MY EXPERIENCE IN SHANGHAI

Last summer the University of Malta gave me the opportunity to become an International Student at the University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in Shanghai. I consider it one of the best experiences that could have happened to me after my first year of University. The scholarship covered all the costs: tuition fees, accommodation in a four star hotel next to the University, and meal plan (a lot of vegetables, rice and, of course, only chopsticks, cutlery not included!).

However I was having such a wonderful time that I decided to extend my staying in Shanghai. Therefore, following the end of the program I chose to broaden my TCM studies and practice Tuina (medical manipulation) at my professor`s clinic.

The study program was very well organized. Lectures covered a variety of topics, not only concerning TCM, but about Chinese culture in general. For example, we had calligraphy and language classes, and although I have never studied Chinese before, it was such a challenge! Chinese became so useful for me, and made it so that I could bargain with vendors on the street. My minor at the University of Malta is Theatre, and I also had the unique opportunity to assist in the Peking Opera rehearsal. I could not believe that what I was previous only reading about in books could happen in reality.

![Figure 1 Chinese Culture Experience. I am on the far right in the front row.](image)

However most of the program was focused on TCM and Materia Medica. Unfortunately TCM is not widely practiced and supported in Italy (my country) and I have never had the opportunity to study this Oriental millenary and fascinating medicine before. Professors at the Shanghai Summer School were very friendly and prepared. Theory and practice lessons were distributed during the week promptly and consistently. Twice a week we were enjoying Tai Chi class, and I still have some videos saved on my phone to keep me from forgetting the movements and positions. During our staying we had the privilege to visit TCM pharmacies, clinics and hospitals,
where every day hundreds of patients are treated with TCM. We participated in the practice of acupuncture, moxibustion, cupping and tuina manipulations. This experience made me believe in the importance of TCM and its beneficial effects in everyday life. The study of this subject has opened up a new world of opportunities, and allowed me to see Western medicine from another perspective.

Figure 2 International Students at the herbal garden.

My experience in Shanghai, however, was not only about China or TCM. I was sharing and learning through my studies, ideas and activities with thirty other international students. I learned some Thai songs (my roommate was from Thailand), I still remember a few samba steps from my Brazilian friends, I know how to say Il-lallu in Korean (ahsshi) but most of all, I have friends to visit and places to stay in so many fascinating countries in the world! We are so different from each other, but we share the same unforgettable memories of a priceless, life-changing summer in Shanghai.

In conclusion, I am extremely thankful to everyone who made this experience possible: The University of Malta, The University of TCM of Shanghai, the amazing volunteers, professors, international students, and of course my Family, that I love and that is always there for me.

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Figure 3 In this picture I am at the Herbal Garden