

**Exchange university**

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

**Degree programme**

Master programme in Machine learning

## Exchange to SJTU

### Before departure

Since my first year at KTH, I have always aspired to participate in an exchange program at another university. When I discovered Shanghai Jiao Tong University, I knew it would be an excellent choice. It offered the chance to experience a vastly different academic environment and teaching style compared to Sweden, which was something I was eager to explore. I chose China because it is a rising powerhouse in both technology and culture, and I wanted to immerse myself in this dynamic environment. Before departing for China, I completed my Chinese language studies and successfully applied for the CSC scholarship. Additionally, I visited the Chinese Visa Application Service Center to secure my visa for the exchange program.

### Upon arrival

My studies at Shanghai Jiao Tong University began on February 20th, and I arrived in China on February 6th. The reason I arrived so early was that Chinese New Year fell on February 10th, and the winter break in China lasted from February 10th to February 18th, during which all institutions were completely closed. I decided to arrive early to experience the festive atmosphere of the Spring Festival. On February 20th, the day I arrived at SJTU, the professors helped us complete the registration of our student accounts and other necessary procedures, making the process very smooth. SJTU offers a wide variety of clubs, including street dance, baking, rock climbing, board games, and Hanfu culture, all of which are very interesting.

### Financials

I applied for and received the CSC scholarship, which covered my accommodation, provided a monthly stipend of 3000 RMB for living expenses, and included insurance. Living on campus was very affordable because the university has canteens where you can buy meals at very low prices. Even if you prefer dining out, restaurant prices are generally cheaper compared to Sweden (note that cooking is not allowed in the dormitories). Additionally, public transportation is very inexpensive, so overall, the cost of living in China is lower than in Sweden.

### Accommodation

Before going to China, the university sent an exchange student guidance document that included the website and procedures for applying for dormitories, as well as information about the different types of rooms available. Since SJTU has two campuses, both offer accommodation options for students.

I was at the Minhang campus, where there are three types of rooms you can apply for. The first option is a single room with a private bathroom, which is the most expensive. The second option is a two-room suite with a shared bathroom, which is relatively cheaper. Both of these types are located outside the campus, about a 15-minute walk away. The third option is a shared room for four people located on campus. This is the most affordable and the most convenient for accessing various teaching buildings since it's within the campus.

### University and studies

The university is very large. The Minhang campus, where I studied, is the largest campus of SJTU. Walking from the north gate to the south gate can take about 30 minutes, but the free campus buses make getting around very convenient. SJTU offers a wide range of subject areas, including engineering,

science, business, medicine, and humanities. The teaching methods at SJTU differ from those at KTH in several ways. Firstly, SJTU has a strict attendance policy, meaning you must attend classes unless you have a valid reason for an absence. Secondly, they have evening classes that run from 18:00 to 20:20, which is quite different from Sweden, where classes do not run that late. Thirdly, SJTU follows a semester system, unlike the period system at KTH. Most courses at SJTU are taught in Chinese, with a few offered in English. They also provide language courses such as Chinese and German. A typical day of studies involved attending lectures, participating in group discussions, and completing assignments.

### **Courses**

I chose courses primarily focused on Machine Learning, such as Data Mining, Neural Networks, Robotics, and Computer Vision. I selected these courses to meet the requirements of my study plan at KTH while also exploring fields I am interested in.

Each course had a unique structure. For example, Data Mining consisted of exams and assignments. Robotics included exams, assignments, and a group lab project. Neural Networks focused on various lab assignments, while Computer Vision was structured around individual assignments and a group project.

What stood out about each course was the well-thought-out organization. Courses with lab assignments often required more time to complete, reflecting the complexity of the tasks. For courses with exams, professors held review sessions to highlight key topics and deepen our understanding, which was very helpful.

### **City and country**

Shanghai is an incredibly modern and bustling city, with a very international atmosphere. When I first arrived in China, I was initially overwhelmed by the sheer number of people. The crowds are truly immense, but everyone was very friendly and eager to help whenever I needed assistance. One significant difference in daily life compared to Sweden is the prevalence of mobile payments. In China, almost everything is paid for using mobile payment apps, making transactions extremely convenient. Although some shops do accept cash, very few places offer the option to pay by card, which contrasts with Sweden where card payments are the norm.

### **Leisure and social activities**

In my spare time, I often traveled to different cities by high-speed train, which is incredibly fast and convenient. The university has extensive sports facilities, including large sports fields, basketball courts, a gym, and a swimming pool. Additionally, because the campus is so large, there are running tracks along the pedestrian pathways, offering plenty of opportunities for exercise. The university also organized various activities. Many of my courses involved group projects, through which I met a lot of fellow students. They were all very friendly and willing to help whenever I needed assistance.

### **Sustainability**

Within the campus, I typically got around by walking or using shared bikes, which are inexpensive and very convenient. The campus is also quite close to the subway station, so I usually took the subway when traveling to other areas. The university has three large libraries where you can borrow the books you need, promoting sustainability by reducing the need for purchasing new textbooks.

### **Other recommendations and observations**

**1. Be Prepared for Course Selection Challenges:** The course selection process at SJTU is highly competitive, as it operates on a first-come, first-served basis. This means you might not always get into your preferred courses, so it's essential to have several backup options ready.

**2. Set Up a Bank Account and Mobile Payment Quickly:** Upon arriving in China, make it a priority to set up a local bank account and complete the mobile payment process. While many apps like Alipay offer international versions that support Visa cards, in practice, you might find that these

cards are often not accepted. Having a Chinese bank card will ensure smooth and hassle-free transactions.