

## Healthcare industry BW

### Guest article

# Experience report: Six months Shanghai

**Sebastian Giese, a doctoral student at the University of Freiburg, spent six months in Shanghai with funding from a Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts China scholarship. Below, Sebastian tells us about his impressions of the country and its people and his experiences in the megacity.**



Shanghai at night.  
© Sebastian Giese

I am a doctoral student in the Institute of Virology at the University of Freiburg and have been writing up my doctoral thesis since November 2013. Our group in Freiburg is working with Dr. Chinn from the Institute of Health Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Dr. Xu from the Institut Pasteur of Shanghai at the Chinese Academy of Sciences on different aspects of viral proteins. As part of this research, Dr. Chinn invited me to spend six months in his laboratory in Shanghai.

Intrigued by this unique opportunity and given the fact that I had never been to China, I immediately accepted his offer. I then applied for the “Scholarship Programme with Shanghai and Jiangsu” run by

the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts and was successful. I spent six months from February to August 2014 in Shanghai.

I arrived in Shanghai and was warmly welcomed by my colleagues. My colleagues were very nice and open-minded and not nearly as shy as I had expected. I was in the fortunate position that they helped me not only in the laboratory, but also with everyday things such as finding a place to live and registering with the police. In addition, they not only showed a keen interest in life in Germany, but also clearly enjoyed answering any questions I had about China and of course Shanghai, which gave me the impression that they were just as excited as I was about my stay.

The "Health Institute" where I worked is located on a beautiful green campus in the middle of the former French Concession area. Although Dr. Chinn's laboratory is very similar to my laboratory in Freiburg, I nevertheless very quickly realized that Chinese lab routines are very different to those I was used to in Germany. My Chinese colleagues worked every day and usually did not leave the laboratory until late in the evening. However, I found that careful planning and an efficient way of working enabled me to carry out my daily work in the same number of hours that it usually takes in laboratories at home.



Typical Chinese way of eating with chopsticks.  
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This gave me the time to explore Shanghai at the weekend. Besides the city itself, food is one of the biggest attractions of Shanghai. Once I had mastered the use of the obligatory chopsticks, I was surprised to find that in addition to eating out in one of the large number of restaurants, eating in the canteen was not only cheap, but excellent as well.

Thanks to my colleagues and friends, I was able to adapt quickly to daily life and the heavy traffic in Shanghai. Although I do not speak the language and many residents of Shanghai speak little or no English, I did not find it particularly difficult to find my way around the city. All road signs are in English and the subway system is self-explanatory. In addition to the subway and taxis, bicycles are a quick and easy way to travel around the city. Due to the many foreigners and the fact that Shanghai is the most international city in China, the city is home to a countless number of small cafés, bars and restaurants.

I find it worth pointing out that summer this year was apparently unusually cold, at least according to my Chinese colleagues (32 to 35°C in June).

I would like to thank all my Chinese colleagues and especially Dr. Chinn and Dr. Xu for this wonderful stay. I have learned and experienced a lot in the last six months. I have also seen many facets of everyday life in Shanghai and can wholeheartedly recommend this special experience. I would also like to thank Prof. Rolf Schmid who is in charge of the scholarship for his personal support. He was instrumental in making my stay in Shanghai possible.

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## **Article**

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