Abigail Fedorovsky

Teaching English in Yangshuo, China

This summer I spent a month teaching English at a summer camp in Yangshuo, China. There was a whole team of volunteers with me from a range of different countries, including Britain, the USA, Spain, France, Singapore and Italy.

A typical day in Yangshuo, China would involve waking up at 8 to have breakfast with the Chinese children that we were teaching. We would teach from 9:30am until 12pm about a range of topics, trying to teach creatively through fun activities and through games. We would eat lunch with the children, talking to them over food, and then run outdoors afternoon activities for them. One of the schools offered to have me teach for them in Beijing next summer, so a new partnership maybe develop out of this.

This summer has benefited me because it has exposed me to a completely different culture. I was able to learn about Chinese history and politics through talking to real people. I learned a lot from teaching about how to be flexible and creative in a pressured situation, as we would often have to change our lessons with not much notice if the children weren’t as capable as we had first thought.

Harry Phillips

Au Pair, Beijing

I spent 3 months working as an au pair for Lopair au pair in Beijing. My host family was based in a northern suburb of Beijing, I was responsible for looking after the 5-year-old child of a celebrity TV presenter and a successful Chinese businessman.

I spent my time there teaching him to read whilst also improving his spoken English. Despite him learning to read in his second language he progressed quickly and upon my departure was reading small books and basic passages of text. This experience greatly enhanced my teaching experience and gives me a good foundation to build on should I decide to pursue teaching English as a second language.

Whilst in China I also receive 30 class hours of Mandarin and 3 cultural events. Upon my arrival I spoke very little Mandarin, yet when leaving; 3 months later, I was speaking much more confidently. In the future my ties to one of the biggest and fastest growing economies will only prove more valuable, making me a more useful Alumnus of the university.

Thank you very much for the grant!
The Santander International Travel Award helped enable me to spend 10 weeks in the USA from July-August 2016. For the first 8 weeks of travel, I taught at an American summer sports camp, called Camp Wah-Nee, in Torrington, Connecticut. I then travelled to North Carolina volunteering for Hillary Clinton’s campaign team in her bid to become President, as well as interning for Cynthia Ball, the candidate for North Carolina’s House of Representatives.

I was a camp counsellor at Camp WahNee, I spent half my time teaching young children to play lacrosse and the other half looking after the 14 girls in my allocated division. I spent another 2 weeks in Raleigh, North Carolina. Here, my time was split between interning for Cynthia Ball’s campaign to become a representative in the North Carolina House and volunteering for Hillary Clinton’s campaign. Spending time in these states, and campaigning in such a high profile political campaign, gave me a unique insight into and understanding of the US political system, that few others outside the country (or even inside the country) will ever experience.
The project was entitled ‘paramagnetic lanthanide chelates for multicontrast MRI’ and took place at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics from 4th July 2016 - 30th September 2016. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a technique using magnetic fields and radiofrequency pulses to obtain detailed anatomical images of living tissue. The results of the project will be used by the Angelovski group to direct their future research. This project has shown that solubility of the agents can be a problem so the agent made will not be carried further but new agents will be made with view to increasing solubility. The project provided me with invaluable experience. Working for 3 months at a world leading research institute in a foreign country has provided me with an unparalleled level of knowledge and experience. This has allowed me to start my masters project at the University of York with a greater level of understanding with the field. It has also provided me with the contacts and insight to explore PhD opportunities further.
Jasmine Newhouse

Volunteer and Travel, China

This Summer, the Santander International Connections Award supported me in spending six weeks exploring China’s busy capital Beijing, Anhui province from where I was adopted, and the suburban city of Xianghe where I volunteered as an English teacher. I was able to discover my background and heritage by revisiting my place of birth in Hefei; somewhere I have not been in touch with since I was an infant. After my tour of Hefei, I travelled to Xianghe, a smaller city outside Beijing, where my role as an English teacher began. I taught students of a primary school age basic topics such as general conversation, animals and food. Over all, the Santander travel bursary has helped me improve my essential life skills such as the ability to confidently present and my background knowledge of Chinese culture and philosophies. This was a life changing excursion which unravelled more of my background history and self, fulfilling many of my curiosities and further enriching my personal development.

Quek Wenxian Lynette

Berlin Atonal Volunteer, Germany

With funding from the Santander International Connections Award, I had the chance to travel to Berlin, Germany to volunteer with Berlin Atonal. Berlin Atonal is a ‘festival for experimental art with sound, light and technology, brought together by technology leaders of young talent and established international and local artists.I was volunteering at the festival, holding several roles ranging from front-of-house to backstage, as well as crowd management and artiste liaison. The artworks exhibited at the festival ranged across a variety of presentations – real-time live audiovisual performances, live music with light shows, fixed music scores and visuals, as well as live audiovisual improvisation. I have also taken the initiative to share my experience with a post on the research blog, hosted by the Contemporary Music Research Centre by the Department of Music: https://www.cmrcyork.org/blog/2016/09/audiovisaul-art-festival-in-berlin/ The trip has aided me in my Masters Research Project, as well as in preparation for my PhD where I undertake practical creations of similar audiovisual works, while also incorporating musicians instead of being fully computer-generated.
Over a period of 70 days, I was a student from the Summer Undergraduate Research Programme (or SURP), working for a team of around 5 PhD students at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at CUHK. Our work revolved around the development of a cutting-edge software described by such group of PhD students on their recently-published scientific paper titled *Husky: towards a more efficient and expressive distributed computing framework*, where Husky is the name of such software.

I will use my acquired experience and my passion for research to continue my previously started research projects at the Department of Computer Science of the University of York. Not only did I learn various practical techniques due to work experience, but I also had the opportunity to tour Hong Kong many times, guided by the wonderful staff from SURP, consequently being inserted in a completely different cultural environment.

My visit to Hong Kong was not only something that I thoroughly enjoyed, but also a means to surely strengthen ties between two different institutions and their respective standard of scientific production.