

A Day in the Life of an International Intern In Shenzhen, China

08:00 – Get up, showered and ready. I get quite a late lie in compared to most people, a combination of working 10 'til 5 and my office only being 40 minutes away on the metro, so if I really wanted I could get up at 09:00 and rush out. Definitely handy for when the late-night world cup games were on!

09:00 – Grab some mantou and baozi from the lady who sells them nearby. They're about 1.5元 each, so I always get a couple! I have no idea what's in them, but with a bit of pointing and smiling we get by – and they're always tasty.

09:10 – Set off for work. We live along line 7, so I have to change to get to line 2. It's a simple journey and I normally listen to music or practice Mandarin on the way.

09:50 – Arrive at Window of the World Station. The mall next to the station doesn't open until 10:00, so I walk the long way around, making the walk to the office in about 5 minutes. I can grab a coffee on the way if need too, as there are a couple of chains including Starbucks and Pacific. These are relatively expensive at over 30元 a coffee, however, so I mostly make coffee at work.

09:55 – Arrive at work. The office is located in an apartment building, but I have made friends with the doorman and he always buzzes me through with no issues.

10:00 – Start work. We have been working on a project to engage University Students in Shenzhen with the work of TNC. This involves asking students to complete a questionnaire that my fellow interns and I (one guy who is also with CRCC, and a guy who has individually volunteered) created in English, which was translated into Mandarin by our colleagues. We are spending time outside of the office conducting the questionnaires later this week, so this morning I am continuing my research into Shenzhen based-Universities to figure out the best areas to visit.

13:00 – Lunch time! As we're a small office we usually eat lunch together and take on average 45 minutes (although when the conversation is really flowing we have been known to have an hour and a half). We have a shorter lunch than most of the other interns seem to get, but this works well because our working day is shorter. We eat locally or head to the Window of the World mall, which has an amazing food court where you can try cuisine from all over China. My colleagues love helping us try new food and explaining where it is from, and they're happy to discuss anything we want to know about Chinese culture. They're also really interested to know about Britain and speak incredibly good English, so there's always loads to talk about! We often find pictures and videos about what we want to explain if there's a misunderstanding and use apps like Youdao to translate sentences if necessary. Lunch is always really interesting!

14:00 – Back to the office to pick up our belongings before heading to the Gangxia community centre, to teach local children English.

15:00 – Begin the lesson. The children are taking part in a summer course run by TNC to educate them about the 'Sponge City' project, which aims to make Chinese cities more environmentally friendly and be less susceptible to flooding. This is TNC's main project in China, and Shenzhen has been chosen as one of the cities that the project will be tested in. We interns have helped to plan the lessons, found the supplies, and are now teaching a section. The English part is good fun and the children seem to really enjoy it!

17:00 – The lesson is over and so is work, so I head home on the Metro.

17:30 – Gangxia isn't too far away so I get home earlier than normal. A man is selling Hopia, a sort of small biscuit made of pastry and filled with mung bean paste, outside of the Metro station for 10元. We got some to try before and they were really tasty so I buy a box to share with my friends before heading to my apartment to relax.

18:30 – Most people are home, so after chatting in our WeChat group we decide to head to dinner. One of our friends has been recommended a Turkish restaurant in Huaqiang Bei, an area with a huge electronics market. We all fancy a bit of a change so we ask around to see who wants to go and decide to meet in the lobby in an hour.

20:00 – We make it to the restaurant using Baidu maps. The waiters here speak really good English, and we are trying to improve our Mandarin, so we communicate in a mixture of languages.

21:30 – After a really nice meal we decide to head up to the viewing platform in Lotus Hill, to see the city at night. It's quick to get there on the Metro and to walk up, and the views are stunning! We ask someone to take a photograph of our group and they are happy to, giving us a short history of Shenzhen and Deng Xiaoping's role in making Shenzhen a China's first Special Economic Zone at the same time (there is a huge statue of the former leader overlooking the platform).

22:30 – The park will be closing soon and some of the group have work really early, so we decide to head back. The Metro will be closing soon as well and there's a lot of us going back to the same area, so we decide to split taxis home. They work out at less than 10元, or about £1, per person.

23:30 – After catching up with people who didn't come out for dinner we head to bed, safe in the knowledge we got some amazing photos of Shenzhen this evening to show friends and family back home. No two days are the same – at work every day is different, especially with the new work project getting me out and about around the city, and instead of travelling so far for dinner we might eat locally and have a couple of drinks – but our cohort of interns get on really well and always socialise together, learning about American, Australian and British cultures as well as China's. This is a great support network and we often keep the conversation going over WeChat until we go to sleep, ready to get up and experience something new tomorrow.