

How to adapt to China in two weeks



Laura, a language student at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, Northern Ireland, has come to Hangzhou as part of a two week trip as part of her degree. Being from the UK it was obvious that she may experience quite a culture shock and will need to adapt to China. We interviewed Laura to see if this was the case and if so, what surprised her most about China in comparison with her hometown and university.

BY SYD class3

“Firstly I want to comment on how we have been welcomed to the university, it has been second to none.

One of the first things that was hard to adapt to and to master was chopsticks. However, as time has passed, it has become a lot easier.

I have noticed a major difference between the road systems and traffic control between the two countries. It appears that the UK has more rules regarding the use of the road.

The most obvious and not surprising difference between China and the UK is the weather as it is a lot warmer here. For us it was strange to see the local people using umbrellas in the sun as they are merely used for rain and bad weather in the UK, which it is famously known for.

Shopping in China is definitely cheaper than the UK, not only for clothes but for food as well. It seems that money would go a long way in China. On the subject of food, I have been pleasantly surprised but I think that I prefer the cuisine in the UK as there is more of a variety for every day meals.

Having travelled to a few cities during my stay in Hangzhou, I have noticed how the local people react to Western people. It almost seems like a novelty when there are Western people in the cities as we have had people asking for photos with us or have simply just taken photos as we walk past.

It appears that there were certain aspects of the culture that were harder to adapt to than others, for example the use of different toilets in China.

With regards to university life, in Northern Ireland if a student lives on campus, there is no curfew. Also, there are a lot more universities situated in Hangzhou, more than in the whole of Ireland. I have noticed that there are a lot of breaks during classes in university here, however, in the UK, and especially Northern Ireland, classes last for either one hour or two and there is no breaks during them. The only exception is when a student has a three hour class and so has a fifteen minute break.

As my trip draws to an end, I have to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here and the experience of adapting to a completely new culture in such a short space of time. In terms of travelling, one of my favourite cities was Shanghai, but I have also enjoyed other cities such as Suzhou and our visit to Westlake. If I have the opportunity in the future, I would love to return to China and travel to Beijing to visit the Great Wall as well as other famous cities in the country".