

26 Golden Days in Wuhan University

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【Introduction】

First of all, I would like to show my gratitude to everyone who provided such a wonderful opportunity for me to go to Wuhan University.

So many things happened during my stay that I'm afraid I can't write all of them here. If I try to do that (in fact I'd love to), it might be too long and less interesting like a kind of diary. So let me introduce a part of my days. Also I must excuse myself for my poor English. The reason why I dare to use English is not to forget the desire I found during my stay to express myself as much as I can to the outside world.

【My Subject】

Although the main purpose of my visit was supposed to be the learning about the basis of scientific research methods in the anatomic laboratory, I discussed with my professor (Prof. Dai) and decided to switch my policy of study to be in much wider range of fields. So I attended all the possible classes other than anatomy; Pharmacology, Immunology, Histology, Biochemistry and Genetics. There I could see what the medical education in this university was like and how people were working, living and feeling there from the students' perspective. And, above all else, I could meet numerous people everyday, teachers, students and even their friends and families! That was the most amazing, fantastic experience for me. So, I'd appreciate it if I could report my whole school life as my subject instead.

【Wuhan city】

Location: Wuhan city is the capital of Hubei province, and is the most populous city in China. It lies at the east of Jiangnan Plain, and the intersection of the middle reaches of the Yangtze and Han River. Located in the middle of China, we can enjoy both rice and food made from wheat. Wuhan is divided into three parts; Wuchang(武昌), Hankou(漢口), and Hanyang(漢陽). Wuhan University lies in Wuchang.

Climate: Wuhan is known for its oppressively hot and humid summer. Because of its hot summer weather, Wuhan is known as one of the Three Furnaces of China, along with Nanjing and Chongqing. Wuhan is by far the hottest of the Three Furnaces; the average temperature in July is 37.2°C, and the maximum often exceeds 40°C. In fact, although it was only the beginning of May, it had been so hot the last two weeks of our stay that we had to wear short-sleeved shirts, shorts and sandals.

Seeing spot: Wuchang has the largest lake in China within the city; the East Lake (東湖).



East Lake

Wuhan University is located just near the East lake, so we can enjoy a magnificent view walking around the lake both day and night.

In the Hubei Museum we can see many artifacts excavated from ancient tombs, a concert bell set etc.



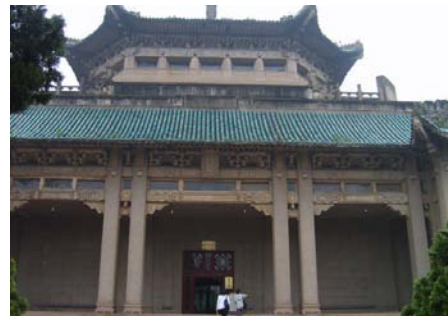
Yellow crane tower

The Yellow Crane Tower (黃鶴樓) is the symbol of Wuhan city. It presumed to have been first built in approximately 220 AD. Although it had been destroyed and reconstructed numerous times, it still maintains its beautiful traditional design.

People: Common-sense understanding :Car won't stop for pedestrian. Drinking and driving. I've once heard that Chinese people take pride in their driving skills on being the most excellent in the world. Now that really made sense. The first time I saw this traffic situations, I was so surprised how dangerous it was....but during my stay I've gotten used to it and I finally succeeded to cross the street alone!

【Wuhan University】

Campus: Wuhan University has four main campuses within Wuhan city. The medical part is the smallest of the four. The biggest part, main campus of Wuhan university is not that far from medical part. We can get there in less than 10 minutes by bus. I have been there twice, daytime and night with some of my friends. It was unbelievably big that I'm sure I'd have easily got lost without my friends' guide.



Library; students were studying quietly

Full of tall trees, the smell of the forest and flowers, large lawn square, old and historical buildings, students playing a flute at the edge of a big pond... It was hard for me to believe I was in a campus of a university.



Beautiful campus

As for the campus of medical part, it was also great. Even though it was the smallest of the four, was much bigger than ours. In addition to the Educational and Research facilities, it had a big library, fine gym, 3 basketball courts outside, 3 students' cafeterias (Chinese food and Indian food), 5 school stores, and dormitories for Chinese students, foreign students and teachers.

The whole campus itself looked like a kind of large garden. There were tables and benches everywhere, which would be a good place for students to study, rest, have lunch and chat.



Student affairs office called "The White House in Wuhan"



Everyone loves to play basketball

Teachers & Students: There were not only Chinese students but also a lot of foreign students from all over the world (India, Pakistan, Egypt, Somalia, UAE, USA, Canada, France, etc...). They all were so kind and friendly and also brilliant at their study. When I met them for the first time, I was really surprised how open they were especially the foreign students. They came up and talked to me anywhere, in the classroom or just passing in the campus. It always goes like this: "Hey keiko, how're you doing?" or "Where're you going?" I think Japanese and Chinese are basically shy people, and are not very good at approaching or speaking to others. (So I often felt an affinity with them. They were really nice to me.) On the other hand, foreign students were completely different. Although I had expected myself to feel a bit of confusion about that, the outcome was luckily quite the opposite. I felt comfortable being open and enjoyed communication with them. Teachers were friendly, too. I saw them talking with students before and after class. Especially I was deeply impressed with Prof. Dai's lecture, with his teaching methods. He gave clear explanations of the complex structure and function of CNS using plain English. Everyone in my class said that he was the best teacher. I really respect him.



Fundamental principles of Wuhan University



Basic medical science center

Class: As noted above, I took a variety of classes on basic medicine. These lectures were mainly for 1st or 2nd year students. Accepting many foreign students, Wuhan university has the classes conducted in English. So I usually joined those classes and took lessons with them though sometimes joined classes for Chinese students. I felt that how great it would be if we had some classes conducted in English in our school.



Classroom

Anatomy practice classroom

Each period has 45 minutes and 5 minutes-rest break to the next period. One class have 2 or 3 periods, that means one class is about 90~120 minutes long. The details are as below.

Morning class		Afternoon class	
1 st period	8:00 ~ 8:45	(6)	13:15 ~ 14:00
2	8:50 ~ 9:35	7	14:05 ~ 14:50
3	9:50 ~ 10:35	8	14:55 ~ 15:40
4	10:40 ~ 11:25	9	15:45 ~ 16:30
5	11:30 ~ 12:15	(10)	16:40 ~ 17:25
Lunch break		(11)	17:30 ~ 18:15

It doesn't always goes on this timetable. It'd change depending on the day of the week. Generally we have lunch break for about 2 hours. Students have lunch at the cafeterias, and after that they even can take a nap in their dorm. During this rest time, some teachers go back to their home to have lunch with their family. I envy them...I think this system is really reasonable. I'm positive that it can improve efficiency in their study or work.



My friends in anatomical practice class



Asking some questions after class

The teachers usually use the projector in class, but don't give the students some kind of hand-out that given in our university. So before/during class, students have to study with their textbook. And after the class, teacher gives them the data of the lecture as a material for self-learning. After school, students review the day's lessons with the data in the library.



Systemic anatomy class

During the class, I noticed there were some differences between Fukushima and Wuhan. The biggest difference is about students. First I was so surprised and impressed with how active they got in their study. Everyone asks a lot of questions, trying to understand each item during the class time. Teacher explains about the matter as many times as need until they got the complete understanding.



Professor Dai talking with his student



Ask some questions before class time

Teacher also pitches some questions to them during the class, then there comes to a free discussion, and then lastly teacher provides the answer. During the class, teacher checks many times to see if everyone understood or not. These things seem to reduce the distance between teacher and students, and that's why I felt more relaxed, friendlier atmosphere in the classes. I think we should learn from them in this respect.

Friends: I met quite a lot of people there and made friends with them. I can't tell how I love them and it may be no exaggeration to say that the most valuable thing I've got during my stay in Wuhan is the friendship with them. We talked about lots of things, about our country, hometown, religion, family, friends, hobby, future...and even about our type of guy/girl! We spent time together in the classroom, in the corridor, in the campus, cafeteria...anywhere, anytime. I visited their dormitory and they also come over to my room many times and we had a nice time. Sometimes they took me out to have lunch, sometimes took me to beautiful spots nearby. We've been keeping in touch with each other by e-mail since I've returned to Japan, which really cheers me up these days. I'm sure they are my friends forever.



My loving friends

Daily life: Although the first period starts at 8 o'clock, I usually woke up much earlier like 5:30 or something. That's because even before 7 o'clock in the morning I could hear people talking or singing outside my hotel. It was new to me to find that there was always somebody walking, playing or chatting in the campus from early morning to late at night.



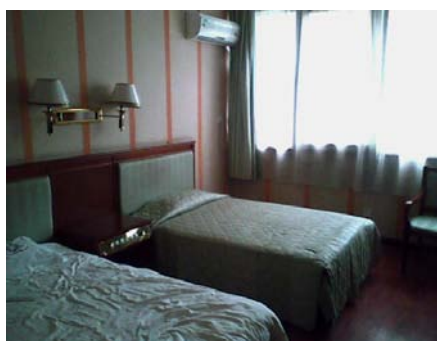
Every morning I enjoyed looking out of window through the morning mist—dogs running, birds singing and people talking, a good smell coming from cafeteria...it was really refreshing.

After the morning classes, I often eat lunch at Chinese students' cafeteria. When my Indian friends took me to Indian cafeteria, I enjoyed a real Indian curry with spoon. I'd like to try it with my hand like my friends did next time.

Because I basically didn't have any classes in the afternoon, I had free time after lunch. Professor Dai and the other researchers at the department of Anatomy provided me a place at the anatomic laboratory where I could use a computer. So I spend afternoon in laboratory or enjoyed just rambling in the campus.



My place



My room

In the evening, I had supper with Yuko in our room when both of us were free. I think it was a very valuable time for us. We talked about everything that happened that day, everything we felt or thought in Japanese and English. Even if either of us had some plans for evening, we tried to find other time at night. In a case like that, we forgot the passage of time and kept talking late into the night. Also sometimes my friends came by my room after they've finished their study in the library. We had fun talking with them, too.

【Hospital】

Wuhan university has 2 university hospitals. One is the 中南 hospital which lies next to the medical part of Wuhan university, and the other is a little far away. Some of the teachers in anatomic department showed me around the 中南 hospital. There are buildings for emergency medicine, internal medicine and for surgery. Each of the latter 2 has its own buildings for in-patients



Patients' room at Pediatrics department

and out-patients. Every floor and room was crowded with patients, their family, hospital staff and students. I was surprised to find that they put some extra beds even in hallway because they don't have enough beds for patients. I could never tell that the facilities are good enough compared to those in Japan. They said that the condition would get far better in time because a new building for surgery is now under construction, would be completed by this October. So they were preparing to move to the new building.

【My Feeling】

I think there is nothing more precious than friendships in our short life time. Although my stay in Wuhan was too short to achieve any work, it gave me such a great chance to meet people and form close friendships. I believe I can meet my friends again someday because the world is not that a big place for us working in the same field, medicine.

This life-changing experience is absolutely the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. During my stay, I felt liberated from myself, getting away from the limit which I've established and kept myself within for a long time. I felt like myself do exist, standing on my own feet. Nothing but each steps of mine could make my way. We don't have any unique standard or absolute value here, where people of different races gather. In fact, I could see the slightest darkness of people's mind and faced the barriers of languages, prejudices or unforgettable past histories. But still, I can't help thinking how beautiful human-to-human relationships are. I just want to believe in the simplest root of human hearts.

Lastly, please let me express my appreciation again to everyone in Fukushima university and Wuhan university who supported us to make this trip a big success. I won't say good bye because I'll surely try my best to find a chance to come back again.

See you everyone, See you Wuhan!

May 25, 2009