

# **NUIST Diary:** **1st Apr. - 8th Apr. 2019**

By University of Reading Environmental Science Ambassadors: Catalina, Colin and Raquel



### **Monday 1st April**

Arrived at Nanjing airport around 11am. We were picked up from the airport by a driver from NUIST. We drove up north passing through Nanjing city centre, seeing the skyline and the city wall from the outside. We were driven to the Yilai hotel where we checked in to our rooms and we were given campus cards to enter buildings and pay for our meals.

Later, we decided to take a walk through the campus and get something to eat. Since it was 14.30 all the students were in lecturers so the canteen was completely empty. Choosing our lunch was a lucky dip! it was difficult to select a meal without any assistance, as the menu was completely in Chinese, and the staff couldn't speak any English. Luckily we could pick a dish based on the range of pictures. During our walk on campus, we passed by the Reading Academy building. It is so interesting to see that it is decorated similarly to our university with the signs. At the entrance of the building, there was a big screen with a personal message, welcoming us and the Reading Staff. Steve Robinson (Associate Professor in Geography and Environmental Science) and Hong Yang (Lecturer in Environmental Science) invited us for dinner and later showed us around a few useful places on campus.



(Sign at the Reading Academy building when we arrived)



(Reading Academy building from the outside)

### **Tuesday 2nd April**

Woke up at 06.00 as class began at 8am. The first lecture was 'English Public Speaking' class at the Reading Academy building. It was interesting to see the differences and similarities of the teaching and the content done between NUIST and the University of Reading. In this class, the students were learning how to analyze speeches. They discussed the tone of the message and its form of delivery. For example, they analyzed some speeches about climate change and how it is portrayed around the world. This was quite interesting and the lecturer even asked us for our input in the topic. After class ended, surprisingly we thought the students were very uninterested with our arrival, as they quickly left the room without any attempt of conversing with us.

From 10.10- 11.50 we had a lecturer called 'Environmental Planning and Management' at the Wende building (a 10-minute walk away). The topic today was on the differences between a 'Comprehensive Plan' and a 'Functional Plan' in Environmental Planning. They also discussed topics about zoning and land use control. This module seemed quite similar to one we have here called 'Environmental Management and Conservation' which Catalina took in first year. The lecturer began her class with a breakdown of the topics she has gone through and will go through over the next few weeks. [Catalina]: I noticed the module taught at NUIST was slightly different to the Reading module. The assessment was similar as we both had to do management plans, however the content differentiated as I was unaware of a couple of the terms the lecturer was discussing about. As well as this, there was a lot of interaction between the teacher and students. Students were called upon and expected to answer questions from last week and today's topic.

Everyone at the University has lunch at the same time so it was so surprising to see so many students heading to the canteen at once and leaving together.

After lunch, we went back to the Reading Academy building for a talk that Steve and Hong Yang were going to give about the University of Reading. They talked about transferring to Reading, life on campus

and life in the UK. Since we had a break between the talk and the next lecture, some students approached us to ask us some general questions about living on campus, food on campus (which was a very popular question), activities and clubs to join etc. It wasn't soon before more and more of the students joined in on the conversation. This was our first proper interaction with our future classmates. As the chat progressed, we realised that the students were actually very interested in us and what we do for fun etc and we soon concluded that the students are just very shy initially. Afterwards, we thought it was better to just be ourselves and be the first to greet the students.

The next lecture was called 'Environment Ecological Engineering'. The lecturer, Rafi, had assigned reading and homework to the students which they went through during the lecture. The topic he was introducing was Ecosystem Services. Our modules at Reading lead to us to be very familiar with this topic. During the class, the professor asked students questions and tried to create a discussion but a lot of the students were very shy to talk in lectures. After the lecture, the professor approached us and asked us questions about the differences in teaching between NUIST and Reading. We explained our different experiences in the classes and range of style of teaching at Reading. We also told him that the Assessment in our modules are coursework heavy (at least 1500-3000 words) in reports & essays. He was very grateful to hear we could provide a presentation for the class on our perspective on the workload and what to expect. The teacher told us he believed this was very important for their preparation and as a result, Rafi told us to 'take over' his scheduled class on Thursday.



(Wende building on campus, possibly 3 times the sizes of the new library at the University of Reading)



(Student run café at the Reading Academy building)



(On our way to lunch. Everyone in the NUIST campus has lunch at the same time slots so this is what it always looks like on the way to lunch)



(Raquel's lunch on Tuesday- You can tell she really likes the tofu here)

### **Wednesday 3rd April**

Today from 10.10 to 11.50, we attended an 'Environmental Graphics' lecture taught in the Wende building. They were taught about polygons, reflections and projections of shapes. It was interesting to attend this lecture as we were very unacquainted with this topic as Environmental Science students. Personally we felt it was very different to all other Environmental-based modules and to some extent not useful for our course. However, these students are currently taking Environmental engineering and perhaps it will help the students who want to focus on the Environmental Modelling field of Environmental Science.

After this, we attended a lunch invitation at the Staff Canteen in NUIST. Steve Robinson, Hong Yang, Andrew Wade (Professor in Water Pollution), the 4 Economics Student Ambassadors and other visitors were all invited to attend by Yan Ma (Dean of NUIST). We had a room in the staff canteen where we were served an incredible lunch with more than 15 dishes all to share in a rotating table. We were so full by the end that it was hard to walk back to our next lecture.

From 13.30- 14.30 Andrew Wade gave a talk about Water Quality. He spoke about the global problems faced by water pollution such as agricultural discharge contamination, micro plastics and eutrophication and gave room to questions at the end.

After a little break, Steve Robinson gave a talk in the same room to the Year 2 students only about Module selection for Part 3 and the options they are offered. This was also very useful for us since we had not heard about our module options for next year yet. He also informed them about how the Dissertation project is going to work out for them. The Chinese students are going to have the option to do their data collection for their dissertation.

When we were done with the talk, three students approached us and they asked us if we wanted to have dinner with them tonight. So around 17.30 we met up by the gates of the University and we went to a restaurant in town together. We had a dish called traditional 'Hot Pot' where there was a pot of boiling water in the middle of the table and we could put meat, tofu, vegetables, etc in it and cook it ourselves. We also tried a Chinese beer called Snow and a liquor called 'Baijiu'. It was a lot of fun to hang out with the Chinese students. We laughed a lot, drank plenty and stuffed ourselves with delicious food. The students were very welcoming, respectful and generous. They refused to let us pay for our meals and just wanted to show us a good time. It was 10pm before we finished our meal.



(Environmental Graphics lecture- you can see us attempting to do the projection of the polygons on our notebooks as well)



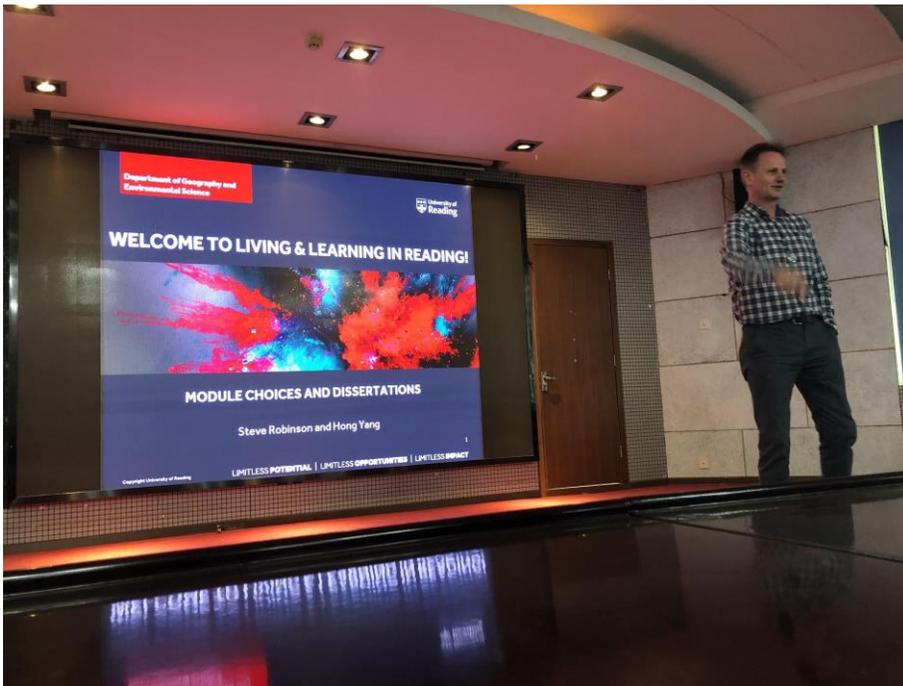
(coffee breaks on campus)



(Invitation to lunch at the staff canteen- everything was delicious!! )



(Colin & Catalina enjoying the noodles- This was the last dish of the meal and we were stuffed at that point but we had to try everything!)



(After lunch, Steve Robinson giving a talk about the University of Reading)



(Dinner with three of our future classmates- from left to right: Raquel, Oliver, Shawn, Colin, Catalina & Brady)

### **Thursday 4th April**

Around 10am we gave the presentation to the students during Rafi's lecture. We greeted the students and handed out some English biscuits we had brought. We had divided the presentation into 4 sections:

- Contact hours (lab work, lectures, field classes & seminars)
- Course work and Assessments
- Independent learning & Blackboard
- Lifestyle (life on campus and in the UK)

We were unsure if the student found it interesting or overwhelming but they asked a lot of questions at the end. We thought the students seemed to know very little about the UK judging by their questions. We also added some of the students on 'WeChat' and Instagram so they can contact us at their arrival in the UK.

We believed the advice we gave to the students was a vital part of their study abroad because it allows students to realize there will be help provide throughout their trip.

After our presentation, we went to a 'Cultural Exchange' activity that was scheduled for us. This was with the Year 1 students that will also come to the University of Reading in 2 years. The students were asked to teach us a type of Chinese game but in the end, we had a cultural chat about the differences in our day to day lives. These students invited us to the canteen for lunch where we had dumplings.

After lunch we were free, so we visited other parts of the campus which we had not yet explored. We went into the enormous library, the sports fields and cafes. We also went to see Annie, the trip coordinator, because she had asked us to come to do some visa paperwork. We took the opportunity to ask her about recommendations to do in our trip to Shanghai the next day. She advised us to go collect our pre-booked tickets on that day rather than Friday morning so we would have more time. After seeing Annie, we went to the Reading Academy student café and we sat there to plan an itinerary for our trip to Shanghai the next day. After dinner, we took the metro to Shanghai Central Station to collect our tickets and it was really busy because it was the Tomb Sweep National Holiday.



(Picture of us giving the presentation and answering questions with teacher Rafi)



(Picture with our future classmates and the Ecosystem Services professor, Rafi, on the far right)



(Found the campus library when we went exploring- it's so big that it could not fit in one picture)



(In front of the Reading Academy building)



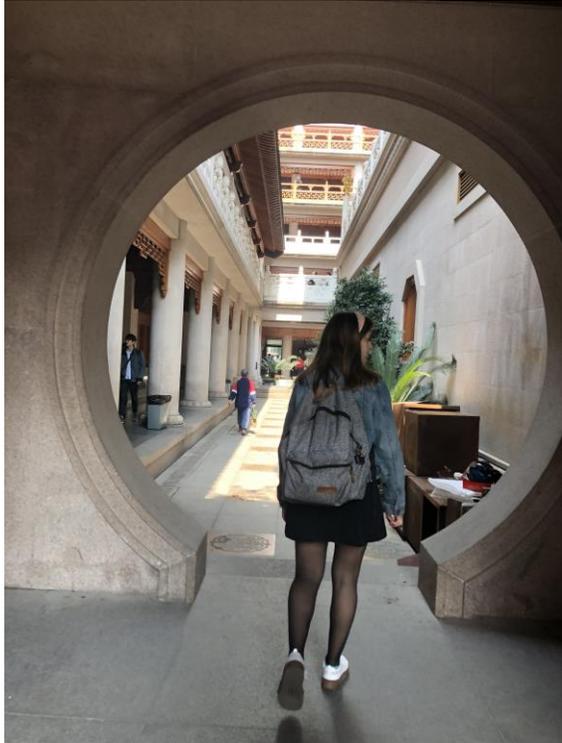
(Planning our trip to Shanghai in the Student Café)

### **Friday 5th April - (national holiday)**

Our train to Shanghai was at 8am We were up and ready to leave around 6. The fast-speed-train ride to Shanghai was around 1h35mins and it went by very smoothly. When we got to Shanghai Central Station we bought a day pass for ¥18 to use unlimitedly during the whole day.

Our first stop in Shanghai was the Jing'an Temple. Since it was a national holiday it was free to enter. It was incredible to see everyone that had come all the way here to worship. We enjoyed the contrast between old traditional buildings and modern China. Our next stop was the Former French Concession neighborhood. When we got there, it felt like we had all of the sudden travelled to the south of France because all the buildings and the streets looked so different to what we had seen so far. We walked through the streets, visited Fuxing park and had French coffee at a café with an outside terrace.

Afterwards, we travelled Shanghai Old town. This area is the traditional part of Shanghai but it was really busy because the streets are small and there were a lot of people visiting. We had plans to see the Yu garden but it was extremely crowded so we decided against it. Instead we made it to the Bund, where one can see the whole skyline of the business district of Shanghai with the famous Oriental Pearl TV tower. From here we walked towards Nanjing Road, the "Oxford Street" of Shanghai. We kept being amazed by how tall all the buildings were. We made it back to the Shanghai Central Station and arrived in Nanjing by 10pm. In total we walked more over 21km that day in 29 degree heat. so we were pretty exhausted by the end.



(First stop in Shanghai- Jing'an temple)



(Former French concession street)



(Former French Concession Café)



(Shanghai Old Town & Yu garden- very crowded!)



(On our way to the Bund)



(Picture of us at the Bund)



(random streets in Shanghai)

### **Saturday 6th April- (national holiday)**

Even though we were already so tired waking up today, we still wanted to do more sightseeing, especially of the city of Nanjing which we had not seen yet. We had breakfast around 8.30 and then met up with some Chinese students from our grade and the grade below because they wanted to show us the city. They first took us to a Buddhist temple called Gujiming Temple. There were lots of pagodas and we climbed stairs until reaching the top. At the top, there were people worshipping as we had seen the day before in Shanghai and this time the Chinese students asked us to join and they showed us how to pray to the north, east, south and west and then make a wish by throwing the incense sticks into the fire. After this, we walked to the Nanjing Wall which was very close to the temple. From the wall we have a nice view of Xuanwu lake towards the North and Nanjing City towards the south. On the wall there's also a statue of the 5 Olympic Rings since Nanjing was a host city in 2014.

At this point, we were all really hungry so the Chinese students took us to the the highest skyscraper in Nanjing, the Zifeng tower, where we had a feast for lunch.

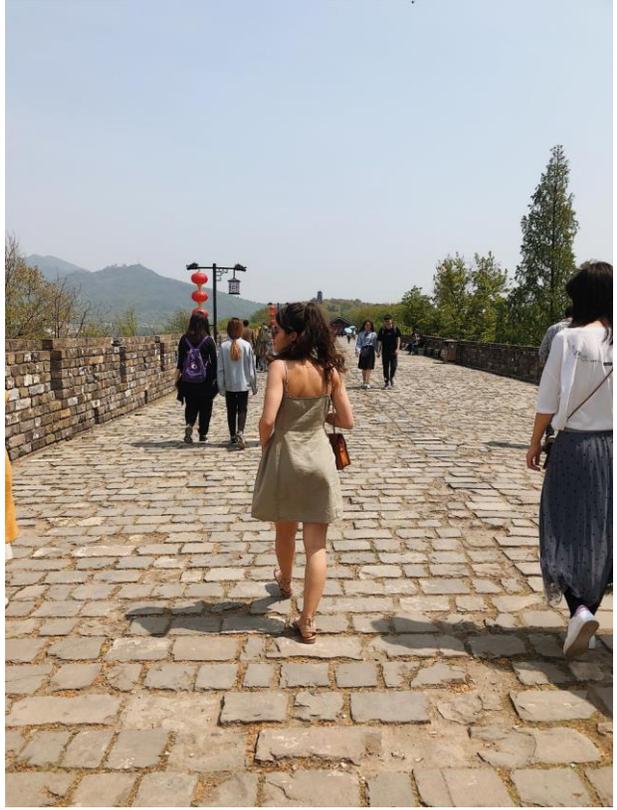
After resting a bit we continued with our sightseeing tour. We first went to the Nanjing Museum to explore some of the Dynasties histories. Some of the Chinese students left to go home and the rest of us headed towards the Laomendong, another part of the Nanjing wall. The streets of this area light up at night and there were decorations from the Chinese New year of the Pig. We also passed by Confucius Temple, a famous landmark here where students used to take their exams. Again they showed us to an incredible restaurant for dinner where we ate traditional food with live music. We were shattered again

by the end of the day and we could tell the Chinese students were tired too so we headed home for some much needed sleep.



(Gujiming Temple visit)





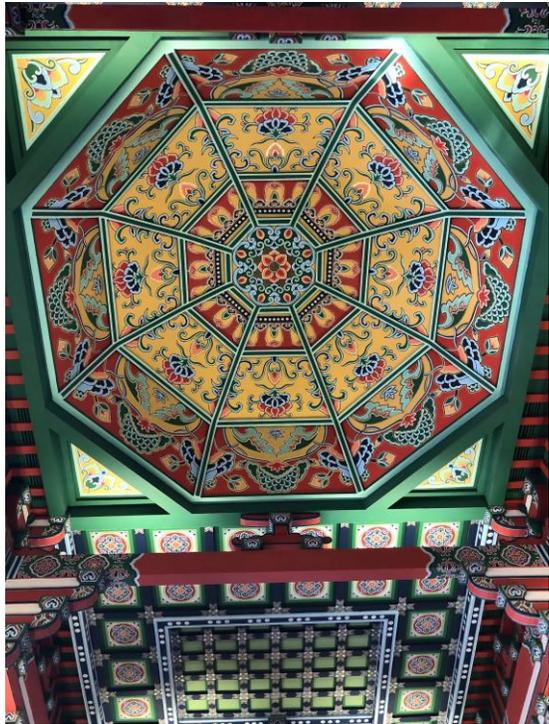
(our visit to the Nanjing wall)



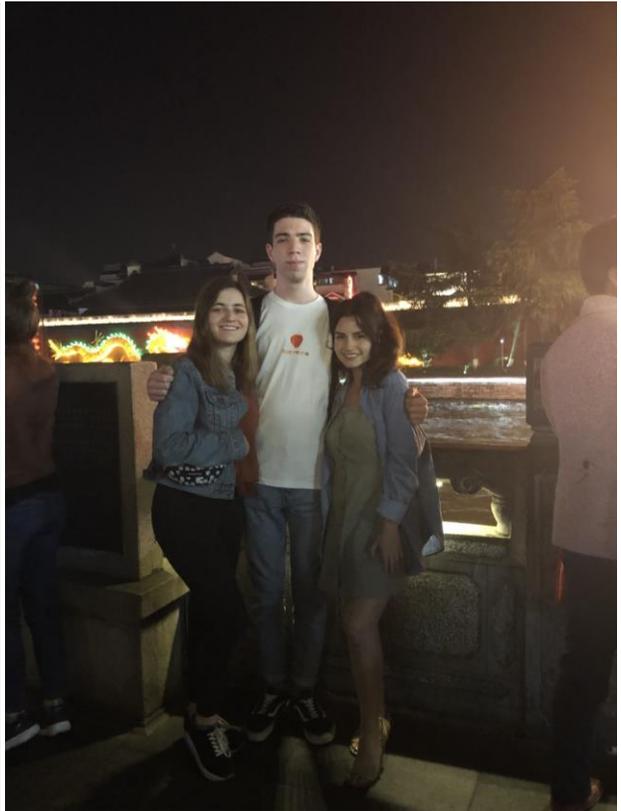
(Group picture of everyone who came on our day trip to Nanjing)



(Our amazing lunch)



(Visit to the Nanjing Museum)



(Chinese New year festival lights around Confucius Temple)

### Sunday 7th- (national holiday)

Sunday was our final day in China however we still had a few things left that we wanted to do. At the top of the list was a trip to Purple Mountain, recommended by teachers and students. We set out mid-morning on the metro and arrived at our destination, however we struggled to find the entrance to the mountain and with the 30 degree heat beating down on us, we abandoned the idea of Purple Mountain and headed to the town centre with shopping on our minds.

We emerged from the metro station into a huge shopping mall with many high end western brands. As these were wildly of our budget, we headed deeper into the town and found an underground shopping mall which we spent ours in. There were countless unique tiny boutiques selling clothes. We ate in the shopping mall before finally returning to the campus.

We invited fellow Chinese students with which we had made friends and all ate together. Before heading back to the hotel, we went to one of the shops on campus with the help of the Chinese students to buy things to bring back for ourselves, our friends and our families. We then said our final goodbyes with our Chinese friends and headed back.

Once back at the hotel, we packed all of our belongings ready for the long journey the next day before going to bed.



(Chinese candy store in the underground shopping center)



(Business District when sun was setting)

### **Monday 8th April- departure**

Catalina and Raquel went to the campus supermarket to get last minute food and snacks to bring back to the UK. At around 10am the driver picked us up to drive us to the airport. We did last minute shopping at the airport to spend the cash we had left. At around 12.30 we boarded our first flight to Frankfurt. We arrived at Frankfurt at 19.30 local time and then waited until 21.00 for our next flight. We finally arrived to home in Reading around 01.00 in the morning.

Overall, the trip was incredible and very eye-opening. We are so thankful to have been given this opportunity by the University and the SAGES Department. We are especially thankful for Steve Robinson for his insightful information about NUIST and constant support before and during the trip. We will also like to thank Hong Yang for being another familiar face during our trip and giving us recommendations about the sights to see in Nanjing. At NUIST, we are so grateful to have had Annie Haibao Yu as our trip coordinator. We came to her with questions about travelling to Shanghai, module changes and transportation and she would always be very helpful and kind. She was always one email away and even during the National Holiday she answered our questions through WeChat immediately.

We also will like to give thanks to the Lauren Andrews (NUIST Programme Coordinator), Martin McCarthy (International Partnerships Manager) and Emily Davis-Williams (Study Abroad Officer), for their help about travelling to Nanjing and preparing us for the cultural differences. Lastly we appreciate the work done by Susie Fullarton and Marie Taylor, especially when we emailed them with last-minute and stressful questions about the trip, the Risk Assessment and travel insurance.

We hope the Chinese students enjoyed our presence and our help as much as we enjoyed the NUIST campus and their country. We think our role was very important for the students to get a different perspective to the University of Reading. Normally they are used to hearing information from lecturers and staff whereas in this case they got to hear it from the personal perspective of students. This allowed them to speak more freely, asking questions about culture, food, social life that they would not have been able to ask otherwise. We believe acquainting the students to a new country before they go makes them more excited and also prepared for a big step in their life. Their country is very far away and most of them have not even been to Europe so they do not know a lot about the country they are moving to and are going to spend a whole year in. Hopefully this Student Ambassador experience can carry on for further years allowing a cultural exchange between two countries and sharing information to the Chinese students about their next step in education in the UK.



(At Nanjing Airport- waiting to board the plane)