Exchange Report

Host Institution: Renmin University of China (RUC) in Beijing, China.
My major/faculty: Physical Geography, Faculty of Environment
Dates/term of exchange: From July 9th to August 3rd, 2018 Summer Short-term

Preparation for exchange

There are not that many information available for this summer program on the SFU exchange website, so I would suggest you look at the RUC ISS website for things like what to bring, important dates, application, how to get to the campus from the airport, etc. The normal course load for this summer program would be 2 courses. Most of the courses are considered as introductory level. There is no need to bring your own bedding since the school will provide you with an entire set. You don’t need to bring too many clothes because there are washing machines in every floors of the residence, so you can probably wash you clothes twice a week or even more often if you wish to. One load of the wash will only cost 3 or 4 yuan (less than 1 dollar) based on the different options that you choose which is very cheap. However, the washing machine only accept WeChat Pay or by washing card purchased from the residence front desk. If you don’t know how to use WeChat pay, you may need to purchase a washing card during the check-in processes. There are convenient stores near the residence and you can get almost everything that you may need during the stay such as umbrella, toilet paper, snacks and drinks but they are a bit pricy compared to other stores outside the campus. You may want to get at least 3000-5000 yuan cash in advance because the residence only accept cash for payment, also you may need some cash for charging your dining card, buy groceries in convenient stores, etc. In case you need some more cash during you stay, you could go to one of the banks near the campus, to either use your credit card to withdraw some money from the ATM or try to use some foreign currency to exchange some money during working hours (use credit card to withdraw money from the ATM would be way more convenient). I would suggest you take a taxi to the campus’ east gate after you arrive at Beijing Airport. The shuttle bus and subway are normally
very crowded so could be very hard if you will be carrying large baggage. The taxi fare should be between 100-150 yuan (around 20-30 dollars). I heard some of my friends told me that the taxi driver asks them to pay 300 yuan (be careful). Renting a place or living in the hotel outside the campus could be very expensive so I would suggest you apply for admission early so as the residence.

**During Exchange**

The registration day was one day before the classes begin and you will get the student id card (the card also used to pay for dining at school canteens). Also, the card is required to enter some certain buildings within the campus such as the Mingde business building and the library. There was an opening ceremony event started right after the end of the first day of classes. The ceremony provided free Chinese foods and it was a good chance to make friends. There were two kinds of accommodation, it depends on you either want to live alone or with a roommate. A single room cost 2-3 times more compared to a double room (I lived in a single room). The majority part of students in the class were RUC students (Chinese students). I would say the way of lecturing was pretty similar to SFU because many of the instructors were actually from universities in English speaking countries but not RUC. The class size is between 30-40 people. The grading is not very hard but at least you need to complete all the assignments/exams to pass the course. You don’t need to spend too much time on reviewing course material, you can One thing interesting was that you may be asked by many Chinese tourists to take photos with them in many of the sightseeing places. It happened every time to my Norwegian and South African friends… They told me that they have never been so famous before… During the registration day, you will be provided many options of cultural activities to visit places such as the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, etc. If you decided to join one or even all these activities, you will need to pay for these activities (cost from 30 to 100 yuan depends on different activities) during the registration day by cash. Going to these activities was also a good chance to make friends!
Reflection After Exchange

Overall, the exchange experience was perfect. I achieved my main goal which is studying in one of the top Chinese universities. More importantly, I got to know so many people from all around the world with different perspectives and experiences. I really learned a lot from many of them. The grading at RUC is relatively easy compared to SFU, so you may spend more time with your friends without worrying too much about the study. I think the only challenging thing is language, because my native language is Chinese so I don’t have any problems, but I can see that many of my foreign friends were having problems sometimes when ordering Chinese foods, taking public transportation, trying to use some Chinese apps on their phone…if you can learn some Chinese before you come to China, that could be very helpful. At least you should try to learn some basic Chinese like Hello, thank you, etc then Chinese people will think that you are very friendly and willing to help you. If you are going to visit some sightseeing places, remember to bring your passport or at least your student id with you since many of the places require a security check before you can enter it and they asked for identification documents (Chinese national id card or passport. From my own experiences, the security is very serious to Chinese people like me, they required me to present my national id card, but for my foreign friends, the security guy can accept student id or not even check any of their IDs…).Spend more time to know more people, learn about their culture, try some Chinese foods that you have never seen before, explore Beijing and other areas in China, just spend a few hours before any assignment due dates or exams … then you will surely have a wonderful exchange experience!

Lastly, just want to show you some photos during my exchange at RUC and Beijing!
Residence:
Foods from the school canteens:
Activities: