

Day in the life of a Shanghai Intern

Doing an internship abroad can sound very intimidating, especially in a country like China that is so different than the U.S. I remember that as I was thinking about applying I was totally lost and had absolutely no idea what to expect, so I figured going through an average day in the life of an intern in Shanghai could provide some insight. Before I begin, let's clear some things up about China/Shanghai:

- Shanghai is very different from the rest of China
 - Shanghai is by far the most "western" city in mainland China. Shanghai's proximity to the South China Sea made it one of the world's largest shipping ports in the early 1900's and caused the U.S., Great Britain, and France to occupy parts of the city until the 1950's. These western influences can still be seen today in the architecture of the buildings and the variety of cuisines offered in the city.
- You don't need to know Chinese to intern in Shanghai
 - I had been studying Chinese for 2 years at KU before going to Shanghai and can honestly say I barely used it. As I mentioned above, Shanghai is a very international city and this is reflected in the amount of English spoken. Every street sign is in English, Chinese and sometimes Japanese, and almost every menu has some kind of translation to English. Typically, the nicer the restaurant, the more English-accommodating it will be. Additionally, Shanghai has a very distinct dialect compared to the Beijing dialect that is taught in American universities. The extent of my use of Chinese was when a cab driver couldn't find the Chinese address I showed before getting in. Even then, I struggled to translate the Shanghainese that is so often spoken by taxi drivers.

Now that we understand that Shanghai isn't quite as foreign as you may have thought, here's what a typical Friday is like as an intern, as Friday will give the most complete picture of what the work-life balance is like.

7:30 AM: Wake up and get ready. For me this included putting on a suit and tie every day, but this wasn't required of all the interns from KU. It depends on what company you intern for, but I would say the average dress code for men was slacks and a dress shirt. FYI: Shanghai summers are very hot and humid so the less clothes you can get away with wearing, the better.

8:30 AM: Leave the hotel. This seemed to become later and later as the summer went on, but I generally needed 20-30 minutes by subway to get to the office from my hotel. Transit is a big part of living in Shanghai, with a population of 24 million people, it is around 3 times the size of New York City. That being said, it has one of the most extensive and, most importantly, clean subway systems in the world. Also, cabs and Uber are very cheap in China relative to the United States so if you're running late that's always an option.

12:00 PM: Finish my daily report and leave for lunch. At my company each intern was assigned a daily report on some part of the financial world that had to be submitted by noon. I was assigned to report on government bonds so I was in charge of updating current bond prices around the world and summarize various news articles about bond markets in the U.S, Europe and Asia. After this we all leave for lunch, which typically rotated between the Korean, Honk Kong, and Italian restaurants near our office. One of

the best parts about business culture in China, or at least at my firm, was that we were allowed an hour and a half for lunch. It wasn't uncommon to see full-time employees take a nap at their desk before getting back to work.

6:00 PM: After lunch I would work on an industry report with one or two other interns. These were in-depth reports on various industries throughout China such as healthcare, consulting, auto, etc. and were usually given around a week to finish them. At 6 we were off so we'd start thinking about dinner around this time.

6:30 PM: Myself and the other interns would usually get to one of our favorite western restaurants by now. On Mondays it was Blue Frog, a popular Chinese burger chain. With their Monday buy one get one burger deals it became routine to find an even number of people and go get a burger. It was imperative for me to find deals like this in Shanghai, for a few reasons. The first being, I'm not crazy about Chinese food. As much as I love China, I still can't eat their food more than once a day. The second is that western food, as a rule, is more expensive than Chinese food. A meal at a restaurant like Blue frog is around 20 U.S. dollars, or ~ 120 RMB without the discount.

10:30 PM: Around this time, myself and the other interns would likely be getting a drink at one of the many expat bars in Shanghai. This is one of the things that surprised me about Shanghai the most. In terms of nightlife there is just about anything you could imagine, from pubs filled with angry soccer fans (being in Shanghai during the Euro Cup was surprisingly fun) to swanky rooftop wine bars and massive nightclubs. There was even a bar that served Boulevard and offered a "Royal" pizza that was topped with Kansas City barbecue.

I was fortunate enough to work at a company with 20 interns from 10 different countries, so making lasting memories with people from all around the world was by far the best part of my time there. Interning in Shanghai allows you to experience a culture and a city that is so much different than anything in the U.S. and will teach you how to adapt in an increasingly global business environment.