



Tel Aviv University
TAU Recanati

The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration

Peking University – Fall semester 2012

Visa information

Visa is required for all those who wish to enter China. Not for Hong Kong though, but if you wish to visit Hong Kong and return to the mainland (China)- multiple entry is required.

The visa issue office is located at the Chinese embassy at Ben Yehuda ST., Tel Aviv. You should bring the passport and certificate from Peking University with you, which approve that you are going to study at the university. The process should take a few days and costs 100-200 NIS.

At the beginning of the semester the Peking University's student exchange office issues multiple entry Visas for those who wish within 10 days.

I recommend doing it and issuing a multiple Visa even if you're not sure whether you will travel or not. Plans might be changed in a few weeks\ months and you can always issue a Visa by your own – but it is much more complicated. It's better to have a multiple entry for any case in order to be flexible and avoid complications.

Housing

Those who think that Tel Aviv's landlords are "fair and lovely" probably aren't familiar with the Beijinger's landlord... I got burnt by one of them but fortunately I succeeded to find a solution.

Most of Peking University & Chingua University students live in the Wudauko area which is located at the university area. (5-10 minutes distance by bus or 20 minutes walking distance from the university).

That area is full of foreigners, western restaurants, active night life, local restaurants, pubs with a student atmosphere and many Chinese of course. Because I wanted to expand the social cycles beyond friends from the university, to feel the "real" Beijing and live at a more relaxed neighborhood, I decided to live at the centre of the city in the Dongsishitiao area - about 40 minutes by subway from the university and 5 minutes by taxi or bus from the second foreigners centre – Sun Litun which I will elaborate on later. In my neighborhood the inhabitants were more mature and prices were more affordable compared to the Wudauko area, although the rent fee was about the same.

Many of the foreigners were assisted by agencies in order to find housing solutions- it might solve lots of headaches (they ask for 1 rent fee usually). I found my apartments through friends.

Another recommended way to find an apartment is to search it at the website www.Thebeijinger.com → Classifields → Housing → look according to your needs.

2 more things that should be mentioned are –

A. I recommend going before the semester starts. Stay in a hostel\ hotel and from there, try to find an apartment. Don't sign a contract before you see the flat with your own eyes!

B. Take into consideration that most of the times – the deposit doesn't return.

Living expenses

Although the prices in China generally and Beijing particularly are persistently increasing- the cost of living in Beijing isn't expensive compared to the living expenses in Israel.

The rent cost in Beijing is high compared to other parts of China, but lower compared to the cost of rent in Tel Aviv. The prices are definitely a good value for money.

Food- cheap as well. Street food would cost 5-15 NIS for a meal. A meal at a "fancy" restaurant will cost between 50-100 NIS per person.

Transportation and tourist sites aren't expensive either.

3500 NIS per month would be enough to live well in Beijing.

1800 NIS for furnished 3 rooms at high condition with a roommate/ 2500 NIS for 2 rooms flat.

200 NIS- transportation

1500 NIS- for food, personal expenses and recreation.

*All the prices are approximated for a month.

Transportation

If you will choose to live in the Wudauko area- you can buy a bicycle and get to the university and the whole area by them- a tool that is used by a major part of the Chinese population.

The transportation in Beijing is very convenient in matters that the subway arrives to almost every part of the city, at a high frequency, is clean and cheap (1.2 NIS for a single ride). The buses and the taxi are inexpensive too.

On the same topic- orientation in the city isn't easy ☺ My recommendation is before you go to a specific place (university at the first few times, tourist sites, shopping malls, restaurants, parks and particularly less known places)- even though you might think that the place is familiar to almost everyone – you might be surprised- some will be afraid to talk with foreigners, others don't speak English, others won't understand you and some don't know the place... So it's better if you have the address of the place written in Chinese and also a small map (Google map or print screen of Google map on your mobile)- that way you can ask the people on the street or show the address to the taxi driver more easily rather than looking for a place for a few hours... You will find that losing your way can happen really frequently.

For your information - A taxi from the airport to the center of Beijing or the Wudauko area should cost between 80-120 RMB.

Courses

Before I will elaborate more regarding the courses that I took, I would like to add a comment regarding the campus which is more like a small city rather than what we know as a "University"... more or less a few thousand people, which aren't students (!), live at the 115 year old university and another few thousands at dorms (which usually aren't used for student exchange programs).

At the campus there are more than 20 restaurants (not surprising that most of them are Chinese though...), a bank, a postal office, supermarkets, a beautiful lake, a forest, gardens, a luxury hotel, new sport courts (some of the Beijing 2008 Olympic games were played at the campus swimming pool and at the sports hall), and many more things to be seen on the huge campus.

PKU is considered the number one university in China and hence the high level (and motivated as well) of the Chinese students. Most of them pass lots of exams in order to be accepted and had better grades

than tens of thousands of other students from their area. It is kind of a dream come true for many of them, and hence the high appreciation from the local people when they hear where you studied (it's a good point if you do business with Chinese some day).

The study method is different from what was familiar to me – the requirements are much more demanding, lots of teamwork during lectures and at group assignments, but the level of the studies is not as high as TAU. I took 5 courses that counted as 7 points (Nekudot Zchut):

Product & Service Innovation

Nice course; few guest lecturers that present a different perspective of innovation. Some of the speakers come from venture capital, technology and research background. There is a big group project during the course and also a few individual assignments.

Business Chinese

I recommend taking this course which is great help for the daily survivability. Nevertheless, the course isn't enough to speak fluently or even understand that hard and demanding language.

The course is 3 hours a week with an exam at the end of the course.

Bayer- Value creation

The course includes 5 sessions - 2.5 hours each, and at each session another Bayer's representative, from a different background (Bayer is a German chemical and pharmaceutical company and one of the leading companies in that industry) which presents a different prospective of value creation, some of them focus more on Bayer while others are more general. The grade is determined by a summary at the end of the course.

E-commerce

This is probably the best course that I took (together with the marketing channels course).

The professor has wide experience and knowledge of that industry in China and in Europe and the U.S. as well. Lots of examples were given from the Chinese market with a comparison to west.

On that topic, among many others, China is different from the west and it's interesting to see and learn on those differences, especially if you think of being involved in that industry which is widely used in China.

There are 3 individual assignments, a group presentation and a group project that at the end of the course has to be presented and written in paper as well. The course is demanding and requires a lot of effort but is interesting.

Marketing channels

An interesting course on the marketing channels in China and their uniqueness. There are 2 group assignments with presentations and an additional individual home exam. Excellent professor and interesting material.

Recreation

In Beijing there is an advanced night life including a wide variety of food and restaurants from many different kinds for attractive prices, with pubs, bars, coffee shops and clubs as well.

There are 3 main areas for recreation- Wudauko, San Litun and Gulodajie. Karaoke is a popular recreation for the Chinese people- that usually takes place in private rooms with food and alcohol and is worth a try while you are there.

General experience

In my opinion, the student exchange experience, no matter where- is a great experience and is recommended for anyone who wishes to expand their horizons. There are a few reasons for it. Regarding studies- to see and feel it in a different country, to expand your network, live abroad for a limited period of time, and it's more likely to know the place, its culture and its people better as a citizen rather than a tourist. Besides that- it's a kind of a "time-out" from ordinary life and the familiarity, to lay back and get a good chance to examine your route and your future.

China is the future and more than that – the present. There is no better way to feel and know a place rather than live in it for a limited period of time, see and feel the Chinese mentality, culture, attitude, way of thinking and behavioral differences which is so different from what we are used to.

Chinese people highly appreciate the western culture and step by step are opening up to the west- the number of English speaker's is increasing gradually, more and more coffee shops are opening (while tea is the most popular beverage in China) and western restaurants too, so the authentic is disappearing slowly.

Beijing provides a safe and secure feeling despite its size and the cultural difference. The beauty of Beijing is that the past and the future are combined and integrated- skyscrapers just beside old hutong (traditional narrow Chinese alleys) and extremely high construction speed- put in doubt the time that we have left to enjoy the view which is changing all the time.

Due to the reason that the place is so unique and different - everyone has a different experience from Beijing (and from China of course).

Tips & important things to be aware of

The winter in Beijing is hard and extremely cold, the language is a barrier, and please take into consideration that life in Beijing is different from what we are used to (compared to western countries).

Be aware of the food – when you ask for chicken you have to be more specific if you don't want to be surprised... the different toilet, the water that isn't allowed for drinking directly from the faucet, the landlords, people who want to "practice" the English language with you or "innocent" girls who invite you for a drink of tea\ wine\ beer and are in fact a swindle (which happened to acquaintances).

I recommend taking a Chinese course for survivability and in any case- to take with you anywhere your address, food, etc. written in Chinese (or a transcription).

By My personal experience, I am really happy that I chose Beijing to be my destination due to all the reasons that I explained before. The student exchange term in Beijing was one of the most special experiences that I had, and I can't wait to be there again ☺

For more information you are welcome to contact me:

Oded Segal

Oded_segal7@walla.com

052-3772573