Study Report

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From: TUM School of Management
At: Peking University HSBC Business School

Thomas Ciarán Zschocke
pekinguniversity@tomciaran.com
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1. Motivation

"We Chinese know only too well what it takes to achieve prosperity, so we applaud the achievements of others and we wish them a better future. We are not jealous of others’ success and we will not complain about the others who have benefited. We will welcome them aboard the express train of Chinese development."

Xi Jinping, World Economic Forum 2017

It’s thrilling that TUM SOM Exchange enables us students to visit Peking University in China. Why? Because it’s the best university of the world’s largest economy.

Why study abroad?

I’m not a fan of being a tourist. Living abroad, to work or to study, is a lot better! It allows you to dive deeper into the life of people from all over the world. TUM SOM Exchange is an amazing opportunity to do exactly that – a free possibility to gain new perspectives on a different academic system, culture, language, people, mindset and way-of-life. Use it!

Why China?

I’ve been to China several times before this semester – for internships and a study program – and it was clear to me: I want to go back! Why? Living in China debunked many presumptions and clichés that Westerns have about China: China is not innovative and simply a copycat? Not anymore: Tencent’s WeChat, Huawei B2B solutions or Lenovo’s Thinkpads are examples of an increasingly innovating economy. I’ve experienced the Chinese society as driven, hard-working, smart, dynamic – and super friendly. Bad quality of life? On the contrary, I got the impression that China is a very livable country: Often, parks are full of children playing, couples dancing, old people exercising; colourful street food restaurants are bustling; Chinese festivals are celebrated enthusiastically; and China’s new big rising middle class know exactly how to enjoy life – be it shopping in the mall, or crazy in the club. China is not influential or relevant yet? Anyone who believes that should watch Xi Jinping’s speech at the World Economic Forum 2017 – or simply watch the news: China has become a leading superpower. Also, it’s Germany’s largest trading partner – and Germany is one of China’s largest. Summarizing: China’s friendly and dynamic high-speed society, China’s quality of life, and the country’s powerful new role in the world are my three key motivators to study and live in China! Furthermore, China is superbly fascinating simply because it is so full of contrasts and so very different than any other country.

Why Peking University?

As TUM student, you study at Germany’s best university – according e.g. to the QS World University Ranking 2016. China has two universities that are seen as clear number one: Tsinghua University and Peking University (short “BeiDa”). They both have acceptance rates lower than 1% – it’s great that TUM enables us to study at China’s top school.

Why Shenzhen?

Peking University and Tsinghua University are actually both based in Peking – but they’ve built a new international graduate level campus in Shenzhen, a 12 million city in China’s warm South and only a few kilometers from Hong Kong. Here, classes are taught in English and the quota of international students is higher than on main campus. When China opened up, Shenzhen became the gateway through which many international businesses made their way into China. The Shenzhen campus has a strong focus on finance (maybe because of its closeness to the many financial institutions in Hong
Kong) and living in Shenzhen is perfect for students interested in entrepreneurship (because of Shenzhen’s amazing status as China’s entrepreneurship epicenter – and the world’s hardware motor; more details later). Finally, the weather is superb, with relatively fresh air, sunny beaches – and one of the world’s most exciting cities around the corner: Hong Kong.

For Further Reading
Although not complete and not necessarily my opinion, these infos can help understand a bit more about China – and increase your motivation even more:

- Ian Morris, Stanford Professor and historian, wrote a very insightful book on the entire history of the East and the West: “Why the West Rules – For Now”
- A must watch for anyone moving to Shenzhen, as this is what the city is famous for – worldwide: https://youtu.be/SGJ5cZnoody
- Info on Peking University: http://english.pku.edu.cn/Admission/InternationalStudents/
- It’s tough for Chinese to get into top universities:
  https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/06/chinas-unfair-college-admissions-system/276995/
- Rise of China I – Xi Jinping at World Economic Forum Davos:
  Full Video: https://youtu.be/Ys6skqxQKMk
- Rise of China II – interesting TED talk that helps understand China:
  https://www.ted.com/talks/martin_jacques_understanding_the_rise_of_china
- Rise of China III – When will China overtake US GDP?:
- Rise of China IV:
  http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/16/is-china-the-fastest-rising-power-in-history/
- Get the Handelsblatt China Briefing Newsletter for weekly insights:
  http://chinacircle.handelsblatt.com/

2. Application and Preparation

Language Preparation
Chinese is a wonderful, poetic, ancient, and super relevant language – and, like so many things about China, very unusual. I can highly recommend to take a Chinese course beforehand (e.g. A1), because it’s a great way to familiarize yourself with the language and to make contacts with other future China exchange students. HelloChinese is a great Chinese learning app that I’d recommend the most.

Mental Preparation
China is completely different than the West – or any other country I’ve been to. Be open minded, and don’t expect things to work the same way as in Germany. If they don’t, it’s important not to get frustrated. E.g.: Internet! The Chinese Internet works great for Chinese websites – but it can be very frustrating regarding websites we are used to: Google, Gmail, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Snapchat, some news sites, and many more, are blocked by the Chinese firewall (you need to download a VPN client, beforehand). And non-blocked sites can be very slow. In such cases, optimism and adaptation brings you further than frustration. Use Apple Maps instead of Google Maps, use Youku instead of Youtube, Didi instead of Uber, and enjoy the many amazing features of WeChat. The same corresponds to communication problems with Chinese classmates, construction
site noise, air pollution or people spitting on the streets: Every challenge is a great opportunity to learn!

**Visa Application**

The visa application in Munich was very straightforward; I got all necessary information and documents from the partner university – on time. Apply at the Chinese Visa Application Service Center (SLaim Bf), not at the Consulate. Students who are studying for only one semester/less than 180 days in China can only apply for the X2 visa. This visa unfortunately doesn’t allow multiple entries, meaning that as soon as you leave China you will not be allowed to enter again. Shenzhen is located beside Hong Kong, and a visit to Hong Kong entails an official departure from China. Therefore, Peking University will offer to help you apply for a so-called residence permit upon arrival on campus. I definitely recommend you to get the residence permit. The partner university supports the entire process, which will cost you about 150 EUR, including a hospital check-up, getting passport photos, reporting to the police. It takes a few weeks until you get your permit and your passport back – so keep that in mind for holiday planning. Nicole, Caroline, Megan, and the other coordinators of Peking University were happy to answer any questions and were always very supportive. Don’t worry and relax if things go wrong or seem more complicated than at home: There’s always a solution.

**Further preparation: Courses, Cash, Housing**

It’s recommendable to clarify your learning agreement beforehand. Also, organize one or two means of pulling cash from ATM machines: China is a very cash-oriented country (except for WeChat – definitely use WeChat Pay!) and sometimes ATMs have difficulties with foreign bank cards. I’d recommend to have a VISA card (e.g. Comdirect) and a MasterCard (e.g. N26). Also, I highly recommend a single room (about 900 EUR) instead of a double room (about 450 EUR). Those prices are for the entire semester and include an en-suite bathroom and balcony! The rooms are clean and the campus is great – I’d recommend to use campus housing, except if you’re going to Shenzhen mainly for diving into the startup environment and the city, instead of the university. It’s cool to buy items like bike, blankets and lamps from previous students – there’s only a bed, desk and cupboard in the room. Hosting friends or having guests overnight was never an issue.

3. **Arrival**

The university staff does a great job to make all students’ arrival easy and streamlined.

**First Steps: Connecting and Getting to Campus**

I can recommend to connect with your new international classmates beforehand, via Facebook and via the emails sent by the Peking University incoming student coordinators. We had a big group that met before the semester started, in Hong Kong, and arrived on campus together – which was great. Generally, take official cabs from taxi stands (when you arrive e.g. at the border or the airport) because it takes a while to know how much to pay the unofficial ones. Always have your destination address written in Chinese characters for the cab driver, as they usually don’t speak English – and you probably don’t have perfect Mandarin … yet ;). You’ll find important addresses at the end of this report.

**University To Dos**

The incoming coordinators and university staff will guide you through all relevant steps at the beginning at the semester. Again: If things don’t work out, e.g. your preferred courses seem full,
don’t worry! It’s China: It might not be as straightforward as elsewhere – but everything finds its solution in the end, if you’re friendly, creative and persistent.

**Administrative To Dos**

Don’t worry about the following To Dos yet – you’ll be guided through them when you’re on campus:

1. A couple of EUR for hot water and electricity is enough at the beginning.
2. Get a SIM card when the providers visit campus. China Unicom has a great deal – and in comparison to China Mobile, Unicom’s SIM cards work great with older European iPhones.
3. Set up banking at the Ping An Bank. Their card also serves as your university and room card. Definitely connect your account to your mobile phone number for WeChat Pay.
4. Load money onto WeChat Pay – it’s the perfect way to pay anything in China.

You’ll be all set in no time!

4. Studies

**Classes**

As its a business school, courses are very interactive, and class sizes are usually like small seminars. Generally, the courses are held in English and have a different kind of workload than a typical mass lecture at TUM: Final exams might not be as demanding and time consuming as big final exams at TUM, as the courses are more comparable with TUM seminars. Instead, the workload of classes can be constantly very high during the semester. Grades are usually based on many factors besides the exam, such as presentations, deliverables, class participation etc. I very much enjoyed this business school format. The semesters are divided into two halves (so called modules) with a maximum of three courses each.

**Professors**

Professors are very engaging and you are encouraged to ask questions during and after class, also tete-à-tete in their office. Professors are an international mix – mainly from the US, China, and South Korea. Keep their respective background and origin in mind: Whilst American professors might encourage discussions and constructive criticism in class (like in Germany), Chinese professors might be used to a more polite way of expressing different opinions. When in doubt, I think it’s best to clarify things with a Chinese professor face to face instead of in front of the class, in order to conform with the complicated Chinese concept of losing face.

**Facilities**

The university is a beautiful new modern glass building and has great facilities such as a financial lab with Bloomberg Terminals, cafés and study rooms. I can recommend the student café on the second floor. The dorms are built around the so-called Mirror Lake at the center of Peking University. You’ll find restaurants, outdoor sports facilities, a gym, a hairdresser, convenient stores etc. there.

**My Courses**

**Entrepreneurship with Professor Chastagner:** A great course that goes through all topics relevant for a founder – from ideation, over financials, to writing a business plan. Lots of interesting readings, engaging interactive classes, and a high constant workload. Deliverables included weekly essays, an interview report, writing a business plan as a team, and more.

**Entrepreneurial Finance with Professor Oh:** Dives deep into the financial topics regarding founding a company. Workload increases during semester. Deliverables included group work and an exam.
Leadership with Professor Liu: This interactive course combines learning about leadership research with practical application of the content. It involves several fun group presentations and case studies. Workload is about average; attendance is important for the grade.

Introduction to Chinese Economy with Professor Zhou: This course consists mainly of student presentations and, more interestingly, guest lectures and company visits. Workload is quite low; attendance might be important.

Marketing Management with Professor Park: I’d recommend the content of this course mainly as a starter/intro to marketing, and less for students with advanced marketing background. The interactive group work helps to apply the content. Workload is constant at a normal level, and Professor Park is very enthusiastic.

Digital Marketing with Professor Chen: Professor Chen was very open to ideas and changes to the curriculum, resulting in an interactive course with group projects and student presentations. Workload is at a normal level.

5. Living

Caroline, international coordinator from Peking University, created a detailed guide to Shenzhen and beyond – getting that from her is the best way to find out how to maximize and enhance your living experience. Therefore I just want to add some highlights and comments.

University Life

As one of China’s most prestigious schools, the Peking University is full of bright students, well-connected student clubs, and knows how to hold grand ceremonies. I can recommend to join a club (entrepreneurship, finance, golfing, other sports …) and to inform yourself during the club fair. I’m also happy to connect – just let me know. It was great fun for me e.g. to host a big university event (see picture). Also, if given the chance to represent TUM – e.g. during an exchange program information session for Chinese – I think it’s great to seize that chance and to pitch our Alma Mater. Mrs. Helfers and her team provide helpful slides for such a case.
**Shenzhen City Life**

Shenzhen has a lot of fun things to do – hiking in nearby mountains, going to the beaches (both take at least an hour ride to get there, though), and many party possibilities; you can read about them in Caroline’s guide. Also, you’ll find important addresses in Chapter 6. Here are my favorite spots in SZ:

**My favorite place no. 3: Coco Park** and its surrounding area is the typical party area – but it has some unique spots, like the LAVO Jazz Club (live jazz), the Evening Show Club (rooftop pool), the BAIA Burger Restaurant (happy hour with half price), the O Garden Rooftop (ladies drink for free on Wednesdays), many clubs (100 RMB for voucher with four drinks) and the bar street (order oysters for 1 EUR a piece at SICILIA while dancing on the dancefloor).

**My favorite place no. 2: OCT Loft** with its artist ateliers, coffee shops, designer boutiques, Western and Chinese restaurants, and its hip flair is a great place to relax and bring guests during the day.

**My favorite place no. 1: BaiShiZhou** area (North of the BaiShiZhou subway station) full of Chinese street food, and including the ShaHe Jie pedestrian zone with an amazing Italian cocktail bar (MAGMA) that hosts great live artistic/electro music sessions, and the craft brewery BIONIC. I recommend to connect with the owners, ask regarding upcoming events, get added into the MAGMA WeChat group – and say hi.

**Hong Kong City Life**

I went to Hong Kong on average once a week – and can highly recommend it. I’m sure you’ll quickly find out why, and what to do in Hong Kong. My favorite tips include: Temple Street Food Market; Horse Races; Stanley Bay; the view from the Peak; the crazy vibe of LKF; hidden bars in SoHo; the light show as seen from the EyeBar at 8 pm; the free rooftop terrace on the International Finance Center mall; renting a private boat with 50 friends during the New Year’s firework. Feel free to contact me for more detailed info. And some more general advice: Taking the bus from the border to the city is a cheap, easy and fast option. Buy an Octopus metocard to get around fast (100 HKD required). As a German citizen, you can apply for a Hong Kong E-Channel pass at the HK Airport or at the municipal office building in the city center. It’s for free and saves a lot of time at the borders. Also, you can apply for the Chinese E-Channel, in case you have a resident permit valid for more than six months. More details on how to get from SZ to HK: Chapter 6.

**Going Beyond in Shenzhen – and China!**

China is an amazing opportunity – so use every day. Dive into the crazy Shenzhen maker and entrepreneurship scene. Or become an English teacher. Or work as an actor or model. Or found a company. Watch the WIRED documentary on Shenzhen, if you want to understand more about this city’s unique relevance for our global economy. I highly recommend to visit HAX and Startup Grind events. Again, feel free to ask if I can help you connect with people from these areas (contact details see first page). Also, Chinese people often are incredibly helpful, kind and considerate. Meet great people! I wish you an unforgettable time – enjoy!

6. **My “Shenzhen Helper”**

**Apps**

- WeChat (most amazing app ever)
- HelloChinese (language learning app)
- ExpressVPN (buy VPN plan beforehand; TUM VPN isn’t reliable enough)
- DiDi (you’ll need a Chinese phone number)
- Shenzhen Metro
Numbers on Campus
- Locked out? Don’t panic: 26035317

Places in Shenzhen
- MAGMA/BIONIC: 高新南七道深港产学研基地2层W213
- Window of the world: 世界之窗
- Home: 北京大学深圳研究生院-东门
- Sushi place in Xili: 米彩料理寿司
- Huanggang Checkpoint: 皇岗口岸 . Hong Kong 24 hours. Has the buses to Jordan etc
- Shenzhen Bay/Wan Checkp: 西二路 . Good for Hong Kong airport. Buy bus tickets before.
- Futian Port: 福田口岸 . Has metro: Lok Ma Chau.
- ... but: 蛇口港 is a bit closer and more convenient
- Hospital: 香港大学深圳医院 . Hong Kong University Shenzhen Hospital
- HAX: 深圳福田区华强电子世界2号楼8楼 ; 8F HQ-Mart Building 2 (Huaqiang Electronics Market), Futian district; access by using the glass elevator on the right side of building 2 when coming from Shennan Road; Subway: Huaqianglu station, exit A
- Electronics market: 华强北 . Huaqiangbei Electronics Market
- LAVO jazz bar: 中心4路1号 . close to Coco Park
- Coco Park: 购物公园
- SeaWorld/SheKou: 海上世界
- Airport: 深圳宝安国际机场 Shenzhen Bao’an International Airport
- Window of the World: 世界之窗
- A Cinema: 中影4K国际影城 (民治店)
- Folk Culture Village: 民族文化村
- Coastal City: 海岸城 . Hai An Chen

Getting from Hong Kong to Shenzhen
- From Central: To Shenzhen Bay: every 30 min. To HuangGang: 1600h
- From Wan Chai: 24h. Harbor ferry pier, at Harbor Rd.
- From Jordan/TST: 24h, at B P International Hotel

Helpful Links
- Again, the WIRED documentary: https://youtu.be/SGJ5cZnoodY
- HAX: https://hax.co/
- Great entrepreneurship events in Shenzhen: https://www.eventbrite.com
- MAGMA: http://www.shenzhenparty.com/places/food-drink/bars/magma