

Globalinks Blog 1
March 18, 2013

I just spent my first week living abroad in Shanghai, China and boy was it great! I had a wonderful week at the Livingston American School (LAS), and met some of the teachers out over the weekend for a going away party. My first week has been so busy and so much fun that I feel as though I have already been living in Shanghai for months, not just one week! For this blog I will talk about some of my first expectations of this new country I am living in.

In the months leading up to departing for my study abroad opportunity, I tried not to make that many expectations. I did not want to get my hopes up for anything, nor did I want to have a long list of things I wanted to do. My reasoning behind this was that I wanted to this experience to develop on its own. I want this experience to go with the flow, and just to let things happen naturally. So far it has been a week, and just that has happened. By just exploring the city during the day I have been able to find some markets and restaurants which I have frequented for meals. And this weekend some of my fellow teachers mentioned a going away party, I attended that and was able to meet a great number of people.

By talking to a number of Americans and Europeans abroad, I quickly realized that not have grand expectations is the way to go. They have said that the ones who have trouble in Shanghai, or any nonwestern country for that matter, are the ones that try to make the foreign place like the US or try to do the same things they did the US at their new stay. Being on the track and cross country teams at my university, and going to school in Maine, I am used to running on trails nearly every day in the woods. Being in Shanghai, in a very heavily trafficked area, I have to adapt to my new surroundings and alter what I like to do. The apartment that I am living in had a gym equipped with treadmills. I don't particularly enjoy running on treadmills, but I have to make adjustments to my routine. By not going into this study abroad experience thinking I would be able to get out and run every day, the transition has not been too hard for me. If I can make it up to the gym and run then I do it, if something comes up where I can't then I just run the next day. It's as easy as that.

The school that I am working at is very welcoming and helpful. They treat me as one of the staff here, and it does help that they all speak English. As I venture outside the realm of my school, communicating with others becomes more difficult. The street signs as well as most signs have both Chinese characters and English letters; this makes navigating the city much easier. Since Shanghai is known for business in China, it is more western and more people speak English opposed to other cities. Many of the American restaurants and stores will have someone that speaks English, like a Starbucks, Burger King, McDonalds, 7-11, etc. Since I do not look like I'm from China, some people will come up to me and try to be of assistance if I look puzzled standing at an intersection. This has surprised me. Someone who speaks English will sometimes try to ask where I'm going or what I'm looking for. I have been very thankful and appreciative of these strangers who have tried to help me out!

I am still getting a feel of the city, and have been adventuring further and further out from my apartment. My future blogs will have some more details of different adventures I have been on and some pictures to accompany it. I am enjoying my stay so far in Shanghai, and everything has been going very well!