

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

WANT TO WORK IN **CHINA?**

GET TIPS FROM YOUR
ALUMNI NETWORK!

Young professionals and graduate employers from the Birmingham alumni community share their experiences of living and working in China.

With more than 300,000 alumni, there are Birmingham graduates across the globe. China is one of the most popular destinations for our alumni, with almost 11,000 based there.

This guide will take you through the process of moving to China, with insights from alumni who have already made the move. It will cover what to plan before leaving, how to find and apply for jobs and how to integrate into society.

THE BASICS

In case you haven't started your research yet, let our alumni talk you through the basics of life in China.

MAIN NATIONALITIES

CHINESE (92%)

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

110 (POLICE),

119 (FIRE)

120 (AMBULANCE)

MAIN TRANSPORT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND CAR



‘There are amazing opportunities for travel to explore the weird and wonderfulness of China.’

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

MAJOR RELIGIONS

DAOISM AND
BUDDHISM

POPULATION

1.35 BILLION



MAIN LANGUAGES

MANDARIN
AND
CANTONESE

‘For most areas of China some basic Chinese is a must as taxis don't like to take foreigners who don't know where they are going and who can't really communicate!’

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

CURRENCY

CHINESE YUAN
RENMINBI
(¥, RMB, CNY)

‘China has had one of the strongest economic growths of major countries in the world for the last few decades, and this will continue in the foreseeable years.’

Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

INTERNET DOMAIN

WWW....

.CN



THE LABOUR MARKET

What can you expect from working in China?

LABOUR FORCE

793.3 MILLION (2013)



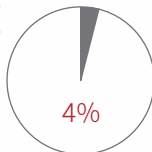
‘China is fast developing. You get more opportunities to explore business in the global context and the possibility to pilot your work in the global market.’

Jie Chen (MA Education, International Management & Policy, 2001)



AVERAGE AGE
AT GRADUATION

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE



HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

11 DAYS PUBLIC HOLIDAY
AND 5 DAYS ANNUAL LEAVE

(DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF SERVICE)

AVERAGE STARTING SALARY

4000 CNY PER MONTH



‘We tend to pay fresh graduates with Bachelor’s degrees 5000 CNY per month, and more for Master’s graduates.’

Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

‘You get a great remuneration package in China.’

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

AVERAGE WORKING WEEK

40 HOURS, MONDAY TO FRIDAY

‘Working overtime is quite common.’

Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

COST OF LIVING

GENERALLY
LOWER THAN UK

‘Living expenses are increasing but still lower than London.’

Peter Zhao

(MBA, 2003)



TAX RATE

RANGES FROM 5–45%
(DEPENDING ON SALARY)

For more information about each of these areas, Google ‘TargetJobs Working Abroad’ or ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’.

Please note that these figures are averages or estimates that were deemed accurate at the time of print.



WHAT TO PLAN

Don't forget anything! Let our recent graduates talk you through what they planned before they left, as well as what you can leave until you arrive.

‘It is not easy to apply for a work permit as a foreign employee in China especially for fresh graduates. Chinese returnees are preferred at the moment.’
Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

✓ ASSESS YOUR VISA OPTIONS

✓ FIND THE RIGHT JOB BEFORE YOU LEAVE

✓ FIND ACCOMMODATION

‘Generally, main cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen are very international.’
Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

‘If Visa restrictions are high, get a foot in the door at the company's UK branch, prove yourself there and then push for a move overseas after a year or so.’
Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

‘If you are looking for adventure and want to explore China, it is worth considering smaller cities where people are generally friendlier and the pace of work and life is a bit slower compared to the main metropolitan cities.’
Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

For more detailed information on the legalities of moving abroad, consult the Careers Network's International Work Experience page or the UK Chinese Embassy website.

‘From city to city you can have very different experiences. Shanghai is very modern and metropolitan. It is almost like ‘China for beginners’. The best place to live for foreigners is in the French Concession area.’
Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

‘Jobs can range from the very good to the very bad. Make sure you know what your package is. Top companies will provide flights, medical care, accommodation, a relocation budget and should have a HR department who will arrange your Visa, bank account, phone, etc.’
Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

‘Flat shares are quite common for foreign and Chinese graduates. People advertise these on forums and *SmartShanghai.com*.’
Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

‘I would advise securing a job before heading to China.’
Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

‘Initially my employer provided accommodation. I then used a local agent to arrange an apartment and got my employer to check the lease.’
Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

FINDING JOBS

Our alumni have pursued a wide range of careers, but there are some key places that they all advise you look when searching for a job in China.



WEBSITES

www.51job.com
www.zhaopin.com

“Most websites advertising junior roles are in Chinese, like *51job.com* and *zhaopin.com*. LinkedIn is the best option if you do not speak Chinese.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

“One of the major differences is the importance of one’s seniority and *guanxi* (personal relationships/network). The alumni networks in China are taken very seriously and it’s not unusual for grads to meet regularly for lunch or dinner.”

Thomas Merritt (BA International Studies with French, 2009)

“Websites are useful, as are recommendations from senior professionals.”

Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

“I often find out about jobs by friends referring me to them and by using LinkedIn.”

Jie Chen (MA Education, International Management & Policy, 2001)

“Networking is absolutely key. Identify the line managers at the companies you want to work in on LinkedIn and approach them directly.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)



NETWORKING

4

EVENTS

“For teaching jobs, the CIS job fair in London was a great place to look for jobs.”
Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

For more information on where to look, use the TargetJobs Working Abroad pages.

APPLYING FOR JOBS

Our alumni talk through some of their experiences of applying for jobs in China.



- ‘Experience is seen as most important. For a fresh graduate, their university’s reputation and their capability are dually considered.’

Peter Zhao (MBA, 2003)

- ‘International organisations here in China tend to have very similar recruitment processes to the UK.’

Jie Chen (MA Education, International Management & Policy, 2001)

- ‘For local Chinese companies, the interviews are less intense and formal than their international peers. A rule of thumb is that the similarity of recruitment process of Chinese companies to their international peers increases with their size.’

Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

CAREERS TO CONSIDER



- ‘Writing to the Chambers of Commerce (AmCham & BritCham) would be useful as they have opportunities for fresh graduates.’

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

Make the most of the Careers Network (CN). They can discuss your career options, give guidance on your CV, conduct mock interviews and much more. Google ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’ for more info.

Remember that CN is also available to you for two years after you graduate.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES IN CHINA COMPARED TO THE UK?

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION?



DESIRABLE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- ‘Chinese companies look for graduates who are adaptable and hard-working, and who have the ability to work in fast-paced environments and build, develop and maintain relationships. Speaking Mandarin is usually required.’

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

- ‘There is value in those of us who have experience of studying and working in the UK as you can bring your multicultural understanding into your work.’

Jie Chen (MA Education, International Management & Policy, 2001)

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE



- ‘Great importance is placed on keeping ‘face’. You can sense hierarchy in a meeting and challenging seniority is rare.’

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

- ‘The Chinese love building relationships and a lot of business is done through socialising and drinking.’

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

HOW TO INTEGRATE

So you've made your plans, you've booked your flights and you've found your job... but what should you do when you actually arrive? Our alumni have loads of advice to give you to ensure that you feel a part of Chinese society as quickly as possible.



GET USED TO COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

- “Chinese people think nothing of asking personal questions, e.g. how much you earn, what your family situation is like, etc. Some older generation Chinese also dislike pointing.”

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)

- “Politeness, like saying “please” and “thanks”, is shown to strangers but not to family members and friends as it is generally considered as a sign of distance and formality.”

Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

EMBRACE THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

- “The biggest challenge is that China is so different from the UK. Things that we take for granted in the UK are often ignored here. It is important to keep an open mind.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

GET A BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL AND EX-PAT FRIENDS

- “Ex-pat forums, like *Internations.org*, advertise lots of activities and would also be useful for guidance before you leave. Try to avoid meeting just ex-pats though as you will not learn the Chinese culture this way. The app called *Meetup* is good for making local friends.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

GET TO KNOW YOUR CO-WORKERS

- “Befriending your colleagues is the easiest way to feel integrated.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)

- “Dinner parties and work place encounters will almost guarantee a fast expanding social circle for any British graduate.”

Sen Du (PhD Geography, 2011)

GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL ACTIVITIES

- “For the outgoing it is easy to make friends in bars. Other than that, work friends or language learning buddies are the best way. Most major cities have a range of sports teams which you can get involved in.”

Ed Smith (MEd, 2008)



LEARN THE LANGUAGE

- “Life is so much easier when you speak Mandarin. You don't have to be fluent, but I would recommend taking beginners lessons and learning to read Pinyin.”

Alex Martin (BA International Studies with Political Science, 2009)



- “Check what the local university and the central library offer in terms of study and leisure activities. At these you will meet people who share the same values and who you can learn from.”

Jie Chen (MA Education, International Management & Policy, 2001)

YOUR ALUMNI

A wide variety of alumni contributed to this guide. Here are just a few examples of what they're up to at the moment.

Degree:

MA Education,
International
Management & Policy

Year of

graduation: 2011

Role: Senior Key Account Manager
Automobile, Allianz Assistance

Responsibilities: Roadside
assistance, accident service and
emergency call telematics for BMW,
MINI and Rolls Royce, and exploring
wider business scope



JIE CHEN

Degree:

PGCE
Humanities and
Masters of Education

Year of

graduation:

2007 and 2008

Role: Teacher, Harrow International
School Beijing

Responsibilities: Teaching History

Reason for moving: I moved
to China as I wanted a completely
different cultural experience and had
always wanted to visit Asia



ED SMITH

Degree:

BA International Studies
with Political Science

Year of graduation:

2009

Role: Executive Search
Consultant, Robert Walters
China

Responsibilities: Sourcing
candidates and building relationships
with companies in order to match
them with each other

Reason for moving: I graduated
around the same time as the financial
crisis so I moved to Asia within
two months!



ALEX MARTIN

Degree:

BCom Commerce,
MSc Economics,
MSc Investments,
and PhD Geography

Year of graduation:

2002-2011

Role: MSP/Drilex

Responsibilities: Overall management
of the company, an oil and gas equipment
manufacturer, and particularly its global
marketing, public relations and financing



SEN DU

Want to stay in touch with other Birmingham graduates?



University of Birmingham Alumni



University of Birmingham Alumni
and Friends



@birminghamalum

Our Chinese alumni stay in regular contact
using Weibo chat. Download the app and
add 'The Alumni Association BUACC of the
University of Birmingham UK'.

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