Prior to departure

- Book a flight with a flexible return date, your finals might be in-class finals, so you might finish early and want to travel around.
- Don’t worry about exchanging too much money. Many ATMs in China accept Canadian debt cards and the exchange rate isn’t that bad. (Bank of China ATMs accept TD debit cards)
- When they email you the date for applying for dormitories, make sure you register exactly at that time (and convert the time to Vancouver time from Beijing time). It’s very competitive to get a single room.

Things to pack:
- Hand sanitizer
- Towel
- Photo copy of your passport
- Backpack for travel
- Lonely Planet guide to China
- Canadian memorabilia to give to foreign friends
- Bring clothes for cold and warm weather (seasons change fast)
- Don’t bother bringing an umbrella if you go in the fall semester. (It only rained once)

During Exchange

- When you arrive at the check-in desk for your building, ask if you can have a room facing the sunny side. It makes a big difference!
- I found class sizes to be smaller in Tsinghua compared to SFU. As well professors ask students a lot of questions during class, so be prepared to participate.
- You’re allowed to drop a class halfway through the semester. Most professors will make sure to hold the midterm before the deadline, so that you can see your midterm grade before deciding whether or not to drop a class. That said the grade distribution is more generous at Tsinghua, so you’ll probably be rewarded for toughing it out.
- There are tons of clubs, volunteer groups, and language exchange groups at Tsinghua.

Things to do:
- Take a raft boat from Guilin to Yangshou
- Ride a horse on the planes of Inner Mongolia
- Take the bullet train to Shanghai
- See a show in the National Center for Performing Arts
- Get lost in a Beijing Hutong
Words of wisdom

- Don’t attend any tea ceremonies – they are scams
- Be weary of anyone who comes up to you and asks to lead you somewhere. That said there are lots of really nice people who just want to chat, but if they try to lead you somewhere, it’s probably a scam.
- A “Black Taxi” is an unlicensed taxi, it doesn’t look like a taxi that’s painted black, it’s just a normal car. You can recognize a black taxi by the fact that the driver is usually standing around his car asking you where you want to go. The advantages of a black taxi are A) you can negotiate the price before you leave B) They are everywhere. If you are going to use a black taxi, make sure you are with a big group of friends that speak mandarin and that you are familiar with where you are going (and can recognize if the driver is going off track). I have heard stories of people getting driven out to the middle of nowhere and getting robbed. So for the most part I would recommend you use a regular taxi to stay safe.