

Report for Stanley Ho Travel Funding for China

Thanks to support from the Stanley Ho Travel Funding for China, this summer I was able to travel to mainland China for over a month and visit thirteen cities and towns across ten different provinces and municipalities. Starting in Xi'an in central China and ending in Shanghai, the scale of this trip would not have been possible without the support of the Stanley Ho Travel Funding for China. This trip was invaluable going into my final year of my Chinese degree, as it allowed me to contextualise my cultural, historical, and political knowledge, practice the language, and experience a diverse range of locations.



Xi'an, Drum tower

I am especially grateful for this opportunity as this was the first time in during my degree that I had been to mainland China (as my year abroad was in Taiwan). This trip not only consolidated and motivated my studies, but also served as an interesting way to compare society, infrastructure, and day-to-day lifestyle in the two places. I was particularly interested in the transport and different applications (such as Alipay and *gaode ditu* – both apps used daily in China) which are not used much in Taiwan but are indispensable in mainland China.

I was able to visit rich historical areas such as former capitals Xi'an and Nanjing, which allowed me to contextualise much of what I had learnt in my first year of study. The museums in Nanjing were excellent, particularly the Nanjing Massacre Museum, where it was very interesting to see how the museum presented the tragedy and the impact the event had on the country's modern history and relationship with Japan. In Shanghai, I was able to appreciate the juxtaposition between modernity and tradition present in the city, as well as the political significance of the area. By visiting the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China, I gained a deeper understanding of the political foundations of the country, and how these are presented to the Chinese public versus how I had been taught.

Beyond historical and urban exploration, thanks to the Stanley Ho Travel Funding for China I also had the chance to visit some of the country's most breathtaking



Longsheng Rice Terraces

countryside and tourist regions.

Guilin city, Yangshuo, Longsheng, and Zhangjiajie were all stunning, and certainly helped me understand why many ancient poets and artists were inspired by the scenery there. These visits also helped me understand the scale of China's domestic tourism, as we met many other Chinese tourists and families who told us about how far they had travelled to visit these areas of national beauty. Travelling to these places also highlighted the diversity of environments within China, as life here felt much more relaxed and contemplative than busy urban centres like Shanghai or Chongqing.



Chengdu, People's Park: 'Ten Persists' (part of a Xi Jinping speech) on display in a park.

One of the highlights of this trip was the opportunity to be immersed in a Chinese-speaking environment and being able to interact with people from all walks of life while practicing my language. Whether I was speaking to university students in hostels or shop owners and other domestic tourists in city centres, the ability to practice Chinese everyday was extremely motivating. I learnt quite a few new words, and also experienced some of the difficulties of dialects and slang that I had only encountered online before (or sometimes not at all). The money from this scholarship allowed me to spend time in so many different places, therefore getting to talk to many different people around China, which gave me a more wholistic and authentic understanding of the country. This will no doubt benefit my academic progress, but also be immensely helpful for my overall language learning and understanding of China.

Overall, this trip allowed me to see China from so many different perspectives, from its ancient capitals and huge municipalities to natural magnificence. The funding allowed me to engage with China on a scale I had not thought possible, and experience more than I could ever have alone. This trip has been an invaluable experience going into my final year of study, and without this financial support it would not have been the enriching trip it was. I am incredibly grateful to the Stanley Ho Travel Funding for China for making this trip possible.



Chengdu: Leshan Giant Buddha (largest Buddha statue in the world)



Nanjing, Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders

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