

Tips to feeling more like a local when studying abroad <http://tinyurl.com/y9b9lf3>

As a student studying abroad in a foreign city, you obviously would like to see all the tourist hot spots. You definitely want to learn and see all the things that attracted you to pick that city. But where there are tourist attractions, there are lots of tourists. Often doing things and activities that the locals do gives you the student more insight into the people and culture of the city in which you are temporarily a member. The following are easy (and cheap!) ways to immerse yourself into the city you are learning in.

1. Get a newspaper. Just like papers that circulate here, there are sections dedicated to telling the reader what entertainment is happening for the week i.e. shows, local bands playing in parks, flea markets, etc. Many of these things are free or relatively cheap.

English Newspapers in China:

The China Daily: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>

People's Daily Online: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/>

SINA English: <http://english.sina.com/index.html>

Xinhua News: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english2010/>

CRI English: <http://english.cri.cn/>

CCTV : <http://english.cctv.com/english/headline/index.shtml>

Or, grab a Chinese newspaper and use it to help with your learning of the language. The newspaper is an excellent source to help improve your language skills.

2. Ride public transit. Taxis are not only expensive, but they offer little interaction. Hop on a bus and just ride its route. You can not only people watch and observe, but you also can see a lot of the city that you might not have seen otherwise.

BUSES

Bus riding is a very cheap and reliable means of transportation, but buses are often crowded, and they are one of the few places where thefts occur. Great places to observe Chinese life though!

TRAINS

Touring by train is one of the best ways to see the country. There are four ways to travel by train: hard seat, soft seat, hard sleeper and soft sleeper (listed in order of increasing price). The soft sleeper cars have four beds per compartment with a door to separate each compartment from the rest of the car. The hard sleeper cars contain open sections of six beds (two stacks of three) facing a shared window and table. Trains that go

overnight all have dining cars. However it is good to bring some of your own food (fruit, water, and some crackers). If you want to get out for a stretch when the train stops, be sure to pay attention to how long the stop is to avoid being left behind.

BIKE TOUR

Ride a bike through hutongs (traditional labyrinth of neighborhoods and alleyways), to see some local vegetable markets, to learn how locals bargain for the vegetables and fresh fish, take in the smells of all kinds of spices, and try some great take away food.

3. Shop at flea markets. In flea markets, many handmade and home grown products can be found. You can get many unique pieces at these markets and for very cheap.

MARKETS IN BEIJING:

Pan Jia Yuan Antique Market

Located in the south east of Beijing this market is open on the weekends, it is a great place to see local people's daily life and you can look around at some true antiques, arts, and crafts. Local people also take their own antiques to sell, even things such as, an old clock and old shoes, anything they want to sell or exchange. This market allows you to see the difference of old China and new China.

Hong Qiao Market

This market is located in the south central area of Beijing, just to the east of the Temple of Heaven. It is an indoor mall with a seafood market in the basement and about 3 floors up. It is filled mainly with cheap electronic goods like portable CD players, vcd players, camcorders, batteries, sunglasses, electronics, household phones.

Wang Fu Jing Street

Located in the Dongcheng District, Wang Fu Jing Street is one of Beijing's most famous shopping streets. Much of the road is off-limits to cars and other motor vehicles, and the streets are generally packed with shoppers. Here you can find fashion stores, souvenirs, cafes and restaurants, a cinema and a built-in large department store with some reasonably priced high-quality electronics.

4. Eat food from a street vendor. Food from street vendors may sound questionable, but it is often quite delicious. Do be cautious though, and wait until you have fully adjusted to local cuisine before trying street vendor food. Use your best judgment!

Dong Hua Men Food Street

Dong Hua Men food street is next to Wang Fu Jing street, you can see all kinds of snakes, and other unique food choices. One local told me, “Chinese people eat everything with four legs except tables, and eat everything with 2 wings except planes.”

9 Men Xiao China “The Snakes with 9 Gates”

Here you can see the sugar coated fruits, sheep head meet, sticky rice cake, Beijing hand make noodles, imperial yogurt, and much more.

Peking Duck

This may be better served at a restaurant, but is a must have while visiting Beijing. Peking Duck has been prepared since the imperial era, and is now considered one of China’s national foods..

5. Walk and wander. Though riding public transit is part of the experience, walking is an adventure all in itself. You will come across a variety of shops, eateries, clubs, etc. You will find things you did not know existed. As well as discovering hidden treasures, exploration will help you better acquaint yourself to the city. In no time, you will be able to easily find your way around town and may even be comfortable enough to give directions to others. Then you will really feel like a local and less like a tourist or visitor.

Qian Men Street

Just south of Tiananmen Square, there is an old trolley train station, with two gates. It’s a great place to wander and explore as you will find very traditional Beijing shops, where you can see the handmade shoes shop, scissor shops, and chop stick shops.

These are just five simple actions you as a student can do to “fit-in” and learn about everyday life for locals in the city you are studying abroad in. These are cheap and easily accommodating ways to feel like a local on a student budget. When not popping around the city with a camera, take a break and do as the locals do.