

Travel Report: Exchange Semester in at Peking University spring 2027

Spending a semester studying at Peking University in Beijing was one of the most intensive and educational periods of my life. I studied Mandarin, attending a full 20 hours of lessons per week. Even though it was challenging at first, this allowed me to genuinely feel my language skills develop quickly, both in speaking and writing. After a couple months I was able to communicate with my classmates and local people completely in Mandarin, which really allowed me to connect with the people I met and enhanced my understanding of Chinese culture and society.

Alongside my Mandarin studies, I also took the opportunity to complete a course in International Security Studies, a subject I am genuinely passionate about and intend to work with in the future. The course touched upon traditional security studies theories and other established frameworks for understanding conflict, deterrence, and state behavior. It combined the traditional theories with the Chinese perspective on security and international relations. This gave me valuable insight into how security is conceptualized and debated differently depending on one's geopolitical vantage point, and it deepened my understanding of the theoretical foundations of the field as a whole.

Beijing is a city that offers a unique blend of experiences which is one of the things I really enjoyed about living there. You can explore historical sites such as the Summer Palace, Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City while also enjoying the views from one of the cities' many skyscrapers. This contrast between old and new made the city especially exciting to explore. One aspect that particularly stood out was how far China has advanced digitally. Nearly everything from payments to transportation was managed through mobile phones. This was remarkably impressive to witness, though it initially also took some time to adjust.

The scholarship I received from the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in China facilitated opportunities for me to explore several parts of China outside of Beijing. I was able to travel to cities such as Xi'an, Shanghai, Chongqing, Qingdao and Tianjin, while also taking road trips through suburban China, exploring provinces such as Inner Mongolia and Qinghai.

Altogether, my semester in Beijing offered far more than language proficiency alone. I gained lifelong friendships, deepened my knowledge in a subject I am passionate about, and developed an entirely new understanding of a society evolving at a remarkable pace. I am deeply and sincerely grateful to have received this scholarship, as it allowed me to fully embrace my time in China without significant financial concern.

This was an experience I will carry with me always, and I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to return one day. I would strongly encourage anyone seeking a meaningful challenge to pursue this opportunity.

Best regards and my sincere thanks once again,

Vivian Hoac