SHANGHAI EXCHANGE STUDENT Q&A

Potential questions and answers on spending a semester or two in Shanghai, China. All assumptions I make are based on my own experience and perception of Shanghai and China.

I arrived in Shanghai on September 1st 2010 and left on July 20th 2011. Going to China was one of the best things I’ve ever done, so I highly recommend it.

Michael Thelin (thelinmichael@gmail.com)
30th July 2011

As a Computer Science student at Tongji University, I have added information that is specific to the university and its campus in Jiading. This information is contained within a frame like this one.

Shanghai’s famous skyline.
WARNINGS

1. Where should I be extra careful of scammers in Shanghai?

Touristy places such as

- People’s Square and People’s Park
- East Nanjing Road (the busiest shopping street)
- West Nanjing Road and adjacent streets
- Jing An Temple Area

2. What type of people would typically try to scam me?

Young people, around 18-22 years of age, usually working in groups. They oftentimes claim to be students looking for someone to practice English with. They can also claim to be into art and wants you to come along to an art gallery.

3. How do they approach me?

They act as if they just bumped into you on their way somewhere. It happens that they need help with taking a picture of themselves, trying to find a casual way to start a conversation.

4. What is the scam?

**Buying tea or alcohol for ridiculous prices.** The reason they wanted you to come along, whether it was to practice English, enjoy a traditional tea ceremony or to see an art gallery, is to join for a drink. You can find all kinds of war stories online, written by people who have paid everything from 300 to 1500 RMB for a cup of tea or a glass of otherwise cheap whiskey.

5. Are they dangerous?

They scammers you meet in streets are not dangerous. I’ve heard that people who have refused to pay the bill have been threatened with physical violence.

SHOPPING CLOTHES, ELECTRONICS

1. Is electronics much cheaper than in Europe or the U.S.?

No. Electronic equipment such as computers and cameras are sold for about the same price as in Europe. If you’re looking for a good deal, head down to
Hong Kong where the taxes are much lower and have a great vacation at the same time.

2. Where can I get clothes tailored made?

One of the larger tailor markets is located 500 meters away from Nanpu Bridge on Metro Line 4. Never forget to bargain.

3. Where can I get fake clothes?

Huge amounts of fake clothes are being sold in the open. The quality is of course lower, but if you think it is worth it, check out of the most popular fake markets inside the Science and Technology Museum metro station on Metro Line 2.

4. Can you give me some price examples?

The sales staff are excellent actors and can give you a start price that is 500% or more of what they are really willing to sell for. If a sale is going way too easy, you’re likely to make a bad deal. The sales staff should be annoyed with you when you walk away.

- Canada Goose Jacket, 180-250 RMB.
- Gant or La Coste Polo, 25 RMB.
- Mahjong board game in bamboo and plastic, 140 RMB.
- Calvin Klein underwear, 15 RMB.
- Socks, 5 RMB.
- Tailored shirt, 80 RMB.
- Samsonite medium size suitcase, 200 RMB.

WEATHER AND POLLUTION

1. People claim that the Shanghainese winter is horrible. Is that really true?

I didn’t think anything of it when classmates told me that they really disliked the winters. The medium temperature during day time in January is -3 to -5 degrees, which is not a new experience for people who go to China on exchange.

China has drawn the line for Officially Cold Winters and Officially Warm Winters at the Yangtze River. South of this river, the weather is supposedly warm enough not to need radiators for heating.
Shanghai is south of the Yangtze River, thus officially not in need of radiator heating. Indoor temperature is seldom above 15 degrees without a big air conditioner.

So it is really not about the outside temperature, but about how life is indoors. Which is freezing. My room temperature was about 12-15 degrees during the entire winter. In desperation I tried burning candles and isolating the door and windows with clothes, as the only source for heat is body temperature and the air conditioner running in reverse. Buy an electric blanket so that you don’t need to sleep with your clothes on.

**Snow is very uncommon.** During last winter, it only snowed three times.

**Summer time is baking hot,** above 30 degrees is trivial. Sometimes the temperature shoots up to 38 degrees, and sometimes as low as 22-23. The humid climate makes the summer a pretty uncomfortable time to be outside in longer periods of time.
Utilizing umbrellas to get some shade is very common, especially among females. Picture is taken on East Nanjing Road, the largest shopping street in Shanghai.

I found late April – early June and late October – early December to be the best periods to be in Shanghai.

2. How bad is the pollution?

The most beautiful days are the days after heavy rain, when the dust and pollution particles have been washed away. These are clear days and you can even enjoy blue skies. On other days the pollution can be quite bad, sometimes so bad that you cannot see the horizon and have a hard time distinguishing buildings a kilometer away.

Even if you have asthma you should be OK. A friend of mine had mild asthma and never complained.

The rooms on campus will be very cold during the winter. Get an electric blanket and try to isolate the doors as a lot of cold air gets through there. Even an air conditioner running on 30 degrees for days doesn’t help. Be happy if you have a window facing the sun.

Summer time is no problem, the room never gets too hot when an air conditioner.
Campus area (my building) in mid January. About -8 degrees Celsius and as cool as it gets.

RESTROOMS

1. How common are Western style toilets?

In short, you’ll never be certain until you check. Places like hostels and hotels are likely to have both, but restaurants and malls can go either with only Chinese, only Western or both.

2. What is the standard like?

I have very little good to say about the restroom standard in China. Public bathrooms are oftentimes beyond disgusting, and you can smell them miles away.

- Pipes are too narrow. Most places require you to put used toilet paper in a basket next to the toilet. In public bathrooms, it is not uncommon to find tissues stained with feces face up in a basket just next to your feet.
- Toilets lack so called gas traps, allowing sulfuric gases to rise through the pipes and enter the bathrooms.

Also, always carry tissue with you. Toilet paper in bathrooms is rare.
1. What are clubs like in Shanghai?

Nightclubs and bars are concentrated to the French Concession. Fancier places are found around The Bund or the Lujiazui area in Pudong. Never visited the places close to The Bund, but I did visit out the bar on the 92nd floor of the Bottle opener (Shanghai World Financial Center). Definitely recommended to take your female friends there on Wednesday Ladies Night, as champagne is on the house until about 11 pm.

There’s different types of clubs in the French Concession, some with a lot of expats, some with less. The places with a larger Chinese clientele tends to fill the entire area with tables, with small dance floor gaps and usually a stage for the bravest. Tables are generally only available for the people who pay for them.

2. What’s the Chinese drinking culture like?

In my experience, the Chinese who visit nightclubs don’t spit in the glass. Most places around French Concession will stay open until 4-5 a.m., and it is pretty common to see both men and women sleeping at their reserved tables a few hours after midnight. This was not something that was frowned upon, maybe because sleeping in public is relatively common. Go to slow restaurants during lunch and you’ll find staff sleeping in the customer sofas.

3. How much will a night out cost me?

If you’re a female on a budget, and don’t like men buying you drinks, Wednesday seems to be the best option. Ladies night in Shanghai is concentrated to Wednesdays, and usually means free drinks until either 11 p.m. or the entire night.

An all-you-can-eat-and-drink Teppanyakis and similar buffets is a good way to start a night. Most places serve you for hours for about 160-180 RMB per head.

In the area around The Bund and Lujiazui, you can expect to pay the same as in Western countries, if not more. In the French Concession and bars around the Jing An area, prices are about 30%-50% of what prizes are in the West. All you can drink bracelets are sold in some places, the usual prize is 100 RMB. Paying for closets space and entrance happens, but is also relatively cheap. As mentioned, many places offer tables. And there’s a lot of tables. The ones closer to the dance floor and stage are usually much more expensive than the ones in the back, and cheaper ones go for about 1000 RMB. This also includes alcohol.
3. Can I find sports bars and regular pubs?

Yes. Check out Big Bamboo or Malones on Tongren Road.

- [http://www.bigbamboo.cn/](http://www.bigbamboo.cn/)

4. What’s that KTV place I see everywhere?

KTV is an insanely popular past time in China, and you should really let your Chinese classmates or colleagues show you how it is done. Simply stated, KTV is a place where you rent private rooms to sing karaoke in. Staff check on you regularly to offer you food and beverages for decent prices.

Tongji University (Jiading Campus) specific: The closest KTV is located in Jiading City. I do not think there’s one available in Anting, which is the closest suburban town. But since there’s so much construction going on all over the place, I would not be surprised if there’s already 3-4 different KTV’s in Anting already.
TRAVELING

1. When should I NOT travel?

**During the Chinese holidays** as everyone in China wants to go home to their family. The Spring Festival and the Autumn Festival means extreme price peaks and the trains fill up in no time.

Always travel during weekdays if you can.

2. Where can I go?

There’s so many places to go in China. I could personally have skipped the trip to Suzhou. I cannot recommend going there for more than one day.

Other than that.. There’s lots of places to go. I have compiled a few pictures taken in places that I am really happy I visited during my time in China.
Rice terraces at Longji. Close to Guilin in Guangxi province.

Yangshuo in Guangxi province.
Yellow mountains. Anhui province

The Great Wall at Mutianyu, just north of Beijing.
Me with two classmates outside the Forbidden City, Beijing.

Hong Kong.
West Lake in Hangzhou, capital of the Zhejiang province.

Outside of Nanjing, capital of the Jiangsu province.
3. How is traveling by train versus airplane?

The standard of Chinese trains vary from some of the worst you’ve seen to the ultra modern. The fastest trains run in 350 km/h and are an excellent way to go between Shanghai and close by cities such as Nanjing and Hangzhou. They are also relatively cheap and depart all the time. Going longer trips usually require you to take lower standard trains, such as K or T-trains (bullet trains are prefixed D or G).

There’s four different classes: Soft sleeper, hard sleeper, soft seat, hard seat.

I personally travelled 22 hours in the hard seat section, which is naturally the cheapest (getting tickets in time is no joke, be very early). The tickets are cheap, Shanghai – Guilin takes almost an entire day and costs 190 RMB or 90 RMB if you are a student. Really, get at least soft seats if they’re available!

Hard seat class in a train from Shanghai to Guilin. The people who are standing did so for 22 hours. Warm, noisy and dirty. If you are easily uncomfortable, put another 200 RMB to get into the Hard sleeper class.
Flights can be very cheap and is a good alternative to taking the train. I flew to both Beijing and Shenzhen for 550 RMB.

- Ctrip is a very popular online ticket agent. [http://www.ctrip.com](http://www.ctrip.com)

**SHANGHAI PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC**

1. *Is traffic as bad as I think?*

Yes. It is all a matter of size and aggressiveness.

- Bus > Truck > Car > Motorcycle > Scooter > Bicycle > Pedestrian

*Red lights are sometimes ignored.* Right turns are legal even at red light. Honking never stops. Functionality of car lanes (faster cars to the left, slower to the right) is ignored. One way streets are sometimes two way streets.

2. *How much does taxis cost?*

Taxis are everywhere. The first three kilometers cost 12 RMB. After that, it is something like 2.5 RMB or 4.5 RMB per kilometer depending on if it is at night. Very few drivers speak English. It is very good to have your destination written down on a piece of paper in Chinese characters.

3. *What’s the subway like?*

The subway network in Shanghai has quickly become the world’s largest network. It currently has 11 lines and is really cheap. Going from one side of town to the other is less than 10 yuan and takes more than 2 hours. The standard in the subway cars and subway stations is very good.


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The campus is located far away from downtown Shanghai. Taxis from the campus to downtown costs about 140 RMB and takes at least 45 minutes depending on traffic, where in downtown you want to go and if the driver takes the highway (10 RMB more in toll fee).

The cheaper but slower alternative is taking the subway. Firstly, you take a bus to the Shanghai Automobile City Metro Station on Line 11. The bus is 1 yuan and takes 5 minutes. After that, you ride the metro to Jiangsu Road which is the terminal station at the time of writing. There, you change to Line 2 and get off at for example People’s Square. About 90 minutes and costs 8 yuan.
GOOD AND BAD SPOTS IN SHANGHAI

1. What is worth visiting in Shanghai?

- **Shanghai Zoo.** 30 RMB. Metro station Shanghai Zoo on Line 10. Definitely worth a visit, although be prepared to see animals in smaller cages than normal.

Love at Shanghai Zoo.

Firefoxes (Red Panda) at Shanghai Zoo.
• **JingAn Temple.** 30 RMB. Metro station Jing An Temple on Line 2. Very close to downtown, and a very popular tourist attraction.

Jing An Temple.

• **The Bund.** This is the street facing the Huangpu river on the west side (Puxi). On your side of the river you have the old colonial buildings from the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and on the other side of the river (Pudong) you see Shanghai’s famous skyline with some of the tallest towers on Earth.
Grab coffee or tea at the **Jin Mao**. The second tallest building in Shanghai, the beautiful Jin Mao, has a café on the 54th floor. It is very expensive, about 50 yuan for a cup, but the view is amazing.

**Nanpu Bridge Tailor Market** and **Science and Technology Museum Fake Market**. These two are very typical foreigner destinations for clothes.

**Qi Bao**. A little touristy but cute and old part of Shanghai. Reachable by subway, station has the same name.
• **Huangpu River Cruise**. Costs about 100 yuan and takes a few hours. Wait until the Sun sets.

• **Shanghai Museum**. Free entrance and very close to the People’s Square. Too many things to view, so be selective.

• **Nanjing Road and Huaihai Road shopping streets**. For brand shopping.

• **Bookshops on Fuzhou Road**. Foreign books are found on the book street, parallel to Nanjing Road.

• **Malones Monday**. Incredibly large burger and a pint of beer for 50 yuan on Mondays. 150 yuan on other days.

• **Zapatas**. One of the best bars/clubs in my opinion, although a bit more expensive and with a somewhat older crowd than the regular places for people in their early 20s. Mostly expats. In the French Concession.

• **IKEA**. What kind of Swede would not mention IKEA? Good place to have meatballs, candy and buy high quality furniture for a good price.
The campus is close to some places worth a visit.

- Old part of **Anting** has Western restaurants (very authentic, some run by Germans), Chinese styled houses and a tall pagoda tower accessible for 10 yuan.
- **Jiading New City** has a large Confucius temple that is worth a visit.
- **Shanghai Circuit** is the place to see Formula 1 during the spring. Students are offered very cheap tickets, about 200 RMB per seat.

2. What is NOT worth visiting?

- The top (so called space capsule) of the **Oriental Pearl**. I did not think it was worth 150 RMB and wished I had paid just 120 RMB to get to the middle floor. It is a bit too crowded, and I did not see very well from the unclean windows anyway. I hear many good things about going to the top of the Jin Mao Tower, which is about the same price.
The Oriental Pearl is the most recognizable structure in Shanghai. It was the tallest building in China for almost a decade.

- **The Chinese Pavilion**, the only Pavilion remaining from the Shanghai World Expo 2010, is a very popular attraction for Chinese. The entrance fee is 100 yuan, and in my opinion simply not worth all the waiting. If you go, make sure to do it during a weekday. Too much queuing, even inside.
THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

1. How good can I expect to be after a semester in Shanghai?

If you’re not in China to focus on the language, you will most likely only be able to communicate on the survival level. Do a basic introduction, guide taxi drivers, order food, ask for prices and read common signs such as ‘entrance’, ‘exit’ and ‘train station’.

On a more positive note, I’ve met Europeans who have managed to get to a very impressive level after just 6 months. They took private classes and really focused on learning.

The Basic Chinese course given to engineering exchange students at Tongji University contains the bare minimum of what you need to know. If you want to learn the language you should study outside of the course too.

2. What is the dialect spoken in Shanghai?

People in Shanghai speak Shanghainese. They use the same characters as regular mandarin, but they pronounce the words differently. People from other provinces can barely understand them. I’ve heard it is like comparing German and Dutch, Swedish and Danish, or Spanish and Portuguese. Almost everyone speak or understand Mandarin too, and Shanghainese is not used when speaking to large crowds, like in speakers on the subway.

3. Do people speak English?

Taxi drivers don’t, with very few exceptions. Don’t expect people to speak more than just survival level English. People in academia speak passable English, but it varies a lot. The saying “There’s more English speakers in China than there is in the U.S.A.” is absolutely not true.

4. How will I manage as a non Chinese speaker?

Thanks to the Shanghai World Expo 2010, there’s English translations almost everywhere, and public transportation always repeats in English.
STUDENT LIFE

1. Is the stereotype about Chinese students studying day and night true?

No, I would say that it is pretty much the same level of ambition as in Sweden. Some are very focused in class, some are not at all. Students worked long hours though.

A lot of people are doing something else than following class, like playing games. Pretty typical when there’s computers available, which is usually the case.

2. How is the study pace?

The study pace is a bit lower than you would expect. Taking 12 credits during one semester is equivalent of full time studies and is the minimum. If you’re not lazy and not travelling a lot, you can definitely take 17-20 credits. Chinese students regularly take 20+ credits.

3. What else is different?

Classes are mostly mandatory. If you have a good reason for skipping class, like travelling to Beijing, it is definitely OK. Just speak with the teacher or teacher assistant first. Attendance is usually 5-10% of your grade, but I’ve
heard from students that the teacher is likely be biased to lowering your grade further, when correcting exams or papers, if you have low attendance.

4. Is it easy to get internships?

Yes, as a foreigner you have a very good opportunity to get internships as companies want their employees to improve their English or to just get a international feel to their work environment.

INTERNET AND THE GREAT FIREWALL OF CHINA

1. Which sites are blocked by the Chinese firewall?

The most common one to mention is Facebook, YouTube, Twitter. Wikipedia has a exhaustive list that is updated regularly:

2. How can I access these sites?

You can use a VPN or a proxy. I have friends who have used Freegate successfully for a year, although it is slow sometimes. Also, the site is blocked by the firewall so the software is not available for download if you’re already behind the wall. Ask someone else to download it for you.

- Freegate: [http://download.cnet.com/Freegate/3000-2085_4-10415391.html](http://download.cnet.com/Freegate/3000-2085_4-10415391.html)

There’s a huge number of VPN services you can buy. I personally went with Ivacy which allows you to buy a certain amount of data (minimum 20 GB). By only having it turned on when I browsed Facebook, I never used up the 20 GB. Worth 10€.

- Ivacy: [http://www.ivacy.com](http://www.ivacy.com)

Chinese people usually don’t use VPNs or proxies, but use the Chinese versions of the above mentioned websites instead. Youku instead of YouTube, Weibo instead of Twitter, Renren instead of Facebook.

Internet access on campus is decent. You will most likely choose between a faster, reliable fiber connection (about 2 Mbit/s download and upload speed), or a wireless connection that works on most places on campus. The wireless connection is slow and goes up and down. Not recommended. The price is about the same, 40 RMB a month for the wireless and 60 RMB a month for the fiber.

**ACCOMODATION: LIVING AND RENTING DOWNTOWN ROOMS**

1. Is it difficult to find a room in an apartment?

It depends on

- **Area.** Finding a room in Pudong or around the subway line circling Shanghai is easier than People’s Square, Jing An Temple and French Concession.
- **Budget.** You can save a lot by staying away from the most popular districts.
- **Season.** The time around the start of a semester (March, September) will be more difficult, and the end (January, July) will be much easier.

2. What does a room cost per month?
Naturally it varies quite a lot, depending on location, season, your standards and if you go through a real estate agent.

A few examples:

- A very small room (almost only a bed) at Huihai Road, 2100 RMB.
- A normal room in a nice apartment complex close to centrally located West Nanjing Road, 3000 RMB.
- A master bedroom in Pudong with 15 minutes walk to Lujiazui station is 2500 RMB without an agent.
- A normal room right on People’s Square, 3600 RMB.

3. Where can I find a room?

Rooms on campus cost 350-400 RMB a' month if you’re in Building 13. This is a dorm building for Chinese PhD students and exchange students. The rooms in the hotel (Building 12) cost 1400 RMB a' month.

The rooms are small, approximately 13 square meters, plus toilet with shower. You share washing machine. **There is no fridge and no access to a kitchen.** The hotel rooms have a TV and two beds.

Dorm room in Building 13 on Jiading Campus looks like this and is ridiculously cheap.
MONTHLY EXPENSES AND BUDGETING

1. Accommodation

If you’re renting a room, you should put aside **2300-3000 RMB** for this. If you really want to go budget, you could rent a hostel dorm room. They can get down to 40 RMB per night which totals 1200 RMB per month. I can recommend City Central International Youth Hostel. Cheap.

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<tr>
<th>Room Type</th>
<th>Monthly Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Central Hostel</td>
<td>40 RMB/night (1200 RMB/month)</td>
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2. Food

Cooking by yourself will most likely not be something you even budget for. Eating out is relatively cheap, and depending on how much you indulge in Western food and coffee, and if you live downtown or outside, you could get away with 50 RMB per day or 1500 RMB per month. Make an effort to save and you can probably get a bit lower, but I’d say **1500 – 2000 RMB** per month is reasonable.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Food Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>30-40 RMB/day</td>
<td>In campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-100 RMB/day</td>
<td>Downtown</td>
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It is absolutely possible to live of 30-40 yuan per day (**900-1200 RMB** a month) on the campus.

3. Transportation

This really comes down to what kind of budget you have. If you’re on a tight budget and avoid taxis you can definitely come down to 10 RMB per day if you’re already downtown. So **250-300 RMB** per month at the lowest. If you’re lazy and not too tied down financially, you can spend **800-1000 RMB** per month. If you want to save, share taxis and stick to subways if you’re going places more than 20 minutes away. The taxis are not that much faster than subways, especially during rush hour.

4. Nightlife

When I lived close to downtown, I used to budget 160 RMB for a dinner, 30 RMB for taxi and 150 RMB for drinks, a total of 340 RMB. Cheaper nights without dinner and just a few beers could go as low as 100 RMB but no less.
Expensive nights could get up to 500 RMB. But if you go out often you would want to set the limit to 200 RMB.

Going out twice a week is common among exchange students. That is 400 RMB per week or **1600 RMB** a month.

**FOOD & DRINKS**

1. **Do you have to eat noodles and rice for lunch every day?**

In short, not at all. Although it is naturally much cheaper (see prices at 3. What’s the prices of food in restaurants?) and is much more abundant than non-Chinese food, downtown Shanghai seems to be catering to everyone’s needs. If you grow tired of the standard supply of Beef Noodles, Rice and Tomatoes or Dumplings, and don’t feel like going to any of the fast food chains (KFC are in thousands across China), check out a place that serves all-you-can-eat-and-drink Teppanyaki.

Most regular restaurant serve rice and noodle dishes, with an array of different vegetables and meat to combine. No problem if you don’t eat pork, there’s usually beef, lamb, chicken and duck available.

Trying out Hot Pot. Let a Chinese show you how it is done.
Chinese seldom drink while eating, except for some tea. Even if the dish is from the Hunan or Sichuan province and thus contains 90% chili.

The food on the campus is neither all Chinese or very diverse. Most restaurants in the restaurant street serve typical Chinese cuisine from a number of different provinces, and there’s even a western style restaurant. Although it serves pizza, it will probably not be as good as you expect it to be. On the other hand, when you feel like you have rice coming out of your ears, you’ll find the Chinese pizza delicious.

Most of the restaurants are what I describe as regular worker’s restaurants, serving rice and noodle based dishes. But there’s also a places with different types of dumplings, and a place with fried chicken hamburgers. Just before I left a take away sushi place opened.

2. What do Chinese eat for breakfast and after dinner?

I dropped from 91 kg at arrival in Shanghai in September, to 82 kg in late November, the lowest I’ve weighed in 7 years. I blame this partly on the fact that I could not adapt to the Chinese breakfasts and snacks, and partly because I did not have access to my own kitchen and food in supermarkets. It took me about 4-5 months to adjust, and I was really missing the Swedish meatballs for a while. If I would redo my trip, I would definitely try harder to learn the Chinese way of eating.

Chinese oftentimes eat 2-3 warm, steamed buns which are filled with pork or vegetables (there’s a lot of different other fillings). This can be difficult to get used to eating. They are called Bao zi, and are very easy to find in the mornings.

Snack can often be a so called Chinese pizza, or waffle. It is like a very thin pancake with vegetables, egg, meat and some other stuff smeared on it. Usually rolled and put in a plastic bag for you to eat it from.

Other popular breakfast or snack include small containers of packed rice, with small pieces of fish, crab or meat. Or what in China is called bread. There’s no use of butter, cheese or anything else to put on a sandwich. It really is not a sandwich at all, but just bread reminding of a sugar cake. Oftentimes, the cake is filled with a sugary cream, and sometimes it has dried meat. It is impossible to recommend this.
The first months, I had noodles and sushi for breakfasts and snacks, but finally got used to eating Bao zi 包子 and ended up having it daily and really enjoying it.

3. What’s the price of food?

I never cooked myself. Party because I didn’t have a kitchen most of the time, but also because eating out is incredibly cheap compared to my home country. I did not miss cooking.

Eating in a typical worker’s lunch restaurant costs about 10-12 yuan. If you’re on a tight budget, this is definitely the way to go. If you’re with Chinese, they’ll most likely not take you to this type of place though as they want to treat you Chinese style. The common way to dine together is to eat at a round table with a rotatable glass, on which you place about the same number of dishes as there are people. Everyone then takes food from communal bowls with their own chop sticks. This type of meal commonly costs about 30-50 yuan a head, but it of course depends on what you get and where you eat.

McDonalds and similar fast food chains are much cheaper than western Europe and the United States. Most menus costs between 25-40 yuan.

Breakfast Bao zi 包子 is 1 – 1.5 yuan everywhere. Since you only need 2-4 of them, breakfast is usually cheap and never cost more than 10 yuan.
4. Will I find coffee?

You will likely not be able to get a cup of coffee after a restaurant visit. Shanghai is filled with Starbucks, Costa Coffee and similar chains, so a fix is never far away.

Finding your own coffee brewer and coffee to go with that is definitely both a hassle and expensive. Explore the incredible variety of tea that is available.

When you do order coffee, make sure you get it hot. Cold coffee is seemingly as standard as sugared popcorn. (!)

Coffee is available on campus. There are a few places that sell coffee (usually brewed), and the prize is about 7-10 yuan a’ cup (compare with tea which is 3-4 yuan). The quality is not very good, the coffee is oftentimes burnt, but still good enough. There’s a café that sells pretty good coffee close to the gate. The prize is 16-18 yuan but prepare to wait to get your order.

Campus shops sell instant coffee.