Preparation

Ever since I got the acceptance letter to Renmin University of China, I have started my preparation. Overall, I think to classify all the required preparation into three aspects is good enough for me. These aspects are documentation, accommodation, and academic.

Documentation
Because I am still holding a Chinese passport, therefore I don’t have to worry about acquiring a visa for my trip. Other than this, there is a temporary living permit you will need to obtain after you settle in. If I remember correctly, Chinese government gives up to two weeks for you to apply this after you have arrived. Nonetheless, the much more detailed information will be provided to you when you check-in at the University and once more at the orientation (mandatory).

Accommodation and Living
There are two ways you can live while you are in school. First, you can apply for the University dormitory. There are single room and shared room. Speaking with my own experience, do not put your hope up for a single room to yourself, because the waitlist is so long it takes at least half a year or one semester for a room to be available to newcomers. Shared room is for two students. The room comes with an individual closet, individual desk, and individual bed, and some individual storage place for each student. One air conditioner and a room wifi. You can buy pillow and sheet from the school or use your own. One downside for shared room is that there no private bathroom. Public bathrooms are down the hall, which is shared between the whole floor and there are three shower spots available for man. For shared room, the monthly rent is ¥1200 RMB, or $250~$300 CAD.

If you are uncomfortable with taking shower while you can hear others singing right next to you. You can always rent an apartment inside the school or near the school. The rent is a little higher than dormitory, about ¥3000, or $600 CAD for one room. Landlord will provide other things.

Living cost in Beijing as a student isn’t really high. I would say $1000 CAD per month is enough to cover rent (dormitory), food, leisure, and a bit shopping. There are several cafeterias and restaurants within the school, and there are more close by. School cafeterias cost really low, probably $2~$3 CAD is enough to have a decent meal. While you are there, you must check out all the different but all delicious food.

Academics
Before you check-in at the school, you will not have a student ID, which means you do not have a mean to access the school account. On top of this, there isn’t enough public information online which can help you to decide which course you wish to take. Therefore, feel free to enjoy the excitement of international exchange and start learning/mastering Chinese. Greatness is ahead of you!
During my one-year exchange, there are plenty to talk about, but I will focus the discussion on academic experience for this part of the report. In my time at Renmin University, I have had the pleasure of learning from 11 different teachers, some are professors or associate professors, and others are lecturers. They all provided great help and enlightenment to me. Regardless of this, I will point out some differences between the two countries’ university set up for student. Although these differences might change your attitude, but I sincerely wish it is toward the better.

The first difference is the class formation. In Canada or US, a class for certain major’s course is usually composed by anyone who have met the requirement and willing to take that certain course. Yet, in China, you are assigned to a “Class” with other students from your concentration of that year, and your “Class” will remain the same through out your bachelor years. For example, if your first year of university is starting from September 2019 and you are going to study Physics, then your class number will likely be Year 2019 Physics Class 1 or Year 2019 Physics Class 2. Course schedule is decided by class and students have limited choices of selection for mandatory courses. The good news for them is that when it comes to electives, you are free to choose any given sections as you want. The reason I am explaining this is not to warn you that your choices will be limited to. I am doing so because as an international exchange student, you have access to all the courses in the school (I can’t guarantee the same for other schools). If you decide to get focus your study within one concentration, you shouldn’t be surprised if find out your classmate are almost the same. In this case, if you want to be more involved, you might even have a chance to join that class.

The second difference is the grading system. Similar to Beedie, Renmin University of China applies a curved grading system throughout most faculties. However, if you attend to classes and do your homework, your grade will be just fine. In China, because students have been through the toughest academic challenge – Gaokao (similar to provincial exams, but Gaokao test score is solely responsible for applying university). Therefore, teachers in university are more willing to show leniency to student. Unless you missed most of your homework and classes while doing poorly on the test, you shouldn’t need to be worry of receiving a D or F or even C-. For “Concentration elective class”, you will most likely have a grade between B+ to A+ depending on how good you are. As for the “concentration required class”, grade ranges from B- to A+ for most students.

Recommendations

I have spent half of my life living in Canada, yet, I am still a Chinese citizen. Therefore, being as a Chinese, there isn’t a lot for me to prepare prior to my trip. With that being said, I think the most important tip I can give out prior to landing is to make sure you calculate your arrival date accordingly. If you are planning to check into the dormitory on your arrival date, you must be aware of the following.

First, compare to Canada, Beijing is hot and stuffy at the summer. According to the latest data, average temperature for June 2019 is 32°C and 33°C for July. Even though there is air conditioning within all the building, but there still is some footwork need to be done outside. To summarize the possible condition you
might be in, you are looking at a case which a foreigner who has just flew for 11 hours and is searching for correct direction from the airport to a certain building at the other side of Beijing, which either will be done by taxi and on-foot trip or public transportation and on-foot travel, under the influence of 15 hours time difference and 30°C+ temperature along with one or two heavy luggage.

However, if you choose to arrive just couple days ahead, which is highly recommended, you should book a hotel as early as possible. Early reservation will most likely have a cheaper price, and you will certainly have more room choices.

Despite your arrival date, one more thing you should do before the trip is to have a one to three days roaming package for your phone. You wouldn’t need to have a longer package because it is really easy to have yourself a Chinese sim card at a much better price. Currently, the best student package I have seen is ¥200 per year, which is about $40 in Canadian, and you will be surprise of what it covers. The monthly coverage includes: Unlimited national wide data (20GB of 4G data and limited speed after), 200 min calling time, 30 texts, unlimited call receiving, 30GB school wide directional 4G data (you can use it on APPs like iQiyi, Tencent Video, Mango TV, Tik tok, Arena of Valor, Youku Video, etc. All of them are the popular if not necessary APPs in China), unlimited school wide WLAN (up to 40GB with top speed), and 1000 minutes of calling time between school friends. One thing to be made clear, Renmin University of China’s in-school WLAN provides 25GB of data (regardless of the device) for free to each student, exceeding data is at a price of ¥1/GB.

On top of this, I would like to emphasize that China is a really safe country, from both the social and the health perspectives. You will need your all kinds of insurance, but honestly, you shouldn’t be expecting to use any.

Oh, there is one thing you should beware, because of Chinese Network Laws, you wouldn’t be able to open some sites, mainly social media like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram. According to my latest test, Google and YouTube are accessible without the use of VPN.

One last thing, the air quality is really good, more than 90% of the days are with blue sky!
East Gate

School Motto - Seek Truth from Fact
2019届毕业生誓词

明德博学，求是笃行；
勤勉为新，朴实友爱。
不忘初心，争做国家栋梁；
牢记使命，勇为社会栋梁。
胸怀鸿鹄志，激扬爱国情。
扬帆新征程，建功新时代。

Graduation Oath

Graduates' Student ID Photobooth
"One Spoon" Pond

Summer Sprinkle
School Fountain

Lovely day!