

6 Reasons Everyone Should Intern, Study, or Work in China (At Least Once)

China is home to over 1.3 billion people, the world's second largest economy, and international powerhouses like Alibaba, Tencent, and Wanda Group. You'll find countless products in the US that are "Made in China" and every day US-based companies are trying to figure out how to appeal to Chinese consumers. No matter what industry you're looking to enter after graduation, China will definitely play a part in something that you do.

I stumbled into Chinese at my summer orientation at UVA in 2010 when Chinese and Urdu were the only available 101 classes at my sign-up time. I found myself barely getting through my first year of Chinese, but I decided to do the UVA in Shanghai summer program to finish my two-year language requirement. It was one of the best decisions I'd ever made as I went on to study abroad a second time in China with the McIntire school and eventually moved to Shanghai after graduation.

A summer program is a great way to challenge yourself and get a glimpse at what life would be like living in another country. In China, you don't necessarily need to know the language to live there but it definitely helps. Whether you're thinking about taking the leap to learn about a new culture, improve your Chinese language skills, or gain work experience in an international company, here are just a few of the reasons why you should seriously consider spending a summer in China:

- 1. New Culture** - China was the first country I visited outside of North America and I really had no idea what I was getting into when I stepped off the plane. I knew it would be challenging but I really couldn't have guessed how much I would learn about my own culture and "norms" until I lived somewhere that really was on the entire other side of the spectrum. I've learned to question why I think about things in a certain way and how to work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. China will surprise you, challenge you, and show you how to get comfortable being outside your comfort zone.
- 2. Improve Your Language Skills** – No matter if you think you're fluent or know nothing about Chinese, you will start to pick up on phrases and words that you can use in daily life. If you're studying Chinese, you'll learn how to apply that to every day conversations. For me, studying in China helped me build my confidence in my language ability and I found that many people were happy to help me work through words I didn't know or remember. Immersing yourself in the culture and country will help you improve your language skills by leaps and bounds.
- 3. Quality of Life** – I like to compare Shanghai to New York, as it has a similar energy, number of work opportunities, and pace of life. But thankfully, you get the New York experience without that New York price tag. I love that I can get my \$4 coffee right down the street from my \$1 *jianbing*, a delicious pancake-like wrap that is a local breakfast staple. Shanghai and China are really what you want to make of it. If you want to spend \$40 a day, you definitely can but if you're looking to live off of a student

budget, it's the perfect place to study abroad and work since you know it's not going to break your bank account. Rent is very affordable and no US city can even compete with the low-cost and convenient public transportation options. You'll find me riding a Mobike, a shared-bike that costs less than \$0.20 per hour to ride, every day or hopping on the subway for less than \$0.50 per ride.

4. **Gateway to Asia** – When I first got on the plane to move to China, I knew that I loved China but I was really excited to explore more of what Asia had to offer. China was the first stamp in my passport but since moving there, I've explored Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines. Instead of planning just one big trip a year to explore, you can spend a weekend in a new country. I've grown to love China but also love its surroundings: getting lost in the Ramen Museum in Tokyo, learning to scuba dive in Thailand, and relaxing by the pool in Macau.
5. **Do Something Different** – This is my personal favorite reason for why you should study or work in China. Your summer in China will help you stand out from other candidates and recent graduates when you start looking for a job. Very few Americans have visited China, let alone lived there for a summer. You'll find when you go back home that your summer in China will be a highlight on your CV, with interviewers, friends, and family all wanting to know "What is China really like? What did you think? Do they really eat dog there?" (The answer to that last one is no). Use your summer to help you do something different that showcases that you're not afraid of new things or taking on new challenges.
6. **Why Not?** – When people ask me why I decided to move to China or even really study abroad the first time, I can boil my answer down to "Why not?" I know that if I didn't try to go to China, I would always wonder *what if?* If I'd stayed in the US, I was sure I'd occasionally picture another version of me living in China and I wanted to at least try to be that person. My worst-case scenario was that would only last for six months and the worst that happens is that I have to move home and admit to my friends and family that I'd tried and it hadn't worked out. In terms of worst-cases, this one didn't seem as bad as forever wondering what would have happened if I'd gone to China.

Your summer opportunities as a student are the perfect time to try something new and shake up your routine. China might seem scary or daunting right now but you won't regret spending a summer trying something different and exploring the world's largest economy. If you're interested in studying or working abroad this summer, check out [UVA's Academic Internship](#) and [UVA in Shanghai language programs](#). If you have any more questions about living, working or studying in China, feel free to send me an email at logan@loganstrategygroup.com.