

Study Programme.

Exchange students at CUPL can choose from around fifteen courses offered each semester. There are courses that are about Chinese Law and courses that are about International Law. The courses that were on offer at the semester I attended were: International Public Law, International Trade Law, International Investment Law, Legal Research and Writing, International Aviation, Chinese Law and Society, Chinese Culture and Law, Chinese Anti-Monopoly Law, Chinese Constitutional Law, Chinese Civil Law, and Chinese Civil Procedure Law.

I took International Aviation Law, Chinese Culture and Law, Chinese Anti-Monopoly Law, Chinese Constitutional Law and Chinese Civil Procedure Law. The first two weeks of class aren't mandatory to attend, but I strongly advise you to check out the courses before you make your decision in the third week of class. The level of education in the English taught courses is quite low therefore I strongly recommend making a careful decision on which classes to follow, because the lectures take a long time and can be really dull if you pick the wrong subject.

Each course earns you two Chinese credits which translates to 4,6 ECTS per course. In order to get the 30 ECTS you need, you need to take around 5-6 courses. This takes up a lot of your time since a lecture is a 3,5 hour monologue from the professor, sometimes without a break. All the lectures are mandatory to attend and if you don't it can have an effect on your final grade or can make you fail the course as a whole. After the courses end you can choose to either take an examination or write a paper in most cases. I took one examination, which was an open-book exam with access to Internet and I chose to write papers for the other subjects.

Language

I have taken courses in Chinese for two and a half years before departure and I have been in China before so I knew a little Mandarin, which was quite useful. Most of the other exchange students didn't speak a word of Chinese before coming to China and most left speaking a little Chinese. For me it was quite useful to know Chinese. I recommend everyone before going to China to take a language course at Groningen Confucius Institute. It will make your life in China easier. Don't expect to learn too much, Chinese is one of the hardest languages in the world to learn but you will get to know some of the basics.

Finances

Beijing was very cheap to live. Especially living on campus makes your stay in China cheap. It costs about eight euros per month and you live in a dorm building and share a room with another exchange student. I shared my room with a Dutch guy, which was great. Food is cheap. I went out to eat twice a day. I love Chinese food, so I ate at local Chinese restaurants most of the time. Expect to pay between 3-7 euros per meal in a normal Chinese restaurant. Street food is cheaper, western food means western pricing. On campus they offer food at the cafeteria, which is really cheap but I didn't like it at all. I preferred to go to better restaurants in the neighbourhood. Clubbing and bars are cheap for western people. When you go to a bar expect

to get in for free and get offered free drinks all the time, especially when you are a girl. You should always keep an eye on the bottles. If the waiter brings opened bottles to the table it could be fake alcohol. I have had terrible experiences with that, so beware, some even contain methanol, which can cause blindness. Travelling can be cheap, depending on your flexibility concerning luxury.

Preparation and Contact with the Faculty abroad.

I have never experienced worse communication than the experience I had in China. Communication in China in general is bad; so don't expect anything from the faculty abroad. They are really friendly and helpful and they try their very best, but they do not provide you with any information at all and you have to do everything yourself. Thankfully there are a lot of people in the same situation as you so instead of the faculty; you figure everything out together with your new friends from all over the world. I didn't do much preparation myself. The only thing that needs to be done other than the mandatory things is getting a VPN to access the Internet. China has a firewall, so access to Google services and Facebook are only accessibly through VPN.

Housing.

Housing in general in Beijing is very expensive. Fortunately CUPL offers a very cheap alternative to normal housing. For around eight euros per month you can stay at the dormitory building on campus. I recommend this option, because there are no reasonable alternatives. I knew one exchange student who didn't stay at the dorms. He shared a three-bedroom apartment with a very small sitting room with two of his friends. It was quite near the university, two subway stops away. They each paid 700 euros per month. I do not think it is worth to pay that much. I enjoyed my stay at the dorms. I shared my room, as I said, with another Dutch guy. Almost all exchange students live on the same floor, which is very convenient. In the dorm building there is a small convenient store and a gym as well. I can recommend going IKEA for a mattress, don't the local ones; they are hard and made out of cardboard.

Free Time & Travelling

In Beijing there is a lot to see. It has a lot of historical sites, which you will visit once you decide to come. During my stay we often travelled, for instance to Shanghai and I have been to Dandong and North Korea as well. Inner Mongolia is quite close and is quite an experience, so I have heard. Once you have selected your courses carefully, it could be possible that you have Mondays and Fridays off. I did. That makes travelling very convenient. There is a lot to see near Beijing and a lot to see in China in general as well, if you have the time for it. Public transport is quite cheap; taxis are, when shared, not too expensive either. If you are on a reasonably tight budget I would recommend staying in the north and travel around there. There is a lot to see such as the aforementioned places Dandong and North Korea, but also Chengde, various sites of The Great Wall etc.

Conclusion

Don't expect too much of the level of education and studying in general at CUPL. Enjoy cheap housing at the dormitory. Love the Chinese food and travel around. Learn a little Mandarin before you decide to come to China and staying at CUPL will be lovely.