



RETOUR D'EXPÉRIENCE

Shanghai, Chine



UNIVERSITÉ DE
MONTPELLIER

MONTPELLIER
MANAGEMENT



I think Shanghai is one of the best cities in China for student exchange. I had really good experiences with the university, and even more with the international dormitory. The city is just incredible, there's so much to do, and the people I met during the exchange were amazing.



Practical informations

You do need a visa. We wanted the X1 visa because we thought we could have it since we were going on a semester abroad, and also because it would allow us to leave the country freely (after getting a residence permit). But we were told that since we are officially staying less than 6 months, we had to get the X2 visa. You cannot leave China with an X2 visa. But don't worry, China is incredibly diverse, with many cities worth visiting and a wide variety of landscapes. You won't get bored. Even within Shanghai, there's so much to do.

The visa costs around 120 euros. I applied at the Chinese embassy in Marseille (maybe this one is better than the one in Paris, because the French students I met in the dorms who went through Paris were required to show a return flight ticket to get the visa. That's a bit inconvenient if you plan to travel and haven't decided on your return date yet. It's hard to plan several months in advance).



1 Prepare the required docs in advance

Before booking your appointment, make sure to have :

- **Official admission letter** from the Chinese university (in English or Chinese)
- **JW202 form** (or JW2021, but mostly 202)

To get the JW202 form, you first need to be accepted by your Chinese host university; after confirming your enrollment, the university registers your information on the “**Study in China**” portal, and then you'll receive an email allowing you to log in, download, and verify the JW202 form directly from that platform. This official document is required for your visa application.

- **Valid passport** (at least 6 months validity after your intended entry date + at least 2 blank pages)
- **Passport photo** (white background, recent)

- **Housing confirmation** if possible, but not necessary (e.g., dorm booking confirmation, but the dorm confirmation we got it after doing our visa, so don't worry it's not important)
- **Proof of enrollment** from your current school (in France)
- **Flight ticket** (be aware, like I said, the Paris consulate often requires a **round-trip ticket**, even for X2 visas)
- **International health insurance**

2 Fill out the online application

Go to the official **Chinese Visa Application Service Center (CVASC)** website : <https://www.visaforchina.cn>

Select **France**, then your chosen visa center (e.g., Paris or Marseille)

1. Create an account
2. Complete the online visa application form (select **type X2**, enter personal info, university details, etc.)
3. Upload any documents if requested
4. Print the **completed form** and **summary page with the barcode** (I think there was a barcode but I'm not sure anymore though)

PS : Celia Wang, our coordinator told us to put July 31st as the visa end date.

3 Book your appointment online

Once the form is completed on [visaforchina.cn](https://www.visaforchina.cn), book your appointment at the chosen center (Paris, Marseille, etc.) and print the confirmation.

I recommend again, Marseille because they didn't ask us for the return ticket. So for you too, they may not insist on it.



4

Go to the Visa center

On the day of your appointment, bring :

- The **printed application form**
- All **required documents** listed above
- **Photocopies** of your passport (and previous Chinese visas if you have any) and your passeport (and previous Chinese visas if you have any)

PS : they did a photocopy of my passport there

- Your **payment method** (some centers accept only cash or only card, check ahead because I don't remember) I personally paid by card

5

Visa collection

Processing time : **around 7 working days**

You can pick it up yourself or authorize someone else



I flew from Barcelona, with a layover in Budapest (about 48h, yes it's pretty long but we used this time to see our friend who had already begun her student exchange in Budapest), then from Budapest to Guangzhou for another layover (about 2h or less), and finally Guangzhou to Shanghai. I chose this route because it was very cheap, around 300 euros (not including the checked baggage and the travel insurance I bought on the website while buying my ticket).

The website I used is "trip.com" (it's a Chinese booking platform used worldwide). My flight was on February 11, and I booked it around October/November (the earlier, the better). The airline for Buda-Shanghai was ChinaSouthern Airline

Since Chinese people (and East Asians in general) don't typically use deodorant (because genetically they often don't need it), I recommend bringing a few from home. Don't worry though, you can still find deodorants at the Walmart near the university (there isn't a huge selection, but you'll find good brands like Nivea), or in some cosmetic shops like "Harmay" or "Wow Beauty." Also, bring winter clothes ; it was very cold during the first few weeks. Or you can buy them once you're there.

If you have allergies, don't forget your treatment ! If you're lactose intolerant, you might feel strange drinking milk in China. I personally had no issues (same for my classmate Enzo who also did his student exchange at SHNU like me), but a friend of mine who lived there for more than two years, and who already had pretty bad allergies, developed allergies to several things, including Chinese milk, although she's fine when back in France (I'd like to remind you that she already had allergies back in France, so that's something to take with a grain of salt). So maybe bring something for your gut health, just in case.

Also, very important : bring a stock of medicine like Doliprane, Spasfon, Smecta, etc. aka the basics you can easily get in France. I highly recommend it. I didn't do it myself, but I got lucky and didn't need any. Don't be foolish like me, especially if you plan to travel around China. Bring medicine for digestion (if you know you have a weak gut), general well-being, and stomach issues (the food and drinks are quite different !).

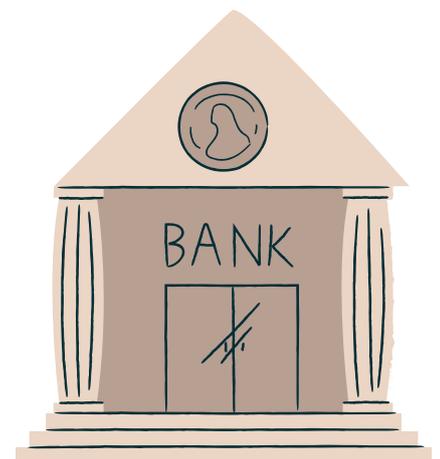
Don't forget to visit a general practitioner to check which vaccines are required for China, or if you're up to date with them. Usually, the official government website 'France Diplomatie' provides all the necessary information regarding vaccinations, entry, and exit requirements, it's a must !

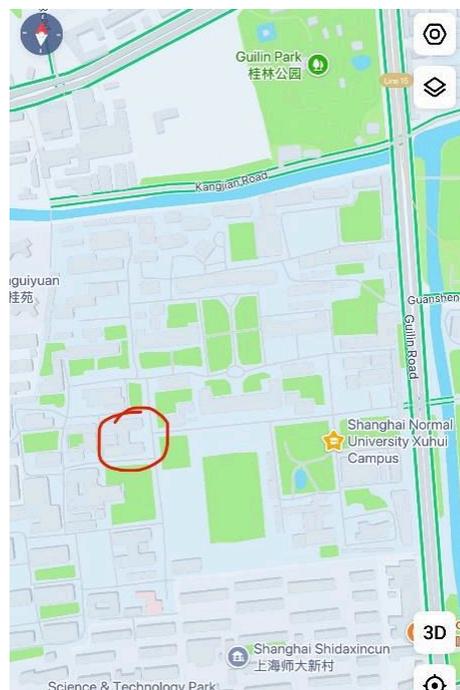




You need, and I recommend, international student insurance. I used “Heyme World Pass” from Heyme. It’s easy to get and available online. Also, when you arrive at the International Student Center on campus, they’ll make you pay for a kind of school insurance, but it’s not enough (it doesn’t cover a lot). So I recommend something more complete, like Heyme. I don’t remember how much I paid though.

I had to open a Chinese bank account. Alipay and WeChat, which you’ll use every day to pay and communicate, didn’t let me transfer money to some friends or pay in some canteens when I only had my Revolut card linked. Also, having a Chinese bank account is super helpful to avoid international card fees (you’ll get charged above 200 RMB, so above 24 euros, you get charged). I went to ICBC Bank. It’s the most convenient chain across China and offers the lowest fees (most international students in the campus also use ICBC). You’ll need your passport, proof of enrollment in China (certificat de scolarité), and a Chinese phone number. That’s what I remember, maybe there are more documents required, sorry lol. **So it’s a must.**





I lived on the campus, so I don't know what to recommend or not (sorry). It was in the International student dormitory (circled in red)

On the map, you can see that the campus is very large, and there's a big road running through the middle that splits it in two. Our classes were on the side of the campus across Guilin Road — not the side where we lived. There were also security guards everywhere, both at the entrance and inside the international student dormitory building. (For your information, there's a second large campus that belongs to SHNU — it's about 40 minutes away and is called the Fengxian campus. The one we were at was the Xuhui campus.)

I stayed in the International Student Dormitory on campus. It's very cheap, **around 150 euros/month**, but the quality of rooms varies. The ones on the first floor are very moldy (be careful if you have allergies or skin/breathing issues), the second and third floors are better. You share your room, and for a one-semester exchange, you'll only get the small ones. There are two dorm buildings: one has big, better rooms (for Master's students, those who fully pay their room, or/and who stay longer), and the other has smaller rooms (for scholarship students and exchange students like us).

If you prefer privacy and don't want to share your sleeping, working, or bathroom space with a classmate (aka the person from the L3 IM class going to SHNU too or your classmate in China) or a stranger of the same gender, you can look for an apartment outside campus. One of our classmates (the only classmate we had in China) did that since she didn't like the dorms and found an apartment instead (I think the university helped because she complained a lot). If you stay in the dorms, check your room first and ask at the reception if you want to switch, they may agree! So ask them, don't be shy.

Courses selection

Chinese



Chinese seems easy at first but is full of subtle rules, so review often. We only had class once per week, which wasn't enough. We used the textbook in class and also for doing exercises at home as homework. We also used the teacher's slides because she added clarifications on certain concepts that weren't in the textbook. You need to take notes, as there are vocabulary words that aren't in the book but that she writes on the board.

Chinese Culture and Communication



We learned about Chinese food, medicine, philosophy, and history. It helps understand the country you're living in. The class material was based on slides, but she doesn't send them. So take notes, and in addition to that, take pictures when you feel the slide is going to disappear quickly.

Appreciation of World's Boutique Hotels



Loved this one (and also the teacher is so cool and nice, we could ask her for any kind of advice). We explored boutique hotels in China and globally, plus famous hotel chains. After this class, you'll notice hotel details more, especially in Shanghai. Same for this class, it was based on slides. But she was more flexible about sharing them, so she sent them to us.

Tourism Culture

This class introduced China's many tourist cities and places with their meanings for Chinese people. Good tips for future travel too. Class materials were also in slide format, so make sure to take notes. For example, she introduced us to the ancient capitals of China, as well as the mountains and caves that are very important in Chinese culture and tourism.

The Science of Marketing

The approach was different from what I knew. There were concept I knew but also new things I didn't see before so I really appreciated that. Slides as well, and a lot of interaction with the teacher. We mainly saw marketing concepts in the field of Tourism Destination.

Notes

Name: **Rayhane NEJJAR**

Date: **July 2025**

At SHNU you can't choose your courses, they're assigned to you. Each class lasted 2h30.

In general, we interacted a lot with the teachers — it was really nice. Everything was easy to understand, and you could tell they genuinely enjoyed explaining things to us.

I really liked the interactions because sometimes we compared China with France and Europe in general, and it was great — it taught us to see things not just from our own perspective or culture(s), but through their point of view as Chinese.

Overall, the courses are easy, but Chinese might be tricky if you don't review your notes.

Reminder **Don't hesitate to ask teachers for tips or advices on**

what to in Shanghai or in China in general.



China

TO DO LIST

- Get a VPN to access your usual apps (LetsVPN or VIVPN) and download Wechat and Alipay before arriving in China
- Follow WeChat accounts (from the University) or join WeChat Groups
- Get a Chinese phone number once you arrive
- Go to Luckin Coffee on campus for your food breaks
- Plan many travels in China : Beijing, Chongqing, Wulong, Suzhou, Zhouzhuang

