

RETURNEE OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 2018



ABOUT EMILY MORLEY

Program: UVA Exchange: Peking University

Duration: Year 2017-2018

Major: Foreign Affairs & Global Development Studies

MOST INTERESTING CLASS & WHY?

I mostly took classes related to my Foreign Affairs major, but had the opportunity to take many classes specifically related to US-China relations, as well as economics and business classes. One of my most interesting classes was on "U.S.-China Economic & Trade Relations," which was taught in Chinese. As the trade war with China had just begun, it was really interesting to hear my Chinese classmates' opinions on the issues, and to learn the logic behind the other side. Although interesting, this class actually frustrated me a lot at certain times, and I often questioned to what extent CCP propaganda and media control affected my classmates' views. My professor for the class was very knowledgeable, and his opinions on the trade war are often quoted in the Chinese media. One day, he invited the President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai to speak to our class, which gave the class an understanding of the U.S. business community's views on trade issues as well.



EMILY MORLEY

UVA EXCHANGE: PEKING UNIVERSITY
YEAR 2017-18



HOW WAS EDUCATION ABROAD DIFFERENT THAN ANTICIPATED?

The education system in China is very different than that of the U.S., both academically and socially. Aside from the Chinese language classes, which are very rigorous and meet 3 times a week for 2 hours each, most undergraduate classes are 2-3 hours long, and meet once a week. During the spring semester, I took six courses and only had class on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, but it's common for Chinese students to take up to ten courses per semester. The university social life revolves around the campus, since most Chinese students study, live, eat, exercise, and socialize on campus all four years, yet most international students live off-campus in the neighboring student area of Wudaokou.



NUMBER ONE WAY THE EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR GROWTH

The most challenging aspects of the experience were learning how to listen to vastly different perspectives on issues and live independently in a foreign country in a 2nd language. I had to figure a lot of things out on my own, from navigating Chinese bureaucracy, applying for residence permits, negotiating with landlords, and even getting a new air conditioner installed in my apartment. At times I felt very alone, as one of only a handful of Americans I knew at my school, and as the only UVA student. Because of this, even making new friends was a totally independent experience. Each challenge I had to overcome forced me to expand my own mindset and problem-solving strategies, as has given me a new sense of confidence in my abilities.

BEIJING IN 3 WORDS

Ancient

Bustling

Intense

EMILY MORLEY

UVA EXCHANGE: PEKING UNIVERSITY YEAR 2017-18

FAVORITE LOCAL HANGOUT & WHY?

One of my favorite local hangouts was a bar in the student area of Wudaokou called Commune, where I have so many memories there with so many friends. We would usually start our nights there, and end at the dumpling restaurant around the corner. The bar would be packed with equal numbers of Chinese and international students. Some highlights there include watching World Cup games on the big screen with fans from every country playing, many a friend's birthday party, and our Chinese Public Policy 'class party' after our final exam when our professor took us all out and celebrated with us. That's definitely a memory I will never forget, and I'm thankful to have had such cool professors who really engaged with us as students.

MOST INTERESTING/DELICIOUS CUISINE TRIED

The simple, but amazing boiled dumplings from the shop across from my school. The place was very local and cheap, and my friends & I went there so many times the people working there memorized our orders. These style dumplings are traditional of northern China, and traditionally, dumplings are eaten during the Chinese New Year.

MOST MEANINGFUL INTERACTION WITH A LOCAL

One really interesting interaction took place on an overnight train ride from the northwest city of Xining to Lhasa, which runs along the Qinghai-Tibet Railway — the highest railway in the world, crossing the Tibetan Plateau and going up to 5000 m. In my bunk area was a family of 5 Tibetans from Yushu Autonomous Prefecture in Amdo/southern Qinghai, who were going to Lhasa on pilgrimage before the New Year. We all chatted for most of the ride, since the 3 daughters speak Mandarin and study in universities in Beijing as well. They were so interested in learning more about where I was from, and the dad and I bonded over our love of the 'Fast & Furious' movies. We parted ways at the train station, but later in the day, while doing the Barkhor 'kora' around the famous Jokhang Temple in Lhasa's old city, I was surprised to be tapped on the shoulder by the family of Tibetans I was on the train with, who were also doing kora. That moment was a really happy one, and we all laughed together over the joy of new friends.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD?

Studying abroad for the year was challenging, but so rewarding. I had so many more opportunities to explore different parts of China, like Hong Kong, random bamboo forests, Inner Mongolia's grasslands & deserts, Tibet, the Base Camp of Mt. Everest, & the "Avatar" mountains. I was also able to take so many interesting classes at my host university and made so many deep friendships with students there.

