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On March 15, 2015, I had the opportunity to travel to Suzhou, China, for a 2 month internship at an international head hunting agency, CFR. I've always been a big fan of travelling abroad and experiencing new cultures, so as soon as I was given the chance, I took it. My lifelong goal is to travel worldwide, and I was extremely fortunate to have been chosen to go.

Before going was a bit of a hassle, I only had a month or so to get everything together before leaving for two months. I have a pet cat, and finding a home for him while I'd be gone for the next 2 months proved to be a difficult task, but luckily my family stepped in to help and he moved in with my uncle in their beautiful family home. He loved it so much, he's even still there! On top of kitty's accommodations, I had to apply for a visa to enter China and make sure my work place was in order. Originally, I was supposed to have a video interview via Skype with my soon-to-be co-workers from China, but the time difference made that difficult so I just had to wait until I was actually in the country.

We travelled as a group of 8 altogether. It was a little intimidating for all of us to go to a new country with a completely different culture, but we were all excited and got along very well. As soon as we arrived to Shanghai, hungry, sleep-deprived, anxious and excited, we stuck to each other like an adopted family.

The first week was the hardest. Being introduced to the food was hard for some people, and using chopsticks 24/7 was interesting to say the least. Luckily we didn't have much problem with them! The range of all kinds of products in the super markets was fascinating as much as it was confusing. None of us knew what anything was, ever. We would find something with some funny looking images on it, or that looked slightly familiar, or something that had at least one English word on the package, and give it a try. We really tried so many new food items in our first week. No one held back when it came to adventurousness! It was quite difficult, though, to get anything else done. We had to get Chinese sim-cards for our phones, but even with our international coordinator, the English speaking students of the college, internet translators and big bosses, it was nearly impossible to do. It took 3 days of returning to the same mobile shop before they could make us a sim-card. To say the least, it was frustrating.

Most of the communication we tried to do with other students, our colleagues and just general people around us, fell flat. The students at the college who were meant to help us were incredibly shy and could not explain anything to us in a way we could understand. Similarly, we couldn't seem to get them to understand how confused we were. It caused some issues down the line as they considered us

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as being disrespectful for not following what they were trying to teach us, but all the conflict got resolved in the end. I was otherwise incredibly lucky because my colleagues were incredibly open and accepted me into their office family very happily and willingly. Their language skills were not great, not even those of my boss, but I was there to help them learn after all and they were willing to try.

Living at the college was a lot of fun. We were given free housing in the college campus' dormitory in some very nice two-person shared rooms. It was very easy-going, we got to choose our roommates and set up our space as we liked. It was very cosy, living altogether, it provided a safe hub for us when we came back from our work places, even if we were having a hard time we could hang out together and support each other. We weren't allowed to cook in our rooms, other than instant noodles and teas, but the college had a canteen on grounds that had just about anything you could think of—of Chinese cuisine. Honestly, it was great, there was lots of delicious food, including a supermarket for snacks, and the college provided us with a little bit of money to spend on it all. There was a doctor on campus, a barber, a laundry machine, pretty much everything you'd need. Other than our mattresses being rock hard and made of bricks, it was great.

My OTJL place was a lot of fun. I mentioned before, it was a head hunting agency called CFR; mainly an international company, but the office I was stationed in worked primarily for Chinese companies and the like. My job was to introduce English into the office atmosphere, challenge my co-workers to speak English, perform interviews with clients in English, aid my co-workers with interviews in English, edit and construct English scripts for my co-workers to use, conduct market research of the company's clients (in English) and create presentations based on that research and on other enlightening information about international and local investments Chinese companies have made, co-operations between China and other countries, and information about other countries and cultures. Aside from that office work, I was also responsible for getting the office together outside working hours to tour different parts of the city or go play badminton or generally spend time together. Needless to say, I was never bored. My co-workers were so much fun, as well. There were 4 teams of 2-4, each relating to a specific field, either Manufacturing, Real-Estate, Pharmaceuticals or Automotive. The timetables, working hours, lunch break, etc were all similar to in Finland, very fair and regular. The hierarchy was similar to. The company itself is originally western founded, so they followed western traditions and structures of business.

Our free time was often our busiest time while we were there. The college had organised different things for us to do from day one- and in fact even on day one, we were pulled around Suzhou

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from the moment we arrived until 9 pm, when we all passed out. We were taken on tours, introduced to the history of Suzhou, taken shopping, taken to play sports such as Ping-Pong and Badminton. Usual days after work we would join up together and go shopping or play some basketball on campus. It was quite rare to get a day off. The good thing for all of us was that transport and general expenses were quite cheap, as long as you stayed local. Souvenirs, imported goods, anything like that would cost an arm and a leg. But otherwise, incredibly cheap compared to Finland.

When I went to China, I intended to get myself to break out of my shell, meet new people and experience the new culture without hesitation. I wanted to do well at my work place and do as much in China that I could, and I managed to do all of it! We travelled to Shanghai, to Beijing, I got to travel with my co-worker to her hometown of Taizhou, we experienced all of Suzhou; it was great. It went above and beyond any expectations I had. I think most importantly I learned that differences don't keep people apart, anyone from anywhere can get along with each other, it's just a matter of opening your mind.

Although it would have definitely helped to have learned some Chinese before going, I had to say there was very little that went wrong or that I would have changed. I would suggest to others to TAKE YOUR MEDICINES AND THINGS WITH YOU. The climate, food and everything is so different, you will get sick. And my mistake was not having been prepared for just how sick, and how many times, I got.