to

approach groups they were not initially in and the communication between groups was hard to understand or grasp. While students did not experience as much administrative distance, students noted that their interactions with administration or institutions were strained due to language barriers and that having a local student would have been helpful.

All students, regardless of university, had to live off campus, which made geographic distance and actually contributed a great deal to initial culture shock. Students lived from twenty minutes to as long as an hour and a half away from campus. Understanding public transportation and taking it daily to get to class could be frustrating, especially when students missed the trains or had to wake up earlier each day. Many indicated that their biggest adjustment was learning all the schedules, but once they were able to incorporate these into their daily routine, they were much more comfortable navigating the city. At times, economic distance strained students at times, but overall, similarly to China, were able to enjoy the difference in costs.

South Korea

Surprisingly, even though South Korea ranked the lowest in individualist characteristics in 1980 (Hofstede), the student interviewed felt very welcomed and that it “wasn’t hard to fit in” (Exhibit B). She found that while the baseball team she joined had members that were uncomfortable with their English skills were more reluctant to approach her, she was more accepted when she made the effort to connect with them. She also noted that there was a general interest and similarity, rather than difference, in pop culture. Having been exposed to Korean pop music and Korean beauty products, she was able to communicate more effectively with her peers. In terms of the language, although she did not take Korean at her home university and had

very limited Korean vocabulary, she found that there were enough signs or displays of English in nearby restaurants or on campus.

Similar to Japan, the infrastructure was more complex than her home and establishing a routine or overcoming that aspect of geographic distance was really key to her overcoming culture shock. Economic distance was similar to Japan and China in that students felt more accountable for their budgets, but had more buying power due to goods being cheaper.

Similarities and Other Observations

Across these countries is a common theme of collectivist characteristics. However, students who joined student organizations or had “buddies” were able to adjust faster and felt that they had a better sense of norms by the end of their study abroad. The inability to form meaningful relationships made it difficult for others to adapt, and many found that this disconnect derived from language barriers. The relationship with home culture was also evident among interviewees. Those who were in long – distance relationships found themselves to be more periodically homesick and as a result, took longer to reach the recover and adjustment phase of culture shock. And while public transportation was very prominent in each city and was a feature in their frustration in culture shock, many respondents found that after their experience, they missed the public transportation when back in the United States. Respondents who had studied abroad, in particular those who studied for longer amounts of time, felt that they had an easier time adapting to their environment. Because they had gone through culture shock in their first experience, they were able to develop coping methods and transferred those methods in their new study abroad experiences. All respondents, while experiencing culture shock, were aware that culture shock could occur and eventually reached the adjustment phase.

Conclusion

There is clear indication that the intercultural relationship plays a great deal in culture shock. It is important to have these relationships for support for transitions, cultural learning and social identification. The ability to develop these relationships should not only be observed on a cultural dimension, but also administrative, geographic, and economic dimension as these play key roles in the effects of culture shock in different regions.

China, Japan, and South Korea are all more collectivist cultures which may make it harder for students from individualist cultures to adapt. Group identity is very important and results in possible exclusivity and more indirect communication. This as well as different measures of distance – cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic – affects how individuals deal with culture shock when looking at the ABC Framework. Infrastructure, institutional differences, and the lack of social relationship networks makes it more difficult for students to transition or develop a routine. Developing relationships within collectivist cultures are not only harder to develop, but may also be more difficult to understand in communication, due to differences in cultural norms or even language. Finally, these relationships play a strong role in social identification as well as attachment or general feelings toward the host culture. Culture shock can result in hostility towards the host culture, but reaching the recovery and adjustment stage of culture shock can lead to successful integration between the home and host cultures.

Culture shock is extremely complex and varies based on individual traits and region. In order to better prepare students for culture shock abroad, it needs to be clarified on a regional or even country basis. The study of culture shock is not only important to help treat its effects, but also important in how we shape our own attitudes towards other cultures and nations.

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Appendix

Exhibit A – CAGE Analysis for China, Japan, and South Korea

	Cultural	Administrative	Geographic	Economic
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official language Mandarin, but several dialects across provinces Religion heavily monitored Collectivist culture: more concerned with interests of the group rather than the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communist government, head of government: President Xi Jinping Censored information and increased police force Issues with sovereignty, in particular Macao, Taiwan, and Hong Kong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Asia Use one-time zone, geographically across five time zones Most populated cities along the coast – Beijing (capital), Shanghai, Hong Kong Conflict over South China Sea with neighboring countries and US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively open economy Large middle class, widening gap between lower and upper income classes Strong infrastructure for coastal cities Attractive for MNCs for their low – cost labor
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collectivist culture: more concerned with interests of the group rather than the individual Major religions include Buddhism and Shinto Different types of Japanese such as Honorific System Culture honors old traditions and customs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutional monarchy Head of government: Prime Minister Abe Monarchy exists, emperor is currently Emperor Akihito Country divided into 47 prefectures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Asia, consists of several islands One-time zone – 13-hour time difference with US Eastern time Major cities include Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka and Nagoya More prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd largest economy in the world Decline in male demographic, worry for future working class Strong automobile industry Heavy in exports
South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collectivist culture: more concerned with interests of the group rather than the individual Pop culture (K-Pop) becoming increasingly popular in Western cultures Major religions include Buddhism and Christianity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presidential republic government 1st female president, Park Geun-hye recently impeached Acting president is Hwang Kyo-ahn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern half of Korean Peninsula Time zone: 13-hour difference with US Eastern time Most populated cities include Seoul, Busan and Incheon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong MNC presence such as Samsung and Hyundai Motors Strong electronics economy, one of the Four Asian Tigers

STEPHANIE ADAMS



BEIJING, CHINA

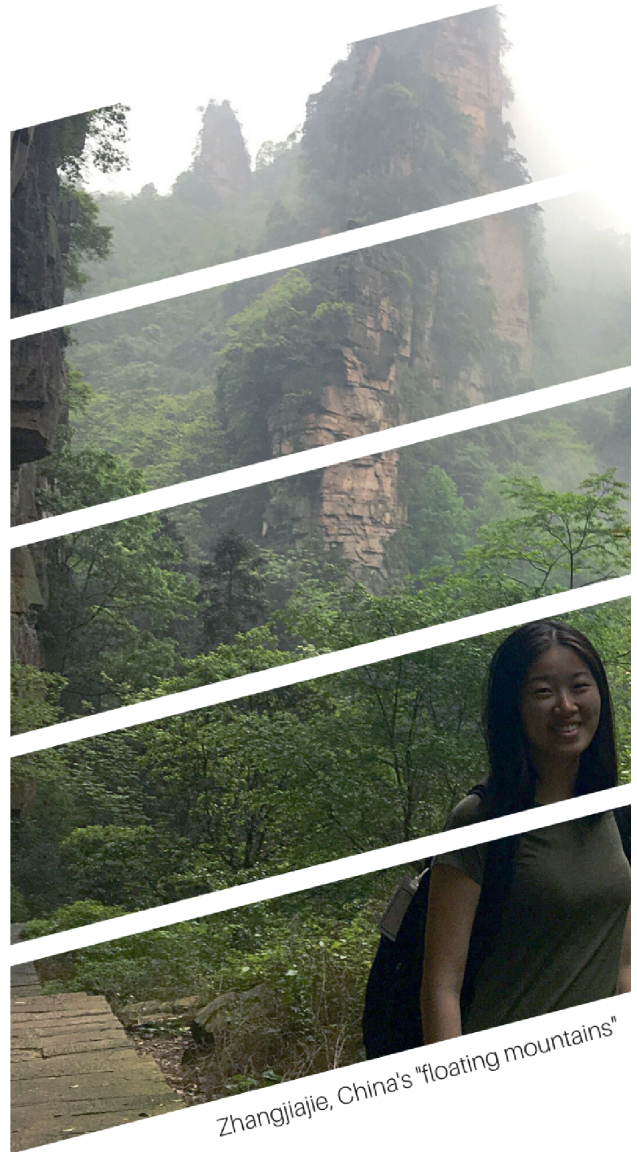
RENMIN UNIVERSITY

Stephanie Adams

International Business, Accounting, and Finance

"I wanted a new and different experience, so I chose Beijing"

- University Language Level: Level 1
- Classes: Introduction to the WTO, Financial Market Institutions, Entrepreneurship, and Marketing
- Workload: not too hard, although professors have higher expectations for students and take attendance
- What you enjoyed most about your classes: group projects with other international students
- Housing: on campus international dorm
- Registration process: school provides a buddy, but you're going to have to figure a lot out on your own
- Communication and Essential Apps: SIM card, Betternet VPN, and WeChat
- Dining: 50/50 on and off campus, all so tasty!
- Transportation on campus: walking
- Struggles: no Netflix
- What you need to know: be proactive the first few weeks and go to the cafe in Building G to meet new people!



Zhangjiajie, China's "floating mountains"



Wangfujing

Exploring Beijing and beyond

- Previous exposure to China: 3rd time in China, 1st time in Beijing
- Favorite places to visit: Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Lama Temple, Temple of Heaven
- Favorite activities: working out with friends, traveling, and seeing the nightlife
- Favorite place for food: Wangfujing street food and conveyor belt sushi
- Money: never a problem. travel is so cheap!
- Transportation: walking, taxis, and subway
- Travels outside of Beijing: Shanghai, the Avatar mountains, and Hainan

Name: Stephanie Adams

From: Baltimore, Maryland

Minor/Language: Chinese

School attended and city: Renmin University, Beijing, China

Career goals: Want to be in audit

Q: How many times have you been in China?

A: It was my third time in China, and my second time in Beijing.

Q: Did you travel outside of China during your semester?

A: No, I stayed in China.

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Bahamas, Canada, and China three times

Q: Why did you choose Beijing? Was Renmin your first choice?

A: Renmin was my first choice. I wanted a new experience, which is why I chose Beijing over Shanghai

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: Walked around campus

Q: When did school start and end?

A: February to May (I left early)

Q: Where did you eat?

A: I ate on campus half the time and off campus half the time. Everything is so good.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived at an on campus dorm and had a roommate from Korea; we became friends really fast.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: The university doesn't really tell you what to do, you're kind of on your own.

Student organizations? No

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: International friends, usually Europeans. I made a lot of friends working out; it kind of became a social event

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: I did, I actually had two. I had one through the international program and one through the business program

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: Intro to WTO, Financial Market Institutions (least favorite with math skills), Entrepreneurship, Chinese Language, and Marketing. I didn't like any classes

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: All my classes were in English except for Chinese Language. Take note, there's a wide gap in between levels of Chinese.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: I had Chinese teachers, but all of them had international experience. They were stricter, and demanded more attention. Classes were more lecture based. It was more test focused than my US courses. I didn't really have homework – just studying for the tests. I also really liked the group projects; it really allowed you to get to know other students and even socialize. However, I had half the course load than Chinese students, there's an exception for international students in that we don't have as high expectations; Chinese students are very studious.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Oh yeah, definitely.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: The best place to find people is to hang out in the café (Building G) and even if you're suffering from jet lag, make sure you go out in the beginning and meet people. Don't be nervous to go out in the beginning.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: Would recommend Forbidden City, Wangfujing, Summer Palace, Lama Temple, and Temple of Heaven

Q: What were your favorite activities?

A: I had a health kick and worked out five times a week, and I also really liked traveling around. The nightlife is really cool too.

Q: How did you get around?

A: Mostly taxi and subway, I really enjoyed walking around the city.

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: I did have a hard time reading menus, especially if they didn't have pictures, but I could normally tell what meats were what, and the serving staff was really friendly. Price was never hard. I went out to eat a fair amount, at least once every other day if not every day. Wangfujing was my favorite places to go. I also really liked going to conveyor belt sushi places.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: WeChat for communication and BetterNet for VPN service.

Q: Did you travel outside of Beijing?

A: Yes - Shanghai, Zhangjiajie (which are the floating mountains in the Avatar movie), and Hainan

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Did you get to practice your religion while abroad?

A: I'm Catholic, but didn't really attend mass

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: I felt more comfortable towards the end, but the first two weeks were hard. I miss speaking Chinese now that I'm back.

Q: What was it like being an American Born Chinese in China?

A: It could be really frustrating because people had certain expectations of me, especially when it came to the language. I was really nervous that what I was saying wasn't being communicated.

Q: Was it hard to fit in with other local students?

A: Yeah, that was pretty rough. I thought going in that I would be able to make more local students, but there were a lot of cultural barriers that made it hard to become close friends.

Administrative

Q: China, of course, is communist – did you see evidence of that different type of administration?

A: No. Not really. I actually felt it more in Shanghai – students were more open about it. I just remember people carrying guns near sites. It was impactful, but I would be more worried about it in the United States. I guess I was more understanding or accepting of it.

Q: Did that administration make you uncomfortable?

A: No, not really.

Q: How did you feel about the censorship that was there?

A: I don't really use social media so it wasn't really hard for me. I do wish I could have had Netflix.

Q: How do you feel about our foreign relations with China now?

A: I think it's really interesting reading through the news and see how China is trying to step up

Q: Did you feel safe while you were abroad?

A: Oh yeah, safer than I do in the US. I will say I felt uncomfortable around homeless disabled individuals.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in China, a culture that's not as Westernized as others in Europe?

A: They didn't care, they know it's safer. I'm going to Europe this summer and they're more concerned with my safety there. They've also been to China.

Q: What is the time zone difference?

A: 12/13 hours. The time zone actually made it better so that my calls home were short, but enough.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home? How often did you reach out?

A: Other than the Firewall, it wasn't really hard to communicate. I called back or messaged my family and my boyfriend pretty often.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1 USD is around 6 or 6.5

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: So much cheaper. Granted, while I realized that clothes were not cheaper, food and drinks were significantly cheaper. Services, like getting my nails done were also so cheap.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: Yes, I felt like I was rich, haha.

Q: Did you have a bank account?

A: No

Q: What did you use to pay?

A: My bank (Bank of America) had international card services so I was able to pull out money from China Construction Bank without transaction fees

Culture Shock

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to China?

A: 1 week to feel adjusted. I had to leave early though to do an internship, which felt urgent. I was really feeling homesick by the end, but I would have rather had people visit me in China than me having to actually leave.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in China?

A: I didn't really miss the US at all as much as I did the relationships.

Q: What do you miss the most about China now that you are back?

A: I miss being able to always have something to do, money was nice, and cheap transportation

Q: What would you do differently about your study abroad experience?

A: Nothing much. I wish I didn't get so homesick so easily, but it's not like I could have fixed it.

Q: How did you share your abroad experiences?

A: I shared with family and friends. Pretty in depth with my family but not as much with my friends.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: I really just missed my friends, family, and boyfriend. Oh, and also personal space.

Q: How long do you think it took you to feel adjusted back in the US?

Not long. I had four days at home before going to Seattle. I was very excited for Seattle, and had never been there long. I really wanted to see new places.

Q: Did you feel ready to leave China? The US?

A: I wasn't really nervous to go to China, but I was nervous that it wouldn't live up to expectations. I was definitely ready to leave the US, since I've been to China.

Q: Do you think China helped you prepare for other study abroad experiences or the job market?

A: Yes, I'm already starting to learn Spanish and I want to go to Europe next.

Q: Did you have any pre-conceived perceptions about Asian culture or the Chinese? How did they change when you went abroad?

A: I had gone through adoption classes and so I felt like I knew about the Chinese culture pretty well.

JUDITH LIN



BEIJING, CHINA

TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

Judith Lin

International Business, Global Supply Chain and
Operations Management, and Marketing

- **University Language Level:** Level 1
- **Classes:** Corporate Strategic Management, Introduction to Marketing, Accounting Information Systems, and Calligraphy
- **Workload:** not too hard, although professors have higher expectations for students and take attendance
- **What you enjoyed most about your classes:** group projects with other international students
- **Housing:** on campus international dorm
- **Registration process:** school provides a buddy, but you're going to have to figure a lot out on your own
- **Essential Apps:** ExpressVPN, Pleco, Eleme, WeChat
- **Dining:** 50/50 on and off campus, all so tasty!
- **Transportation on campus:** biking, moped, and walking
- **What you need to know:** the smog isn't that bad, find a local student to practice Chinese with, and look for really cool speakers and events that come to Tsinghua

"You can't stop exploring the city - there's always something to do in Beijing"



Beijing Fashion Week at the 798 Art District



Summer Palace

Exploring Beijing and beyond

- **Previous exposure to China:** 2nd time in China, first time long-term
- **Favorite places to visit:** 798 Art District, Hou Hai, and the Summer Palace
- **Favorite activities:** finding new bars, exploring the city, and eating at new restaurants
- **Favorite place for food:** Ottos in Wudaokou, Grandma's House, and Green Tea
- **Money:** always had enough, a lot of job opportunities available abroad (ex. tutoring)
- **Transportation:** walking, taxis, buses, and subway
- **Travels outside of Beijing:** Shanghai, Guilin, Fuzhou, and Taiwan

Name: Judith Lin

From: Greenville, SC

Major(s): IB, GSCOM, and Marketing

Minor/Language: Chinese

School attended and city: Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

Career goals: I want to eventually be in international business policy

Q: How many times have you been in China?

A: I've been to China twice, but for a really short time and I don't really remember the experience. I've been to Taiwan a lot because I have family there.

Q: Did you travel outside of China during your semester?

A: Just Taiwan

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: I've been to the Caribbean and South America for vacation, Central Europe on a Maymester, Taiwan, and Australia

Q: Why did you choose to go to China? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: I chose to go to China because I wanted to practice my Chinese. I'm pretty fluent, but I've been slowly losing it with time. I also wanted to go to China to learn about my culture. I chose Beijing (it was my first choice) knowing it would be more of a challenge than Shanghai or Hong Kong because it was more traditional, but I also wanted the cultural experience.

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: I biked around campus, walking is possible, but campus is really big.

Q: When did school start and end?

A: Mid-February to Early June. I highly recommend going early and celebrating Chinese New Year.

Q: Where did you eat?

A: Sometimes on campus, there are a lot of options. A lot. Tsinghua is well known for its food and signature sides like its yogurt and plum juice. I also got delivery when the air was bad or I was feeling lazy (Eleme is the best app ever).

Q: How "clean" was your campus?

A: It's not dirty, but the classrooms are older. The dorm rooms are also a little older, but super clean, there are maids that come and clean the rooms and change the sheets one to two times a week. If you choose a single room option, try to request Building 19 when you get to registration.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived in an international dorm on campus with one other international student from Germany. We had our own bedrooms and shared a bathroom. Make sure you get your housing on time so that you won't be stuck in a double (two people share one bedroom, freshman style).

Q: How was the registration process?

A: It can be really difficult, but they have a great orientation to go step by step through the registration process with a local Chinese student. The classes you think you can take before you go may not actually be available.

Q: Were you in any student organizations?

A: No

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: Mostly international students because of the dorms I was in as well as the fact that my classes were mostly international students. I had a few local friends through the church I joined and through group projects.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: I actually had three. I wasn't very close with mine, but I knew other people who met with their buddy weekly and they really helped each other out with the language. Make sure you get in the Buddy Program WeChat group – it's a great way to meet other people.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: Corporate Strategic Management

Introduction to Marketing

Accounting Information Systems (would not recommend unless you're finance or accounting)

Chinese Speaking II –

Chinese Writing II

Calligraphy – I loved this class, but your Chinese needs to be at a good level because it's taught completely in Chinese and there is a little bit of history and terminology you have to learn.

The levels vary a lot. Chinese Writing II was a challenge for me, but in a good way, since I can't write as well as I speak. Speaking was great reinforcement and practice for my Mandarin.

Note: Also, you can only take 8 courses outside of the School of Economics and Management

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: All of my classes were in English other than my Chinese courses and Calligraphy.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: There's a lot of PowerPoints. The more international students, the more discussion there was it seemed like. I had attendance policies, but some professors were more relaxed than others. I didn't have too many assignments, but I did have group projects which were interesting. You really got to understand different work styles of different cultures.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: It depended. On days I had a lot of class, I was on campus, but for days that were shorter, I would try to plan with friends some trips to different places in the city.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: First of all, the smog really isn't that bad, especially during the spring. Second, Tsinghua is an extremely prestigious and famous university in China so befriend local students and find out what cool speakers and courses are being offered. Apparently, actors from X-Men had come when I was there, but I had no idea. Also, try to find someone to practice English and Chinese with. There are a lot of people looking for that or in some cases for a paid tutor.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: Within Beijing:

I absolutely love the 798 Art District. There's a really unique charm to it and its great for souvenirs. Also, Fashion Week is a really interesting experience if you can get into a show. Network, network, network. I also really like the Summer Palace, and it was the first place I went when it got warm. It's breathtaking and its great just on the boat, away from people.

Outside of Beijing:

I never get tired of going to Taiwan, it's very different from Mainland China and I would recommend going when it's cold. The summer is too humid. I also really liked Guilin, it's this untouched natural beauty in China where you can drift down the river or bike through the mountains and villages.

Q: Favorite activities?

A: You can't stop exploring the city – there is always something to do in Beijing. Finding new bars (Hidden House) and going to new restaurants.

Q: How did you get around?

A: Taxi, Didi, bus, and subway

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: There wasn't a kitchen so it was either the canteens or going out to eat. I was probably half and half. Popular dining places will usually have pictures and sometimes English so it was pretty easy. And you catch on to some of the characters. I really liked family meals at places like Grandma's and Green Tea.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: Ideally, I'd like to be based in the US, but work in China. I'll be going back to China this summer to visit.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: I bought ExpressVPN (do this before you go over) to access social media. I had Eleme for ordering food. Pleco for language translations. Baidu for maps. Alipay as a mobile Venmo. And of course, WeChat for everything.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Religion in China?

A: I identify as Christian and attended a small local church a little bit with some friends from Taiwan. It was all in Chinese and was an interesting experience because it was so small. I also went to a large international church (in Wudaokou) like twice. It was very diverse and really cool. Songs could be led in Korean or Swahili, very cool atmosphere. Locals are not necessarily allowed at church and sometimes they had security check IDs to make sure only foreigners were attending the services.

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: I'm pretty fluent because I grew up speaking it in the house. I do have a Taiwanese accent though which people pointed out. Funny enough, when I went to Taiwan, people thought it was a more Western accent and thought I was from Hong Kong. I got some confused looks when I told them I couldn't read or write certain things.

Q: China has had a few issues around race, did you experience that or see that?

A: Yes. One of my friends who was also from America responded to an ad looking for a tutor. The response that came back was that he was looking for a White American tutor. People aren't mean or outright with their discrimination, but it does exist.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since China can be a collectivist culture?

A: Yes, but once people knew I could speak Chinese they were much more open. Our conversations would be all in Chinese though and not in English, which could be difficult at times.

Administrative

Q: China, of course is communist; what evidence did you see of that there? Did it make you uncomfortable?

A: There's definitely increased security around transportation or sites like Tiananmen Square. Then, of course, there are sites like Google that you can't get on. I don't agree with it, but I understand why those measures are in place given that they're trying to preserve their state and their customs. It's pretty sensitive and I think I understood that having been in Taiwan so much, where people are adamant about their sovereignty as a separate country.

Q: How did you feel about the censorship that was there?

A: I mean, it wasn't great. There's ways around it though. And in a weird way there's actually a lot more stuff available that would probably be illegal in the US.

Q: Did you feel safe while you were abroad?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in China?

A: They were excited. Although my mom, who's Taiwanese probably would have preferred me to be in Taiwan. However, being Asian parents, they were really excited for me to be at such a prestigious university.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13-hour difference until daylight savings and then it was 12.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home?

A: I FaceTimed home maybe once every two weeks, but WeChat them more often. It can be hard to talk because the wifi in the dorms isn't great.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1 dollar = 6.5 yuan

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: Food and souvenirs are much cheaper. Luxury goods are more expensive because they're being imported. Surprisingly, clothes are more expensive – there's a lot less sales. I found the same romper in China and in the US and it was almost half off in the US.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: Absolutely, but I had a lot of scholarship funds from the school (Look for the Freeman) and I was also getting paid for tutoring a professor English.

Q: Rent?

A: I think I paid around 12000 yuan upfront for a certain amount of days, but you get a refund if you leave before the amount of days and I think I got around 2500 back.

Q: Did you have a bank account?

A: Yes. Some people don't but I found it really helpful for drawing out money and using apps like WeChat and Alipay to pay others since they don't split bills at restaurants in China. I set up an account within the first week at the Bank branch on Campus (C Building).

Q: What did you use to pay?

A: Cash. I also had an American Airlines MasterCard which I used for my flights and there were 0 international transaction fees.

Culture Shock

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to China?

A: Longer than I thought it would. I think I had high expectations because of Taiwan, and didn't expect it to be so different.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in China?

A: Family and friends. And driving.

Q: What do you miss the most about China now that you are back?

A: Public transportation, being in a city, and of course, the food.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I wish I had joined a student organization and started exploring the city as early as possible.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: A lot of my friends who were studying abroad in Europe got to meet up which was cool, so I would say being able to go to other countries.

Q: How long do you think you took to feel adjusted back in the US?

A: I think I was forced to adjust because I only had a few days at home and then I had to move across the country to Seattle to start my internship. That fast change really made me miss China, but I was also excited to start my internship and be in a new city, rooming with friends.

Q: Were you ready to leave China and the US?

A: I was nervous to leave the US, especially since this was my first long term trip and I live in state. I was also doing long distance for the first time. I definitely did not want to leave China; I really think a year is the perfect amount of time to study abroad. One semester just wasn't enough.

Q: Do you think China helped you prepare for other study abroad experiences or the job market?

A: For sure. I think my study abroad made me more independent and more willing to take more risks.

Q: Did you have any pre-conceived perceptions about Asian culture? How did they change when you went abroad?

A: Being Asian I feel pretty knowledgeable about Asian culture (mostly Chinese culture), but I think it was interesting to see the difference in personality or work ethic between Asian students and Asian Americans

ABIGAIL HARDEE



SHANGHAI, CHINA

FUDAN UNIVERSITY

Abigail Hardee

International Business and Global Supply Chain and
Operations Management



The Bund



M50 Art District

- **University Language Level:** Level 1
- **Classes:** Foreign Business Investment, Chinese Art History, Finance, Marketing, Corporate Finance, Marketing Management
- **Teaching style:** lecture-based classes with reading assignments and typically a midterm and final exam
- **Internship:** In Shanghai at a corporate communications firm
- **Housing:** International dorm
- **Registration process:** Can be really difficult, the system is all in Chinese but a buddy is available
- **Apps:** WeChat, Express VPN, and BeaconShanghai
- **Dining:** on campus (which is really cheap), local street vendors or restaurants
- **Transportation on campus:** walking and biking
- **What you need to know:** Be as prepared as possible and try to get an internship - it's a great way to get immersed in the work environment

"It felt like home but with a lot more different people from different places"

Getting to know Shanghai

- **Previous exposure to China:** 2nd time in Shanghai, was a part of Chinese intensive program the summer before
- **Favorite places to visit:** The Bund and the M50 Art district
- **Favorite food:** pork buns, Xi'an hamburgers, and shengjianbao (Mr. Yang's)
- **Favorite activities:** trying new food, shopping at night markets, and going to bars and clubs
- **Money:** Try to budget, but it's definitely a less expensive place to study abroad
- **Transportation:** taxi, bike, bus, high and low speed trains to get to other cities
- **Travels outside of Shanghai:** Huangshan, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Nanjing, Beijing, Taiwan,

Name: Abigail Hardee

From: Charlotte, NC

Major(s): IB, GSCOM

Minor/Language: Chinese, Spanish

School attended and city: Fudan University, Shanghai, China

Career goals: I eventually want to be in government working for a cabinet agency and have an elected position.

Q: How many times have you been in China?

A: I spent a summer before in Shanghai for a Chinese intensive program

Q: Did you travel outside of China during your semester?

A: Only to Taiwan

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: The summer in Shanghai was my first time

Q: Why did you choose to go to China? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: I chose to go to China because I knew that my language skills weren't up to where I wanted it to be and I wanted to experience the business culture there and the current events that I hear about while I was in the US. I chose Fudan (it was my first choice) because of the good reputation and the fact that it's not right in the city, so I would get a different feel.

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: I mostly biked and walked around campus

Q: When did school start and end?

A: First week of March to the last week of June

Q: Where did you eat?

A: Sometimes on campus, but I ate out most of the time at local street vendors or local restaurants. 3 kuai per meal for on campus 25 kuai for off. A nice meal was around 80 kuai

Q: How "clean" was your campus?

A: Not at all. It's very old and almost third world, very 70s vibe. Some had Western toilets, while some bathrooms had the troughs.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived in an international dorm on campus with three apartment mates. There were two showers, two bathrooms, two kitchen sinks, and a sometimes working hot plate with a fridge for rental. I would suggest living on campus in the main building, because it's a traditional dorm with all international students – I lived right next to the main building, and even though my building was cheaper, it was a lot harder to interact with international students.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: It can be really difficult, so you need to be prepared. The system was all in Chinese and almost everyone I knew didn't get their first pick on classes.

Q: Were you in any student organizations?

A: No

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: Mostly international students just because of where I lived, and the fact that most of my classes were with international students. The local friends I made were from my internship at Jackson Dawson Corporate Communications.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: I did not have an advisor or a buddy, but there is an option to have a buddy, I think. Things weren't really well advertised.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: Finance 363 – really hard, would not recommend

MKTG 350

Chinese Art History

Chinese Language

Foreign Business Investment – would recommend

It's important to note that there are only three levels of Chinese. You can also sit in on all classes to see if you like them, which I would recommend because Fudan has a wide range of classes.

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: All of my classes were in English other than Chinese. In order to take Chinese courses, you have to prove a certain level of proficiency.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: It was very lecture based, and classes are very long – up to three hours. There's usually a midterm, final exam, and a group project. Attendance wasn't mandatory and so students really weren't that engaged.

Assignments were usually reading and individually teaching yourself the material since professors were more focused on getting through the material than making sure everyone understands it.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: It felt good walking around in such an open environment. It felt like home but with a lot of different people from different places. It felt good we actually didn't get that much special treatment, and local students were used to having international students on campus. We weren't really an anomaly.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: No, campus was mainly just for class and homework. Most of my time was spent on my internship or exploring the city.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: Be as prepared as possible because you are really on your own to figure things out. I would also recommend getting an internship while abroad, I felt really immersed in the Chinese work environment. I would also say don't say no to anything the first week and try not to stick around with USC students.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: Within Shanghai:

The Bund, a great view of the river and skyline

M50 District was an art district that featured a lot of modern art

Outside of Shanghai:

Yellow Mountains, Huang Shan

Beijing for the Great Wall and the Summer Palace

The Gold and Purple Mountains in Nanjing which had a lot of cool tombs

Q: Favorite activities?

A: Trying out new restaurants, night markets, going to parties, bars (La Bamba which is really close to the university and great for meeting people, Helen), and clubs (The Mansion, an underground art and music collective club)

Q: How did you get around?

A: Taxi, bike, bus, metro, high speed and low speed trains

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: Ordering food usually requires a little Chinese, but a lot of menus are in English. There are a lot of cheap options, especially in the local shopping district or near the university. You can spend less than a dollar up to 25 dollars, so I pretty much ate out daily. Roujiamou (pork buns) or xian hamburgers were my favorite. I also really liked shengjianbao and wonton soup.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: I would definitely work short term in the city and I definitely plan on visiting again.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: WeChat for communication. ExpressVPN to get past the Great Firewall. I also used Beacon Shanghai within the WeChat app that helped translate addresses for cabs.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Religion in China?

A: I am more or less religious. I tried going to mass once (found on Google using the VPN), but it was a two-hour trip. There was a line to get checked. There definitely weren't religious organizations being advertised on campus, for obvious reasons.

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: There's always a bit of shock when you first get there and not being able to be understood. But by the end, I was really comfortable doing daily tasks and getting around. I would say that three years and a summer of Chinese language was not enough to be able to take a full on Chinese course or hold a conversation on technical topics.

Q: China has had a few issues around race, did you experience that or see that?

A: Not necessarily to me personally, but Americans do tend to be stigmatized since Shanghai has had foreigners. So Shanghai does have some stereotypes about Americans being really loud so some taxi drivers may not want to drive them. I have had friends who are darker skinned who were treated rudely or denied entrance into clubs.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since China can be a collectivist culture?

A: I mostly hung out with international friends since Asian students tended to be more clique-y.

Administrative

Q: China, of course is communist; what evidence did you see of that there? Did it make you uncomfortable?

A: Internet. Internet. Internet. As well as general public behavior – people aren't likely to queue up for the metro and push and shove, reflective of an individualistic mindset developed during the rise of Communism. So

while China can be collectivist, there's this looking out for yourself kind of attitude. Everyone tends to be more scared of the police and deferent to authority. Our dorms were heavily guarded about who can come and go out – people who were clearly drunk weren't allowed to come in even if they lived there nor were overnight guests allowed. Campus shut down at a certain time as well as public transportation (it closed earlier due to a stampede incident during New Years in the past)

Q: How did you feel about the censorship that was there?

A: More often than not, people seemed used to it or found ways to get around it. The art community is quite vocal or active underground. For me, it was a minor inconvenience that made it hard for me to do school assignments sometimes.

Q: How did you feel about our foreign relations with China now?

A: I feel like the US and China and the way that they carry out diplomacy is very much due to the inherent differences in eastern and western cultures. Both sides need to try to understand one another's core values. It's also really hard to understand the contradictory nature of Communism and capitalism in China.

Q: Did you feel safe while you were abroad?

A: Yes, I never felt unsafe. Even walking by myself at night. There's always police around.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in China?

A: They were excited, but also nervous since it was a Communist country. They really viewed it as an exotic place which they were excited for me to go but just didn't really understand the culture.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13-hour time difference, 12 after daylight savings.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home?

A: I would call back maybe once every two weeks. The time difference can be hard to manage and finding really good wifi connection can make it hard to Skype or FaceTime.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1 dollar is about 6.5 yuan

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: Sometimes, and sometimes more expensive. Chinese focused goods like food and transportation were cheaper. Groceries were about the same and other shopping needs were about the same or more. But it does add up.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: When I budgeted really well, I had enough money. But it's just like the US, sometimes you splurge and sometimes you need to save. It's also definitely less expensive of a place to study abroad than most places.

Q: Rent?

A: I paid like \$1500 for the entire semester.

Q: Did you have a bank account?

A: No

Q: What did you use to pay?

A: I would pull out about 200 USD each time and just pay in cash. I did have a transaction fee.

Culture Shock

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to China?

A: Because I had been there before, the second time around, probably only a few weeks. The first time I was probably in culture shock the entire time.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in China?

A: Ease of communication and sometimes the food.

Q: What do you miss the most about China now that you are back?

A: Now, the food, haha. And how easy it was to visit such different parts of the city and being around such different people. It's hard to get that same diversity here.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I would've tried to get more involved with local students and traveled more in China and outside of China.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: Yes, I would be able to talk about it in class and in interviews too.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: The time I went was the best time for me. It was really hard though for me to get an internship after my school since it ended so late. I also did miss my nephew being born, my brother getting engaged, and my dog dying, so that was really difficult.

Q: How long do you think you took to feel adjusted back in the US?

A: Somedays I still feel like I'm still adjusting because going abroad really changes the way you think. It took a while to come back to American university to really get a grasp of what was going on.

Q: Were you ready to leave China and the US?

A: I was definitely ready to leave China, but I also felt ready to leave the US since I knew as a freshman that this semester was coming.

Q: Do you think China helped you prepare for other study abroad experiences or the job market?

A: It definitely helped me prepare for other study abroad experiences. If you can adjust to China, you can adjust anywhere. For jobs, it really helped me get over inconveniences or things that used to seem really difficult.

Q: Did you have any pre-conceived perceptions about Asian culture? How did they change when you went abroad?

A: I have a very diverse friends group, so I felt pretty well exposed to different regions of Asian culture so I felt like my understanding was only deepened. There's definitely a difference between American Asians and Asian Asians in terms of work ethics or what really matters.

CONNER PHILLIPPI



HONG KONG

CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Conner Phillippi

International Business, Economics

- University Language Level: Level 1
- Semester Start and End: Early January to early May
- Why CUHK: to get a great economic perspective
- Classes: China, HK, and the World Economy, International Marketing, International Operations Management, and Contract Law (all in English)
- Registration: very professional, but it can be difficult getting information on classes; teachers are very helpful
- Housing: on campus international house with roommates, sharing bathrooms, balcony, kitchen and a living room
- Necessities: SIM card, Octopus card
- Dining: Around 20 places on campus to choose from, plenty of off-campus options
- Transportation on campus: walking and the on-campus shuttle service
- Advice for future students: do a lot of research ahead of time and make sure you budget well



Lion's Rock

"The city is always moving; it felt like New York City"

Getting to know Hong Kong

- Previous exposure to Hong Kong: 1st time in HK
- Favorite places to visit: Lantau, Lamma Island, Lan Kwai Fong, and the zoo
- Favorite Activities: attending horse races, visiting Mr. Wong's bar, hiking, jogging, and trying different cuisines
- Favorite foods: egg fried rice with chicken, dumplings, and baozi
- Paying: Octopus card and Capital One card with zero international transaction fees
- Transportation: Uber, taxi and subways
- What you miss the most about HK: Efficiency and the speed of the city
- Travels outside of HK: Australia, New Zealand, India and Vietnam



Hong Kong skyline

Name: Connor Phillipi

From: Cincinnati, Ohio

Major(s): IB, Economics

Minor/Language: Italian

School attended and city: CUHK, Hong Kong

Career goals: management consulting in DC and eventually be a professor of economics

Q: How many times have you been in HK?

A: It was my first time in HK and China, but not my first time out of the states

Q: Did you travel outside of HK during your semester?

A: I went to Australia and New Zealand, India and Vietnam; my favorite was Vietnam and New Zealand, which I traveled to during the semester

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: A couple of times

Q: Why did you choose to go to HK? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: My best friend was actually going there, so we planned it out together. I also went for the economics perspectives. Actually, the guy who pegged the HK currency spoke at my tech class

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: On campus I used the shuttle service. Campus was very large – walking took too long and it was way too hilly for biking. Went on trails and went hiking.

Q: When did school start and end?

A: January 7th and ended May 1st

Q: Where did you eat?

A: Campus cafeterias, but the skinned ducks were a little bit disturbing. There are probably around 20 places to eat on campus - rice dishes with some kind of poultry, noodles, soup were really common. My friend had apartment in Hong Kong and so we ate downtown 2-3 days in the week. I also got delivery a lot - PhD pizza is great.

Q: How clean was campus?

A: Very clean. There was maid service almost every day. On the MTR, you can eat off the ground because it's so clean; the escalator rails dip through hand sanitizer. The air isn't that great, though.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived in an international house that was on campus. It's about a 35 minute Uber to downtown. I had roommates from Luxembourg and France. Locals who wanted to know international students could live in the dorm. 10 people shared 3 bathrooms, a balcony, kitchen, and living room.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: Very professional. They sent out an email for the meeting. They picked the best English speakers to help. It was about a 20-minute process. The only hard thing was finding information on classes, but there is a trial period. There are some language barriers for economic terms, but all the teachers are very helpful.

Q: Were you in any student organizations?

A: Strategic investment Club, which brought in a lot of investment banks, mostly local.

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: International students, culture seemed very closed off. Everyone has very tight social groups. It took a month and a half for local students in the dorms to hang out with us. You had to go out of the way to meet local students in class.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: No, you're kind of on your own. Don't get scammed by the taxi guy. First two days were pretty hectic. Everything is quantitative and detail oriented, and it can be hard to memorize the bus routes and times.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: China, Hong Kong, World Economy (would recommend). International Marketing. International Operations Management. Lecture with professor from UBS. Loved Contract Law (all essays based). I didn't have high enough level of Italian to take the course. I wish I took more classes, but I wanted to travel. All classes are attendance based, but you could talk to the professor.

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: I had all English classes.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: Econ was very lecture based. Marketing and supply chain more discussion based. Homework: essays, two exams, homework every class. Marketing: case studies, a few quizzes, it was pretty standard with US. The grade curve is a little different. There are some group projects, usually case studies. Sometimes it was hard to work with kids who didn't really speak English. I definitely had to take the lead.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Never hostile, welcomed but people were nonchalant. Outside of campus is very international friendly, especially at Wonchai Wednesdays, Happy Valley horse races betting. People asked for pictures. Downtown had many British and American bankers and exchange students. The city really felt like New York City, and I felt more comfortable in the city than campus. However, there's not much historical culture.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: Just during classes.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: Do a lot of research ahead. You have to be very independent. You can email professors and advisors for help, but you really are on your own. Definitely get an Octopus card and SIM card. And financially, you're going to blow through money. Flights are expensive as well. Also, getting a gym membership can be hard there, you have to go to a training and provide records. Outside gyms are available and nice, just less convenient.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places/activities to visit?

A: Lantau (mountainous island) and Lamma island (fishing village). Within the city, go to the horse races. At Mr. Wong's bar, it's very international and all you can drink. Also check out Lan Kwai Fong, the financial district. Also loved hiking (Lion's Rock, Dragon's Back) and boating. Jogging around campus and the city (tracks all around campus) is great. Video gaming huge there. I also enjoyed eating at restaurants; there are so many cuisines (Gordon Ramsey restaurant – Bread Street). The Zoo is also pretty cool.

Q: How did you get around?

A: Hong Kong has the most efficient subway in the world (5 bucks to the city) and I used that a lot. I also Uber'd a lot (30 to 40 bucks to the city).

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: Expensive, probably around (15 to 80 USD). Street food available, it's usually just a store front. Unless it was really niche and local, English menu were mostly available.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: I might want to live there eventually.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: Communication: Line a few times, usually just my own iPhone, Facebook. Get a SIM right when you get there.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: How did you get around with the language? Did you use Mandarin Chinese? What was the reaction if you did use it?

A: I never used Mandarin, but my friend did.

Q: What was the reaction to you being an American in Hong Kong, was it normal for them or did they take interest?

A: On campus, no reaction. Outside of HK, there were some reactions, especially from mainlanders.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since China can be a collectivist culture?

A: The international student dorm was both good and bad, I tended to stick with international students rather than local students.

Administrative

Q: Did you see anything different about the government? What was the attitude towards China?

A: Gangs are pretty prevalent. Friend's phone got stolen. There's a little feeling in the air of tension and a lot of competition between cities, financially. It's kind of like the Catalonia, Spain situation.

Q: What was the reaction to using Mandarin Chinese there?

A: Mandarin is not very common. Language can be indicative of class. Lower class usually only knows Cantonese. Middle class knows Cantonese and English. For business, people will know Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. They don't like it if you only know Mandarin.

Q: Did you ever hear about the Hong Kong student protests?

A: There was something about the Fish Ball protest, Mong Kok civil unrest while I was there

Q: Did you feel safe?

A: I felt very safe; it's illegal to own guns.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in HK?

A: My parents were sad about it at first, but were much more open to it when they visited. My mom fell in love with the city. They spent ten days there.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13 hour time difference always. It was a hard because I interviewed for internships while abroad, which meant phone calls at 4 in the morning.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home?

A: I called home once a week, but texted frequently.

Q: How easy is it to travel outside of Hong Kong?

A: Visa was pretty easy, but it takes pretty long while in Hong Kong.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 7.75 for every 1 USD. It's pretty easy because it's pegged.

Q: How did you pay for things?

A: Octopus card and the Capital One card, which had 0 international transaction fees.

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: No, but dorms are cheaper

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: I didn't know HK would be that expensive. Very import based, minimum wage is higher. Put everything on the credit card. I also got some cash before leaving for HK. I had to cut out Japan because HK and traveling is so expensive.

Q: Did you have a local bank account?

A: No

Culture Shock

Q: What was it like coming back to US? Did you do an internship?

A: A week and a half of a rest and then straight to internship. Being in a domestic city by myself, it wasn't that hard, especially since I had season Boston Red Sox tickets and friends there.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to the US?

A: 2 days in terms of time difference. Driving was awkward. Adjusted pretty fast though, it was nice to be home.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to HK?

A: Not long. A month and a half to really get familiarized with the city. Definitely a learning curve, since it was my first time in an Asian country.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in HK?

A: Comfort food, TV, staying up to date, friends. Favorite food in Hong Kong, egg fried rice and chicken, bao zi. Dumplings.

Q: What do you miss the most about HK now that you are back?

A: Efficiency. The country moves fast.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I would have gone to mainland China, but the Visa takes a few weeks to get.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: Yes, almost got sick of telling. Told all my family members about my experience.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: Election season, so I tried to keep up with politics. And sports, but I made an effort to watch the games.

Q: Were you ready to leave HK and the US?

A: I wanted to stay in HK for an internship, but it's hard without language experience. I still think about it a lot. Technology made it easy to not be homesick because I could call home. I felt ready to leave the US because I had gone to Barcelona before and because I'm an out of state student. I was nervous, but nervous excited. Probably would have been more nervous without my best friend being in Hong Kong. I also hung out with other USC people sometimes as well.

Q: Do you think going to HK helped you prepare to travel to other places?

A: Yes, 100%

MARY LANPHIER



TOKYO, JAPAN

HITSOBASHI UNIVERSITY

Mary Lanphier

International Business and Accounting

"There was more participation in my classes abroad and more global perspectives"



Odaiba

- University Language Level: Level 1
- Favorite Class: Explore Japan gives great cultural insight -with trying on kimonos, visiting sake breweries and watching a sumo tournament
- Semester: April to August, which is standard for Japanese universities
- What the classes are like: mostly discussion based with some lecture components
- Housing: off-campus dorm called ISDEK (there's not an on campus option), had to take train to campus
- Buddy: Community assistants live in the dorms to help out
- Dining: Mostly street food and off-campus restaurants
- Transportation on campus: walking
- Hardest adjustment: getting used to the transportation schedules
- Advice for future students: Plan out where you want to go and make sure to budget



Getting to know Tokyo

- Previous exposure to Japan: 1st time in Japan
- Favorite places to visit: Odaiba, Tokyo Dome, and animal cafes (cat and owl cafes!)
- Favorite activities: shopping, seeing the cherry blossoms and experiencing the Japanese bar scene
- Favorite place for food: Mo's burger
- Shopping: overall, many goods and food are cheaper than US
- Transportation: walking and trains
- Safety: always felt safe, no matter the time or place!
- What you miss: the people and personal connections

Trying on traditional kimonos in Hitsobashi's Explore Japan course

Name: Mary Lanphier

From Macon, GA

Major(s): IB, Accounting

Minor/Language: Japanese

School attended and city: Hitsobashi University in Kunitachi, Tokyo, Japan

Career goals: International business consulting, but more on the financial side. MACC after graduation.

Q: How many times have you been in Japan?

A: It was my first time.

Q: Did you travel outside of Japan during your semester?

A: I stayed in Tokyo, but went to Hawaii on the way there

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: It was actually my first time abroad.

Q: Why did you choose to go to Japan? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: Coming into college I was choosing between Chinese and Japanese, but I didn't want to do socialist or communist government, so I ended up with Japanese. I was also really into the culture and the market.

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: Campus is not very big, East and West campus with classes on both sides. There's a lot of smoke though, so I ended up being allergic to the air (I have asthma). It was about a 30 minute bike ride, 10 minute train. It took me a good week to get used to the train (360 yen each way).

Q: When did school start and end?

A: Started in April (1st week) and ended 1st week of August.

Q: Did you go with any other USC students and did you guys hang out during the semester?

A: I hung out with them a little bit.

Q: Where did you eat?

A: I was limited for food because I don't eat seafood and most vegetables, so I mostly ate street food or went out.

Q: How clean was campus?

A: Everything is very clean. There are no trash cans outside, so no one really eats while walking.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: No one really lives on campus; a lot of students live in this off-campus area. The school tells you where to go. I really like the community at ISDEK (about an hour from downtown), all the USC students lived there, but on different floors. I stayed in hotel the first night, which was very cheap. My dorm rent was also very cheap - 80 bucks a month. I roomed with 6 people, but each person had their individual room and we shared two shower rooms. There was a washer, dryer and kitchen in the rooms. Bedrooms were quite small. All but one roommate (the community assistant) was international.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: Can't register until you get there. Go to the first week of classes before you register, you get to try out classes. I had to personally ask professors about classes and then do a formal process to register, which was

rather chaotic. Orientation helped a lot and optional activities like touring the library was helpful. Many things were in English.

Q: What was it like having your semester so late?

A: I stayed in Columbia, didn't really go home. I directed a skit for VSA, went to Swype, and actually got to hang out with people. I was definitely ready to go to Japan, though. I wasn't really nervous to go abroad, which was surprising. The waiting period really helped. Going back to the US was harder.

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: I had a good mix of both because I joined Cherish near the third week of being abroad, a Japanese dance group on campus. Most of them did not speak English, but didn't really need to. I felt included, but not at first. Many of them thought their English was bad so they didn't really speak. It was actually their first year they let in international students. Clubs are more like teams or social circles.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: A little bit, my community assistant that lived with us helped us out.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: Explore Japan. Definitely take. It was fantastic, and it gave a lot of cultural insight. They showed us how to wear kimonos, went to the sake brewery, went to a sumo tournament and even an American football game. A lot of people dressed up, since companies pay for the teams. I also took Basic II Japanese, which was very hard. They use the Genke books, which was very fast paced. If you want less stress, do Basic I. To prepare for the next level when you come back, Basic II is better. All classes meet once a week, except for Japanese.

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: Yes. Most professors were Japanese, some were international. There were some local students in those classes as well. Introduction to Global Leadership, Japanese Business Culture, and Japanese Corporate Management II were all in English and all an hour and a half. I didn't choose classes until like the first week.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: Mostly discussion based. Some lecture components. Japanese courses usually have high level expectations. I definitely participated more in my classes in Japan than my classes in the US. There were more global perspectives, which was interesting. Assignments weren't difficult - a lot of essays and one group project, but all in English.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Yes

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: Not really. Just went for classes.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: Go ahead and plan out where you want to go because train and transportation can be expensive. School makes you get a bank account (for rent) there, so make sure you can find a way to transfer money.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: Odaiba (beach in the middle Tokyo) some cool festivals there – meat festival, Hawaiian festivals (look things up), definitely helped that other USC students were there.

Downtown Tokyo

Tokyo Dome (where American football game was)

Animal café's – owl café, cat cafés you may have to apply for in advance. Kokubunji, lighthouse was favorite bar

Q: Favorite activities?

A: Exploring the bar scene, Roppongi (be careful. Need to watch your stuff). Shibuya is a lot of fun for shopping. Honomae has some beautiful cherry blossom trees (Yoyogi Park). Harajuku crepes are great.

Q: How did you get around?

A: Train

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: Mos burger, rice patties, teriyaki and lettuce. I actually ended up meeting someone who knew English who invited me to sit with them. We became close and they essentially became my host family; they even threw me a birthday party.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: I could, but not very long. I would definitely want to visit again.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: I called back home almost daily. Family got Line and we used that a lot. I kept in touch with friends, but not as much.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Religion?

A: A little. I normally don't go to church very often so I didn't go in Japan, but I didn't really miss it. Shinto is the prominent religion there.

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: Not well. Japanese is speedy. Then there's the Honorific system and different dialects among the region.

Q: Japan can be very formal or a traditional culture; did you feel uncomfortable?

A: At first, but foreigners kind of get a pass.

Q: What was the hardest thing to adjust to?

A: Not being able to get everywhere when needed. I didn't have a car and I had to wait for trains – I couldn't be late. Tokyo itself is a very largely spread out city. Past midnight, I needed to take taxis.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since Japan is such a collectivist culture?

A: Very collectivist, but I felt more accepted because of Cherish. Student organization were also split up so it helped make the group more intimate.

Administrative

Q: Did you see anything different about the government?

A: More passive. Government doesn't seem like they have that much power. Abe really working to get more women in the work force, but gangs kind of run the place. Business and politics are very intermingled. The culture is very unified, so there are high expectations with that culture. There's a lot of self-discipline.

Q: Did you feel safe?

A: I was being followed at one point. Felt safe though. Walked through the city in backroads at 2am playing Pokemon Go. Did a lot of eating and activities by themselves as well. I'm normally quite independent in the US as well.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in Japan?

A: They liked that it was safer than other places.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13-hour time difference.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home?

A: Not too bad.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1 dollar is about 100 yen

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: Pretty much cheaper. Buying makeup was expensive because it was imported. Transportation was a lot more, around 50 – 100 USD a week.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: Yes.

Q: Any unusual business interactions?

A: Service is very nice because everyone starts at the bottom. You have to show that you have respect for other people. You rotate through all the jobs.

Culture Shock

Q: What was it like going to Japan and then as soon as you came back, having to go to USC?

A: Really hard. I had completely different study habits, there's just not as much work at the collegiate level in Japan. The name is what you get. Course load really hit when I got back and I couldn't get used to that until October.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to Japan?

A: Probably a month. Without Cherish, even longer.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in Japan?

A: Food. I also miss the casualness with eating. Also, t-shirts and Nike shorts were not really usual normal attire in Japan.

Q: What do you miss the most about Japan now that you are back?

A: The people, personal connections. I really liked having USC people because they were people I could talk to.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I would explore Japan more. I would really like to see Northern Japan – there's more natural landscape, but I would need more fluent Japanese.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: I talked to people about it at first, but at very surface level to an extent. There was just a lack of understanding.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: Missed the big Swype showcase and my 21st birthday being in the US.

Q: How long do you think you took to feel adjusted back in the US and Japan?

A: It actually took longer to get adjusted coming back, had to get back into social groups.

Q: Were you ready to leave Japan and the US?

A: I was beyond ready to leave. I didn't miss Japan at first, but once school started, I wanted to go back.

Q: Do you think studying abroad helped you prepare for future travels?

A: I feel much more ready for more travels. I want to go to Europe next.

BRADLEY MARX



TOKYO, JAPAN

WASEDA UNIVERSITY

Bradley Marx

International Business, Global Supply Chain and
Operations Management

- **University Language Level:** Level 1
- **Semester Start and End:** Early April to Late July
- **Why Waseda:** it's right in the city, get a better feel for Tokyo and a better cultural experience
- **Classes:** Emerging Market Strategy, WTO and Dispute Management, European Union and Integration, Negotiations, International Accounting and English Lit.
- **Housing:** dorm sponsored by Waseda in Saitoma, Taoda
- **Dining:** breakfast at the dorm, lunch and dinner on campus or at local restaurants
- **Getting around:** walked on campus, took two trains and a bus to get to campus from my dorm
- **Internship:** worked with Under Armour in Japan during semester abroad
- **Advice for future students:** 1) get housing closer to campus and make it the first thing you do. 2) try to join a club 3) walk around campus and the city before class to get a better feel for it



Hie Shrine in Chiyoda Ward

"I like the way the city is organized, the infrastructure – everything has a purpose. They don't take the land for granted. It really has its own charm."



Tokyo Skytree

Getting to know Tokyo

- **Previous exposure to Japan:** 2nd time, 1st time through the kakihashi project
- **Favorite places to visit:** Asakusa shrine, Tokyo Skytree, Haki Okaba, Odaiba, and Yokuhama
- **Favorite activities:** trying different food, karaoke, going to traditional Japanese bars, and traveling to different parts of the city
- **Favorite food:** Oyakudan and meat platters at Matsuya, a restaurant near campus
- **Money:** cash and used BOA debit card for ATMs
- **Transportation:** you can't escape the trains!
- **Hardest adjustment:** getting around with the language

Name: Bradley Marx

From: Born in San Francisco, but pretty much from Baltimore, Maryland

Major(s): IB, GSCOM

Minor/Language: Japanese

School attended and city: Waseda University in Shinjuku area of Tokyo, business district

Career goals: Trying to get into a supply chain analyst role. Possibly with a Japanese automotive company and I want to be based in San Francisco.

Q: How many times have you been in Japan?

A: Twice with the kakihashi project

Q: Did you travel outside of Japan during your semester?

A: No

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: Around ten times, Italy, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Caribbean islands. Japan was the longest trip I've taken.

Q: Why did you choose to go to Japan? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: I decided Japan because I was studying Japanese. I chose Waseda because of the location, which was right in the city. I thought I would get a better feel for Tokyo and have a better cultural experience.

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: Campus itself I walked. From dorm to campus, two trains and a bus.

Q: When did school start and end?

A: Roughly April 5th and ended around July 31st.

Q: Where did you eat?

A: Since there was such a long distance between campus and dorm, for lunch and dinner, I would eat on campus or at local restaurants. Breakfast in dorms.

Q: Did you hang out with other USC kids?

A: There was only one other USC student, I had another class with her, but we didn't really communicate that much because we didn't know each other that well. I did try to figure things out with other international student in my dorm.

Q: How clean was campus?

A: Extremely clean.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived in a different prefecture, Saitoma, Taoda, in a dorm sponsored by Waseda. I did not have a roommate, but I shared a bathroom and kitchen with the hall. It was an interesting dorm. Mostly international – many Europeans, students from Korea, China, and some Japanese. Japanese students could not speak very well.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: It was confusing at times, but it eventually worked out. Registration for classes was confusing. A lot of classes I thought I could take; I wasn't actually able to take them. For insurance or residency card, I had to go to city hall and no one really spoke English.

Q: What was it like having your semester so late?

A: It was nice having a nice long winter break. I did an internship with Under Armour in Japan during my time there.

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: I was friends with a good amount of both. A lot of Japanese students were very friendly and made conversation with me.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: There was sort of a tour in the beginning, but never a one-on-one.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: Emerging Market Strategy, which is very similar to IBUS 310; WTO and Dispute Management; European Union and Integration, but would not recommend this one. I also took one on the Japanese economy (really liked the professor). Negotiations, which I also liked with a lot of activities and skills that I actually use now. I took Japanese level II, but it was deceptively hard. Future students should know that the Japanese teachers do not speak any English. International accounting, probably not the most interesting, but it didn't have as much work. I also took English literature: Othello.

Q: Did you have any classes in English?

A: All in English except for my Japanese language classes, of course.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: For a lot of my classes, it was very lecture based. Some were more discussion based like my emerging market strategy. I had a couple projects, and a few final projects. Some were group, some were single. Group projects could be hard because some people didn't know English. Majority of my class were Japanese students, my Negotiations course was probably 50/50. A lot of my classes took attendance.

Q: Did you join any student organizations?

A: I definitely wanted to but wasn't able to because of the internship and the distance to campus.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: I definitely did. I would eat in a public pavilion and random people would come and eat with me.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: I had an internship every other day. So on those days I really wasn't on campus.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: I would say, the first thing you want to do, is to get your housing situation settled. Do not procrastinate. Some people are able to find room sharing options with other students and find dorms very close to campus. For registration of classes, try not to take classes that take up two time schedules. And definitely try to join a club. They're very welcoming, and they help you adapt. Walk around campus and the city before class starts to get a feel for it. Also buy a prepaid train pass.

City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit within the city?

A: Asakusa shrine, a really famous temple in the middle of the city. It's extremely impressive. I really enjoyed it whenever I went.

Tokyo Skytree, the highest point in Japan. There are really long lines but it's really impressive.

In terms of pop culture, you can go to Haki Okaba; it a lot of cool technology.

Odaiba, they have a mini statue of liberty and lots of great views.

Yokuhama, it's a little farther, but the bay is just breathtaking and well developed. There's an amusement park and malls that look like palaces.

Q: Favorite activities?

A: I liked trying different things to eat. I also really like to go to karaoke, that was really fun. There's a lot of typical Japanese bars – it's so interesting to see all these men in suits in these areas. I also really liked traveling to different parts of the city.

Q: How did you get around?

A: I took the train or the subway. I think they do have Uber, but I generally do not take the taxis. I took the bus sometimes. Ultimately, you cannot escape the train. I heard biking is really highly recommended though.

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: I went out practically every day. It's really cheap. Reading the menu was sometimes a little challenging, but a lot of times they had menus in English and katakana. Oyakudan was my favorite. It had a scrambled egg on top of rice. And on top of the egg was the chicken. I did go to a lot of restaurants around my dorm, Matsuya had a lot of great meat platters.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: Absolutely.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: I used Line, like everyone in Japan used Line. It was nice because I didn't actually have a data plan. I only used wifi. There's a ton of wifi everywhere, free wifi on the bus and on the campus. I didn't have wifi in my dorm, but I learned how to make a hotspot.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Did you see a evidence of different religions?

A: There were a few churches. Japan doesn't really care about religion that much as they do in the US. It's not a part of your identity. I felt like they were pretty open to other religions from what I saw.

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: My language level was probably intermediate. When I first got there, I felt really overwhelmed by everything. That being said, Japanese is very accessible with all the English signage. The problem is when you want to order something or talk to someone, I had to speak Japanese. When I first got to Japan, I stayed at an Airbnb, which is when I really experienced the most culture shock.

Q: Japan has had a few issues around race, did you experience that or see that?

A: I felt like I was sometimes looked like as a novelty. For them, race is something that is unknown than it is prejudice. I did have a lot of people who would try to talk to me in English.

Q: Japan can be very formal; did you feel uncomfortable?

A: I think so. Especially when I just got there, with subtle etiquette. It's a little passive aggressive. For example, in elevators people who stand are on the left, people who walk are on the right. I think a lot of my faux pas came from miscommunication with the language. The Under Armour office is not traditionally Japanese so it was not as formal. But there were definitely some business etiquette there but with American roots. I was the first intern they had ever had.

Q: What was the hardest thing to adjust to?

A: I would have to say anything language related.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since Japan is such a collectivist culture?

A: A lot of times the group I had at work were the ones who spoke English. So there were times that I felt uncomfortable or awkward.

Administrative

Q: Did you see anything different about the government?

A: I felt like the government was not as controversial. People did not seem as vocal.

Q: How did you feel when Trump met with Prime Minister Abe?

A: I thought it was a little pandering on Abe's part since Trump had already thrown out the TPP, something we talked about in class. From my WTO class, I'm more for the TPP especially for the longer picture. Not super passionate about it.

Q: Did you feel safe?

A: I always felt safe. I could go to a convenience store at 2am and feel super safe.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in Japan?

A: I think my parents were very excited about it since they hadn't gone abroad. I communicated with them a lot and got a few care packages. My mom followed the news quite often.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13 hours ahead

Q: Hard to communicate?

A: I had a GroupMe with my friends and just posted when I wanted. I usually stayed up pretty late and facetime my parents during their morning, maybe once a week.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 102 yen per dollar.

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: I think so. Food was definitely cheaper. Getting a pass was definitely cheaper than buying a ticket each time.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: Yes, I had a scholarship through the school that helped with the finances.

Q: How much was your dorm?

A: I paid monthly about 700 USD. But they served two meals a day for free. I also paid extra for a refrigerator in my room.

Q: Any interesting business interactions, especially in your internship?

A: Definitely the internship but just as well the Japanese train rushes. Even though they have some American rooting, there is still some Japanese formalities. People were very respectful and courteous to managers, whereas managers were more laid back.

Q: Did you have a bank account?

A: I did not. I just transferred money with a deal with Bank of America. I just used cash while I was there and debit to draw out cash.

Culture Shock

Q: What was it like going to Japan and then as soon as you came back, having to go to USC?

A: It was a little jarring, not a lot of time to rest. I became quite nostalgic and appreciated Japan more when I came back.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to Japan?

A: Maybe 2 – 3 weeks.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in Japan?

A: Data, having my own car, being able to use debit cards more.

Q: What do you miss the most about Japan now that you are back?

A: I miss the way the city is organized, the infrastructure – everything has a purpose. They don't take the land for granted. It really has its own charm.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I would try to travel more and join a club. I also went to Okinawa and Sendai, over Golden week. I went to some beautiful bays and natural landscape.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: Yeah, I did – I shared with a lot of family and friends and through surveys the University sent out.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: I missed having a nice summer being able to work.

Q: How long do you think you took to feel adjusted back in the US?

A: Couldn't be more than a week. A lot easier.

Q: Were you ready to leave Japan and the US?

A: I was really excited to go to Japan, especially when I had that teaser. I definitely felt ready to go back and be in America but I also miss a lot of Japan.

Q: Do you feel that Japan has helped you to prepare for future travels?

A: I think so. Jobwise, I think it helped a lot.

Q: What was your perception of Asians before you left? And did it change going to Japan?

A: Not so much Asians than the Japanese culture. There were a lot of things I didn't expect to see. But things that I expected to see, I did see but maybe not to the level I thought.

JESSICA THIERGARTNER



Keio University



TOKYO, JAPAN

KEIO UNIVERSITY

Jessica Thiergartner

International Business and Global Supply Chain and
Operations Management

"After Japan, I feel very prepared
for future travels abroad. I also
feel more self-confident,
professionally."



Shinjuku Gyoen

"Immerse yourself in the culture,
not just the schoolwork"

Exploring Tokyo and beyond

- Previous exposure to Japan: Had a free trip through USC to Japan over winter break
- Favorite places to visit in Tokyo: Asakusa (temples and shrines), Tsukiji (the fish market), Shinjuku park (beautiful landscapes and gardens)
- Favorite places outside Tokyo: Kyoto, Osaka, and Onsen
- When to travel: Golden Week
- Favorite activities: Trying new food, clubbing, and karaoke
- Favorite place for food: Yoshin, near lower campus
- Money: spent around 50 USD a week, had to open a bank account there in order to pay rent
- Transportation: train, student pass is available
- What I miss the most about Japan: the ability to get on a train and go anywhere, and of course, all the food

- University Language Level: Level 1
- Classes: Competing in Emerging Markets, History of Southeast Asia, and International Finance
- Organizations: open to international students, esp. Plureo, a club for intl. students to meet one another
- Internship: hard to find because of the Japanese school schedule, but winter internships are available
- Housing: off-campus dorm, really nice rooms with no roommate, own bathroom, and shared kitchen
- Registration process: chaotic, USC is in a different study abroad program than other universities
- Dining: two cafeterias on campus, both very cheap
- Transportation on campus: walking and a 45 minute train to get to campus
- Advice for future students: Attend the club fair, gives you a lot of interaction with local students and culture



Nagoya Castle

Name: Jessica Thiergartner

From Severna Park, Maryland

Major(s): IB, GSCOM

Minor/Language: Japanese

School attended and city: Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

Career goals: international logistics manager and I really want to work in Asian Pacific manager. I would love to work abroad.

Q: How many times have you been in Japan?

A: I got to go to on the free week long trip to Japan, which was interesting and my first time out of the country. For every meal, there was always a side of fries. The spring semester was my first long term trip in Japan though.

Q: Did you travel outside of Japan during your semester?

A: I only traveled within Japan.

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: First time abroad.

Q: Why did you choose to go to Japan? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: Keio was first choice. Tokyo is kind of the only choice. I chose Japanese, because I loved the food and thought the culture was interesting. Japanese is not tonal and there are different forms such as the Honorific system, which you use for people of different statuses.

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: Dorm to campus: hour long commute, 15-minute walk and a 45-minute train ride. I walked when I was on campus. There are 5 different campuses, but they're all very small.

Q: When did school start and end?

A: Beginning of April and ended the beginning of August.

Q: Where did you eat?

A: There are two campus cafeterias that are very cheap. I ate primarily on campus, but also ate in downtown Tokyo. Plenty of food options.

Q: Cleanliness?

A: Everything is very clean. It's so clean that people keep trash in their own bag.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: Dorm that was off campus with primarily athletes and exchange students, but completely separate. No roommates. Single bedroom, single bathroom, shared kitchen. The rooms were really nice.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: A little chaotic. USC is in a different study abroad program from other international students, different standards so we also had a different orientation. We were also restricted in what classes we could take.

Q: What was it like having your semester so late?

A: I went back to Maryland, which was actually extremely convenient because I had to find a winter internship. I ended up working for Shealy Electrical Wholesalers in Charleston and really enjoyed the period off.

Q: Did you join any student organizations?

A: I joined the official lacrosse team. The best way to learn about the Japanese culture is through sports. I also joined Plurio, club for international students to meet other international students.

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: Mostly international because of my dorm situation. It was hard to make friends in lacrosse, since they were already a tight knit group. A lot of them had never really interacted with international students. I felt really uncomfortable, but also accepted. I had to wear a suit to games and the girls had to use the honorific system. It's very hierarchal in Japanese team sports. Freshman had to be very formal with seniors, constant bowing. There's very little interaction between girls who are in different grades. I was in a group chat with only juniors, girls my age. It was a little bit more relaxed for me because I was the only international student that year on the team.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: Paired up with a junior.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: 12 classes that meet only once a week: Japanese, Competing in Emerging Markets, History of Southeast Asia, Globalization, International Finance. I didn't feel like I had a lot of options to choose from; I really enjoyed Competing in Emerging Markets and Southeast Asia.

Q: English classes?

A: Yes. You can take classes in Japanese when you take the placement test. My classes were a mix of Japanese and International students. There was a good mix of local and international students depending on the department offering the class.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: In classes for international students, everyone had to do group projects. Classic Japanese class – lecture. There weren't high expectations because there are so many international students and English not being the first language for local students. No homework for most classes, sometimes just a short paper and then the group project which had local students. In class, Japanese students more quiet. For my Japanese language classes, I tested into Lower intermediate Japanese, which I felt was a really good level.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Yes, all international students are at the same campus. I hung out a lot with USC students and was already friends with them.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: I tried to stay on campus since its so far. The actual location of the campus is really convenient since its downtown.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: Go to the organization fair (they don't tell you about it). A lot of the clubs are quite welcoming. It really gets you interaction with Japanese students.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: Within Tokyo:

Asakusa: beautiful temples and shrines, souvenirs, and food

Tsukiji: Fish market, super fresh sushi

Shinjuku koen: Shinjuku park, very cheap with French English and Japanese sections with beautiful landscapes and gardens.

Within Japan:

Kyoto, see every shrine that you can

Osaka, right by Kyoto, very jokey more chill and immature – really great local food

Onsen: outdoor hot springs, more in the countryside

I traveled during Golden Week where the entire country gets off, and during exam week if my classes didn't have finals.

Q: Favorite activities?

A: Clubbing, the legal age is 20. The train shuts down from 1am to 5am. Because you're so far, it's hard to get taxis. I would definitely recommend Jumanji, where you can get all you can drink for 2 hours. For a lack of personal space, go to international clubs. Go eat in different places. Oh, and definitely go to Karaoke for some food, drinks, and a great time.

Q: How did you get around?

A: The train, it's very expensive but I was able to get student pass (one time 300 USD).

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: Food in Japan is really cheap, there are of course, higher-end restaurants. Didn't eat out that much though, I utilized the kitchen quite a bit. Ate out maybe 3 times a week. Would recommend Yoshin, by the station, near lower campus has great don. Oh, and rice sashimi. It can be hard to eat out because of language. It's easy to get (Japanese) Italian food or deserts at French pastry shops.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: Apps: Line. Google Maps. And there's an app out there that tells you what public transportation to use to get to your destination which is fantastic. And there's a three-month free trial.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Religion?

A: I identify as Christian, but haven't been to church in a long time. I was pretty comfortable around temples and shrines, and would go with the customs and pray, throw in the coin. Shinto and Buddhism are the primary religions, but the shrines and temples are more of way of life and historical tradition.

Q: How did you get around with the language?

A: I was able to speak at a casual level, which was good for traveling and hostels, but students there didn't speak English which made it harder to meet local students. Shops in Tokyo are generally English-friendly, since its very tourist-y.

Q: Japan as had a few issues around race? Did you experience that or see that?

A: Japan is very insular in some ways. They really value being "fully" Japanese and for people to stay in Japan. Even for my friend who is half Japanese faced some discrimination while we were there.

Q: Japan can be very formal; did you feel uncomfortable?

A: Day to day, it didn't really affect me. But yes in formal settings, like the lacrosse team. Each morning, we would bow to the field and had confession circles.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since Japan is such a collectivist culture?

A: Yes, even at practice, only some people would greet me. The team was really big – almost 200 people. One girl, who had studied abroad in the US knew how I felt and so she was more friendly to me.

Administrative

Q: Did you see anything different about the government?

A: People don't talk about politics. Younger generation doesn't really vote or take interest.

Q: How did you feel when Trump met with Prime Minister Abe?

A: Occasionally, but mostly by Europeans or students who had more Western exposure would bring it up. Also, my professor would bring it up.

Q: Did you feel safe?

A: Absolutely. Traveled a lot by myself. More likely to be attacked by a foreigner than someone in Japan.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in Japan?

A: I had a two-year fight with my parents, and eventually I convinced my parents about how safe it was. They wanted me to be closer or in England. Now, they're very supportive of me working abroad in the future.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13-hour time difference.

Q: Hard to communicate?

A: I rarely called back home, but usually Lined (app) with my parents. I got an international addition for my plan, but I would recommend getting a cheap SIM card there. You also get a lot more data through it.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1 dollar is about 100 yen

Q: Were things cheaper?

A: Pretty much cheaper. Transportation and groceries was pretty expensive. Shopping was expensive. Anything fish related, amazing. I spent maybe around 50 USD a week.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: Yes. About the same as I would spend at USC.

Q: Rent?

A: Half of what I pay at USC

Q: Did you have a bank account while abroad

A: I had to open a bank account.

Culture Shock

Q: What was it like going to Japan and then as soon as you came back, having to go to USC?

A: I wish I had gone directly to Japan and not had that waiting period. I was a little bit impatient. Coming back was terrible. My classes were so chill and I had to come back and immediately start studying again.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to Japan?

A: Just a couple weeks once I figured out the subway and campus.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in Japan?

A: Food. Sandwiches are rare in Japan.

Q: What do you miss the most about Japan now that you are back?

A: Being able to get on a train and go anywhere in the country. And of course, all the food.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: Immerse yourself in the culture rather than the schoolwork. Four months is actually so short, so I wish I took advantage of Fridays and explored the city more.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: I talked to my family a little bit. I talked the most in depth with my roommates who also studied abroad. I didn't talk to friends that much when I was abroad.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: Internships and the last summer of college. I felt pretty updated with the news, since we talked a lot over dinner with international students.

Q: How long do you think you took to feel adjusted back in the US and Japan?

A: It wasn't too long for either.

Q: Were you ready to leave Japan and the US?

A: I wish I did a whole year of Japan; I was not ready to leave. I felt very ready to leave the US.

Q: Do you think your semester in Japan has helped prepare you for future travels?

A: Feel very prepared to study abroad or travel to other countries. I also felt much more self-confident. When I came back to USC, I was acing interviews.

SHELBY OLSEN



SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

YONSEI UNIVERSITY

Shelby Olsen

HR Management, Finance

- **University Language Level:** Level 1
- **Semester Start and End:** Early March to Mid-June
- **Why Yonsei:** not a mainstream location, and downtown is right across the street
- **Classes:** Operational management, Introduction to Marketing, Strategic Management, Religions in East Asia, Political Science
- **Workload and teaching style:** a lot of group projects and mostly lecture-based classes
- **Housing:** international dorm with shared bathroom
- **Registration process:** a love-hate relationship, very organized, but make sure you do some research
- **Dining:** dining hall on campus and local restaurants in Sinchon, Seoul
- **Transportation on campus:** campus is small enough to walk anywhere
- **Advice for future students:** join organizations, reach out to local students, and visit outside of campus more

"Going to a country where you don't know the language is really encouraging and helpful for future experiences."



Bukhansan Mt.

Getting to know Seoul



Gamcheon Cultural Village

- **Previous exposure to Korea:** 1st time in Asia
- **Favorite places to visit:** Bukhansan, Jaunbong, Busan, and Gamcheon cultural village
- **Favorite activities:** hiking and waiting for the train at 5 in the morning
- **Favorite foods:** Korean barbecue and a local dish - cracked egg in soup paired with rice (be careful, Korean food can be extremely spicy)
- **Money:** bank account with bank on campus
- **Transportation:** walking or the subway, taxis are harder to use because the drivers don't speak English
- **Safety:** other than the occasional military practice from North Korea, it's extremely safe
- **What I miss the most about Korea:** easy transportation, shared meals, the nightlife, and definitely the food

Name: Shelby Olsen

From: Charleston, SC

Major(s): HR Management and Finance

Minor/Language: Chinese

School attended and city: Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea

Career Goals: I want to go into finance or accounting. I'm looking at finance related jobs in Charleston and Greenville.

Q: How many times have you been in Korea?

A: It was my first time in Asia

Q: Did you travel outside of Korea during your semester?

A: No

Q: How many times have you been outside of the US?

A: I studied abroad in high school in Switzerland

Q: Why did you choose to go to Korea? Why that specific city? Was it your first choice?

A: It was my first choice through the IB program. I was a Chinese minor because I wanted to educate myself on the Asian culture and USC doesn't offer any other Asian cultures. I wanted something not so mainstream as China, and I wanted another cultural perspective

About the University

Q: How did you get around campus?

A: I walked. Campus is small enough that you can just walk everywhere.

Q: When did school start and end?

A: Began the 1st of March ending Mid-June

Q: Where did you eat on campus?

A: I actually ate in the dining hall a lot, especially for lunch. By the time I left I had seven go to restaurants in Sinchon, the part of Seoul I was in.

Q: How clean was campus?

A: Really clean. I was really impressed. There was just a little air pollution.

Q: Where did you live? Did you have a roommate?

A: I lived in the international student dorm. I shared a freshman style dorm with a roommate. We shared a bathroom. I still keep in touch with her. There was a kitchen downstairs, but not a full blown kitchen.

Q: How was the registration process?

A: It was a love-hate relationship. Yonsei is very organized, but not very helpful. My registration packet got lost in customs. I had a big issue wiring payment (the only way they would accept the payment) for housing internationally – small US banks require extra information the school wasn't willing to give and the school was not very helpful. Class registration was okay, except that I was told that I would be able to take Chinese 322 there and I was not able to when I got there.

Q: Were you in any student organizations?

A: Yes. I joined the all-boys engineering baseball team. I practiced with them one to two times a week, but we were not allowed to play in the games. I got to throw the first pitch in the championship game. There was another

international student who also joined. It was a complete accident that I had joined; I had played baseball growing up. I wanted to know when their games were so I could watch, but somehow I showed up to a practice and was told I could play with them. They were really nice and made my experience better. A lot of international students had trouble befriending Korean students, but I had my baseball team.

Q: Were you friends with locals or mostly international students? Did you try to make certain friends?

A: 75% were probably international and the other 25% were Korean, my baseball team. They were so nice – they took me to karaoke and showed me how to use Korean chopsticks properly.

Q: Did you have a buddy?

A: I signed up for a program but no one ever contacted me.

Q: What classes did you take? Which ones would you recommend?

A: 3 businesses classes and 2 culture based classes. Operational management, Intro to marketing, strategic management, religions in East Asia, and a political science course taught by a business professor (political business relations between major Asian countries and China). I would definitely recommend the religions class, I liked the political science course, but not the professor. I also really liked the marketing professor.

Q: Were any of your courses in English?

A: All in English.

Q: What was the teaching style like? What were the professor's expectations? What were the assignments like?

A: Definitely more lecture based, but that was just the professor's style, not necessarily a Korean classroom style. The religion class was more discussion, which I liked. All classes had attendance policies. I had a lot of group projects, but I think that's because it was the businesses classes I was in. Not a ton of individual homework.

I want to really note that Korean students can be very open in pointing out that others are wrong. In discussions, American classrooms are more encouraging where Korean students are more like "I'm right and this is why you're wrong." They would look up research to prove you wrong. Typical Korean classes only allow 70% of students to pass.

Q: Did you feel welcome on campus?

A: Yeah, overall. Local students weren't going to go out of their way to talk to you though.

Q: Did you stay on campus a lot?

A: Yeah, a good bit. Downtown is like right across the street though, which I researched before I went and it was one of the reasons why I really liked Yonsei.

Q: What advice do you have for students who are going to go to your university?

A: Join organizations, make the effort to approach students, and go visit outside of campus more.

About the City/Country

Q: What were your favorite places to visit?

A: I did a lot of hiking (Bukansan, Jaunbong) especially in Bukansan national park. I really like Busan. Gamchon cultural village was really cool. For activities, I loved karaoke. Nightlife is fun and really interesting – people just waited until the 5am train to go home.

Q: How did you get around?

A: I walked or took the subway. I did take taxis a couple of time, but they really didn't speak English. Uber is not a thing in Korea.

Q: How often did you go out to eat, how difficult was it, and what was your favorite?

A: I went out to eat a lot, not for lunch. I went out for dinner probably 4-5 times a week. Not expensive, the most I spent was probably around 8 USD. A lot of the menus have pictures which helped and after a while you pick up what character is what. I really liked Korean barbeque, I also really liked this soup that you cracked an egg in and paired with rice. Korean food is also extremely spicy.

Q: Would you ever work here? Visit?

A: I don't think I would work there, but I would definitely go back and visit.

Q: What apps did you use? What did you use for communication?

A: I used Kakaow Talk – I had to get one immediately. I got a local Samsung phone and paid monthly, it was total like 300USD for everything while I was there.

CAGE Framework

Culture

Q: Religion?

A: Christianity is very prominent there. I didn't go to church there. I don't remember a lot of students who really went.

Q: How did you get around with the language? Did you use Korean?

A: I probably knew like thirty words while I was there. There are enough things in English to get around. I had been abroad before so I knew how to get around without the language. Younger generation was learning language.

Q: What was the reaction to you being an American in Korea, was it normal for them or did they take interest?

A: They definitely took interest. Old Korean men would come up to me and give me compliments – it wasn't creepy or mean, it was just a genuine interest. They thought I was really funny. One time on the bus though, I got shushed because they don't talk on public transportation. I will say because I'm pretty short going clothes shopping was the best.

Q: Did you find it hard to fit in or be in a group since Korea can be a collectivist culture? Or was it easy since Korea is quite westernized in pop culture?

A: Yeah the pop culture is really cool. But it wasn't that hard to fit in. Like with the baseball team, it wasn't hard to fit in. They wouldn't talk to you because they were scared of their English skills but if I made an effort, it was reciprocated.

Q: Attitudes towards China and Japan?

A: Not the biggest fan of China. From what I could understand, China was more of a bully. They also blamed them for their air pollution. Historically, there are some instances where Korea doesn't like Japan.

Administrative

Q: Did you see anything different about the government? What was the attitude towards North Korea among people there?

A: I was over there when North Korea shot things into the sea. It was actually terrifying. In late March/early April the US and South Korea do a lot of joint practice. North Korea gets offended. I remember my professor saying "Let's hope North Korea doesn't blow up, we might not see each other Monday." It's not present on a

certain level but it's still kind of there. They try to ignore it, but you can tell it still frightens people. They don't really view themselves as South Korea or North Korea, it's always north and south. There's definitely a pity or sadness for the North Korean people. There's been a misunderstanding and people are stuck there. Korea is taking a more aggressive stance though. Nothing was going on with President Park yet until the fall when I was back in the US.

Q: What was it like with students being in military?

A: A lot of people will do it in between high school and college. It's just something that people have to do. It's a very expected norm and Seoul is like an hour from the DMZ.

Q: Did you feel safe?

A: Extremely safe. I never felt creeped out or approached unnecessarily.

Geographic

Q: How did your parents feel about you being in Korea?

A: My mom works for Homeland Security so she was not that excited. But more excited for Korea than China. Especially after China had hacked government information. She was definitely worried about me, not on a day to day basis. She was not that excited about the political atmosphere.

Q: Time zone?

A: 13 hours ahead, but changed to 12 hours.

Q: Was it hard to communicate back home?

A: No, not really. Only problem I had was my boyfriend not being able to work his Skype. We've been dating for 5 years, but time difference actually made it easier we talked when someone was going to sleep or waking up. I had family and friends download WhatsApp.

Q: How easy is it to travel outside of Korea?

A: I think I had multiple entries, but I was on a budget so I knew that I wasn't going to be leaving Korea. I know a lot of people did a lot of traveling. The visa process overall was pretty easy.

Economic

Q: What is the exchange rate?

A: 1000 won is like the smallest bill, but for every 1USD is like 1200 won.

Q: How did you pay for things?

A: I immediately got there and set up a bank account. They had a student bank on campus. I converted USD to local currency at my layover in Chicago to help me out the first few days. Every two weeks, I would take out roughly 350000 Korean Won (about 300 bucks) from my domestic bank account and then deposit it into my own Korean account. If I had been able to wire a bunch of money at a time it would have been easier, but I have a really small bank at home.

Q: Were things cheaper in Korea?

A: Yeah, I probably spent more on food than usual because I didn't have my own kitchen.

Q: Did you feel like you had enough?

A: The first month I spent a lot because of food shopping upfront, but I started to budget more and it was fine.

Culture Shock

Q: What was it like coming back to US? Did you do an internship?

A: I came back end of June, and worked at a marina, managing. I had a couple of internship offers but because I was coming back so late, they wouldn't take me.

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to the US?

A: I was excited to be back. I definitely had some homesick stages there but it was mostly because of the drop changes with my major and relationship distance. I felt pretty ready to come home though. I didn't have that much reverse culture shock because I had studied a year in Switzerland in high school and that really took me like 6 months. I maybe had like a few weeks of culture shock. Driving again is always weird. As soon as I got back I had to work so it kind of helped me keep my mind off of it

Q: How long did it take you to adjust to Korea?

A: It probably took me a good six weeks. Two months in I really felt like myself. The first two weeks were really hard because I felt like other exchange students knew a lot about Korea. After a while, I found out that what they knew was really just what they researched. 6 weeks though I had solid friends and a routine.

Q: What did you miss the most about the US when you were in Korea?

A: People and forks.

Q: What do you miss the most about Korea now that you are back?

A: Probably transportation. The nightlife – there's so much more to do. I also missed sharing meals. Definitely the food.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I wish I would have traveled more, maybe Japan, China and Southeast Asia.

Q: Did you talk to people about your experience abroad?

A: Pretty surface level. But even now, on my resume, people are really interested in the fact that I went to Korea. I talked to close relationships in depth about my experience.

Q: Did you feel like you missed out on anything while you were abroad?

A: I missed out on a relationship anniversary. Would not recommend a new brand new relationship going into study abroad. When I was there I felt like I was missing out, but now that I look back, it was nothing. Would not recommend calling home every day – immerse yourself in the culture there.

Q: Were you ready to leave Korea and the US?

A: I felt pretty ready to leave Korea. I was definitely nervous to leave the US because I had never been before, but I didn't doubt the experience I would have. The first few days I was a little apprehensive.

Q: Do you think going to Korea helped you prepare to travel to other places?

A: Oh yeah, for sure. Going to a country that you don't know the language is really encouraging and helpful for future experiences.