Choose China

Laowei
Grady ADPR
Choose China Program

This program provides an immersive and educational exploration of China’s major cities. From touring regional and international advertising and PR agencies to taste testing every type of exotic food the Chinese culture has to offer, this trip gives students a unique cultural and informational experience.

Key Phrases

Laowai
Literally: “very foreign”
Colloquial term for foreigner

Xièxiè
“Thank you”

Duo shao
“How much?”

Ganbei
Literally: “bottoms up”
“dry cup”
Cheers!

Traversing the Cities

Total Steps: 348,324
Total Mileage: 152.34 miles

That’s only 2.7% the distance of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall

Total Mileage: 18,979.69 miles

Converting the Cash

1 US Dollar =

6.89 Chinese Yuan =

7.79 Hong Kong Dollars =
Kyle Sledge
Major: Marketing
Year: Rising Junior

“To me, this trip was about doing something unique and adventurous. I wouldn’t have been able to see China like this on my own and my new experiences have given me a new perspective on China and I have a better understanding of their culture. This program has challenged me to try new things and inspired me to never stop exploring.”

Shelby Moss
Major: Advertising
Year: Rising Senior

“As someone who’s done a good bit of travelling, I really wanted to step out of my comfort zone and go somewhere I probably wouldn’t go on my own. Though I was intimidated at first, I have learned and grown so much on this trip. There is so much history in this part of the world and I’m glad I was able to scratch the surface. Can’t wait to come back!”

Ryanna Beckham
Major: Public Relations and Sports Management
Year: Rising Senior

“Before going on this trip, I’d never been out of the country, so I was a little nervous about going so far from home. I challenged myself to face my fears and fully immerse myself into the Chinese culture. Choosing to go to China was by far the best decision I could’ve ever made for not only my personal growth but also my career goals.”
Shanghai

Shanghai has over 24 million people in the city, so everywhere we went was very crowded. The local people and Chinese tourists visiting from inside the country would seem very amazed to see such a large group of foreigners. People would stare as we traveled to different places and take pictures of us. Some would even come up and start speaking in Mandarin but thanks to hand gestures we would assume they wanted to take a picture. None of us had ever had this happen before so we thought it was cool that people were so intrigued by us. Interacting with locals is how you can truly get a feel for a place, but this can be difficult when you do not speak the language. We realized this would be a challenge very early on when we tried to get a taxi to go exploring. We went off on our free day to explore and happened to come across some of the locals playing basketball in the park. Kyle and Hunter joined in the pick-up game and the rest of us watched them play. Even though there was a language barrier, it was fascinating to see how the game of basketball could still bring us all together.

Imagine walking into a store and seeing everything you wanted but the prices were just too high. Now what if you could get all of the items you wanted such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Prada or even Nike for the prices you thought were fair? Sounds impossible right? Well that’s exactly what happens in the local Chinese markets. Bartering is something that anyone can do, you just have to have the right mentality when going into the market. The rule is you come up with a price you’re willing to pay and no matter how much they try to convince you do not change your price. Either they’ll take it or leave it. The great thing is there are plenty of other stores to shop in where you can find the exact same items. If you decide to walk away, the person will more than likely change their mind and go for the price you gave them. You should never let the person know how bad you want the item or they’ll have the control.
BIGmind Design was our very first agency tour on the trip. We were able to meet the Chief Innovation Officer/Founder, Yan Zhang and a few other members of the team. The agency was housed inside of the Tongji University. We learned about service design and the details of one of the major projects the team recently worked on for a craft museum. After their presentation, we broke off into our groups to brainstorm ideas for the Oriental Pearl Tower project. We came up with a plan to revamp the experience that consumers have when visiting the tower. The Oriental Pearl Tower is one of the major tourist attractions in Shanghai. The building was the tallest in the city up until the Shanghai World Financial Center and the Shanghai Tower were built.

Leo Burnett

The Leo Burnett tour was done by Angie Wong, the Managing Director, who showed us a presentation on some of the campaigns the company has launched in China. Before going into detail on the cases, she gave a brief background of the company’s history. Wong discussed some of the successful cases and ones that failed to give us a wholistic view of their work. A few of the client’s campaigns we learned about included McDonalds, P&G and Xiao Ming Tong Xue, a popular beverage company in China. Wong presented the Tong Xue case which was a new launch of cold tea beverages. During the visit we were able to try the five flavors of the tea as she shared the components of the campaign. She explained the importance of knowing the needs of your target audience when trying to launch a new campaign.

PHD

PHD is a global communications planning and media buying agency. We had the pleasure of meeting Denise Ng, Mobile Strategy Director, Doris Li, Business Director, and Joanna Shih, Corporate Communications Manager. We learned about the strengths and weaknesses of the media giants Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. Ng discussed how much Chinese people use their mobile devices for day to day activities. The majority of the presentation was spent on WeChat and its endless features. WeChat is a multipurpose app with nearly limitless capabilities used by a large portion of the people in China. Imagine Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and even Apple Pay all integrated into one app. By using WeChat, some of the simplest things like washing your dog or picking up your flowers can all be done for you from the palm of your hand.

Burson-Marsteller

During our visit to the Burson-Marsteller office we met with Associate Directors Charles Zhang and Jerry Yip. Zhang gave an overview of the digital landscape in Shanghai. The big three leading tech companies he discussed were Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. He also compared the digital platforms used in Shanghai to the ones used by consumers in the United States. From there we split into two groups for the interactive portion of the session. Each group was given the task to come up with a campaign idea for a real client request that the company received. After coming up with our plan, we had to pitch our campaign to Zhang, Yip and Dr. Meng for feedback.
Exploring the food culture is one of the best ways to immerse yourself in a new country. In Shanghai, we were introduced to all different types of authentic Chinese food from soup dumplings and noodles to bamboo roots and even jellyfish. Each dish has a unique flavor and presentation. Sometimes dishes are not served hot, but you would be surprised how tasty some of your favorite meats are when they are cold. A traditional Chinese dinner includes a Lazy Susan at the center of the table and dishes shared among the group. Some dishes go faster than others, but they are all worth trying at least once. We also mastered using chopsticks and became accustomed to drinking hot water and tea with our meals. Our favorites from Shanghai were the crab soup served in an orange and the dumplings from Din Tai Fung.
Wuzhen

We took a day trip out of Shanghai to visit Wuzhen, a water town built on top of a branch of the Yangtze river. The city is reminiscent of Venice because of its many canals. Although the city is now a place for tourists to visit, it was originally a small town that provided fertile land for rice and fish. It is also connected to the Grand Canal, the longest artificial river in the world that stretches across the eastern part of China. While in Wuzhen, we saw how the city would have run when it was created. There were several workshops that showed craft forms from the different time periods. Local people demonstrated the traditional processes and there were opportunities for us to try the process ourselves. We saw how people use to make silk, soy sauce, and dye fabrics. We also learned about the wedding customs, wore warrior armor and saw koi fish. We enjoyed a nice boat ride along the canals as we made our way out of the city.
As the ancient capital of China, Xi'an has over 3,000 years of history and is best known as the home of the Terracotta Army. There are over 8,000 soldiers spread across three pits representing different factions of the army. Each soldier has distinct facial features and were originally painted to look like the emperor’s army. We wondered how this enormous project was completed over 2,300 years ago. Over time, the paint wore off and looters destroyed many of the soldiers, leaving them in hundreds of pieces. Archaeologists have been working since the site was discovered in 1974 to rebuild the army piece by piece. We were able to see some of the soldiers that they are currently rebuilding but finding the right pieces for each soldier requires patience and ingenuity. It was incredible to see how detailed the soldiers are in person.

We rode bikes around the ancient city wall of Xi'an which gave us some perspective on the size of the ancient capital and traditional architecture. Then, we visited several temples that were important to the development of Xi'an including the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda and the City God Temple. Xi'an was the starting point of the Silk Road so it has many different religious and cultural influences not found in other Chinese cities. At night, we explored the Muslim market by taking in all the sights, sounds, and smells as well as bartering with the local vendors for gifts.
Beijing

Walking Through History

The current capital of China, Beijing, has operated as the political center of China for over 800 years. Thousands of international and Chinese tourists all come to this city to see Tiananmen Square, so it was very crowded on the day that we visited. The Square is a place of national pride to the Chinese culture and it is the largest public square in the world. It is also the main gate to the Forbidden City. We crossed the street to enter the Forbidden City, which was the palace for 24 emperors during the Ming and Qing Dynasties for almost 500 years. We were amazed at the enormous scale of the palace and tried to imagine what life would be like at that time. The palace complex exemplifies traditional Chinese architecture that you might not see in some of the other cities. After that, we visited the Temple of Heaven located in southern Beijing. This is where the emperor would make sacrifices for a good harvest each year. While visiting the site, we met a group of other American students who shared their experiences thus far in the city.

We had many memorable meals within Beijing and tried many famous Chinese meals in the city. Our welcome dinner took us to a famous Peking Duck restaurant where we watched the chef carve our duck before tasting the crisp and delicious meal. We experienced hotpot which is an exceptionally spicy and boiling broth at the center of the table with different kinds of raw meat and vegetables served on the side. You take the meat and place it in the broth until cooked. The flavor from the broth creates both a delicious taste and a mouth-numbing sensation. The night markets provide all types of uncommon food to try, such as octopus tentacle, snake, stinky tofu, and scorpions.
We were extremely excited to climb the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall stretches over 13,000 miles and was built in the third century B.C. It is one of China's many attractions with extremely rich history. The Emperor Qin Shi Huang built the wall as a means of preventing invaders from the Chinese Empire. The day that we climbed the wall was very rainy, but we were so pumped that regardless of rain or shine we were still ready to conquer the Great Wall. Since the start of our trip, we all were waiting for this once in a lifetime opportunity. We took a pull car up to the section where we were climbing which got us all more excited as we could see the mountains as we went up in elevation. The rain made the mountains very foggy and created a smoky mountain look. Everything looked so surreal. The climb was intense with some parts more challenging than others. We couldn't believe that we were actually doing this, but it gave us all the motivation to keep pushing. After about an hour we finally reached the top, and the view was incredible. The entire group met at the top to take several pictures and videos.
Hong Kong

As soon as we arrived in Hong Kong, we started to see how different it was from the other cities in mainland China. For starters, our driver drove on the left side of the road and had a slight British accent. Since Hong Kong was colonized by Great Britain until 1997, the European influence is still very prevalent in the city. There is a fusion between the British and Chinese impact on the culture in Hong Kong. This is why you’ll see natives of the city speaking in a British accent. Some consider themselves Chinese because Hong Kong is technically a part of China now while most refer to themselves as “Hong Kong.” Also, English is the second language spoken in Hong Kong after Cantonese. The fact that lots of people spoke English made it much easier when we explored the city.

Hong Kong is the world’s most competitive and economically free market in the world. The city is known for being extremely luxurious and all the top international brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, etc. have at least one flagship store here. While exploring the city you’ll notice a lot of luxury—the city has more Mercedes Benz and Rolls-Royce’s per capita than anywhere else in the world. With such little livable space and more than 7 million people, Hong Kong has some of the most expensive property in the world. Statistics state that people in Hong Kong work 38% more than the global average and have the longest work week. The city also has the most skyscrapers in the world. Luckily, we got to go to Victoria Harbor at night where we could see a beautiful view of the buildings light up. We enjoyed the light show that takes places every night and got a few group pictures. While in Hong Kong, we also visited the horse races, an international soccer match, and hiked Dragon’s Back to see the other side of the city.
At Burson-Marsteller Hong Kong we had the opportunity to meet Alastair Monteith-Hodge, the Managing Director. Monteith-Hodge gave us a quick brief on how the company got started in 1953. It was surprising to learn that Harold Burson still goes into the New York office at the age of 96. Monteith-Hodge went into detail about some of the crises he's worked on during his career. One of the most important things is to identity whether a situation is an issue that can be handled or actually a crisis that is threatening to your business. He explained that something he loves about public relations is that it challenges you to do things you've never done before. PR professionals work with the media on a day to day basis and after being in the business for a while you start to form relationship with journalists. As rising juniors and seniors we all wanted to know how to go about landing internships/jobs after graduation. The advice given was that you have to have something that stands out on your resume so an employer will want to learn more about you. For example, traveling to study abroad in China for three weeks is an experience only few can say they've done.

When we arrived at Edelman Hong Kong, we met with Adrian Warr, Managing Director. Warr took the time to give a bit of background on the company and to highlight the fact that Edelman is a family owned business. This is what sets the company apart from other communication firms. He explained that public relations is about the earned story and main the idea is to get people talking. Most content starts with social networks, messaging services, search engines, and personalized news curators. He discussed the publishers role as the content creators and the platforms used. In Hong Kong two of the major platforms used by consumers are WhatsApp and Facebook. Warr then gave insight on how to sell trust to the general/ mass population and the informed public. The idea is that you must earn trust from your publics by defining your purpose. The steps to do this include: research, gain insight, strategize, create content, and then tell your story. We were then introduced to members of different teams to learn about cases they worked on recently. A few of the campaigns we learned about were brands such as LG, Women's Foundation, Starbucks, and AstraZeneca.

Our final visit was at BBDO Hong Kong Office. BBDO is an advertising agency with 42 offices in 18 countries throughout the world. We met with Poi Yu, Corporate Communications Manager of Greater China, Naomi Lam, Strategic Planner, and Josh Cheung, Account Manager. They seemed eager to give us insight on the work that they do in their office. Cheung took us through a detailed schedule of what a typical day at BBDO Hong Kong looks like. Throughout the day everyone is very busy meeting with different clients and the creative team to work on projects. Lam deals with consumer insights. She took us through a number of campaigns showing us how the company solves problems for their clients. For example, the goal for the Barbie campaign was to adapt the message to the consumers. Asian parents don't see play time as something that is necessary for their children, but through the campaign they were able to change the perception of play time to something that allows children to form their imagination. The advice given to the group was that you have to be passionate about what you’re doing to really enjoy this type of work.