

## Let me Count the Ways...

As a former expat of multiple countries, I routinely got asked which city I liked best. I'd scoff and answer, "That's like choosing a favorite child!" But, Shanghai, let me tell you a secret. That's a lie! It's been you and it's always been you. I know the other cities may feel cheated at my confession but you offered so much more than they ever could ... let me count the ways:

- You came to me without ego. You welcomed me and all expats like no other. I know what it feels like to be unwanted in another country, to get the finger on a regular basis, to be reprimanded in a foreign language like a child. Your citizens smiled at people like me for absolutely no reason other than kindness and intrigue.
- You catered to me. You seemed to want me there. There were events created just for my pleasure like Brawl on the Bund or Oktoberfest. There were opportunities for me to volunteer and get involved from rocking adoptive babies to teaching English. I've never felt so accepted before in a foreign country so quickly.
- You simplified my life. You took away some unhealthy habits. I admit, I was angered by the lack of social media and Netflix at first. But, I replaced them with healthier entertainment. You took away some conveniences like Kraft macaroni and cheese and Downey. But I found a way to live without products that were not good for my body. You made me a better person.
- You offered me a new family. I struggled to meet neighbors before but my Pudong neighborhood became my tribe. We sweated and traveled, laughed and cried, cooked and drank, and celebrated together. We pushed each other to be our best selves. And to this day, I have you to thank as I still have my tribe even after repatriation.
- You helped me understand different views and appreciate your culture immensely. I left with knowledge that can't be taught in a classroom. From excursions to language classes, proud locals showed me what China was, is, and will become. I respect the country and the painful past, the hope and pride for the future, and cheer you on as one of your biggest fans.
- You made me a more flexible and creative problem solver. If ever stumped, there was always "a guy" who could fix it. Got a 400 pound Xian terra cotta warrior that needs to be delivered? There's a guy who will strap it between his scooter and his buddy's and have it to your porch in 2 hours. Nothing seems impossible any more. Innovating thinking will overcome any obstacle.

No matter the destination, living abroad will push your boundaries, test your limits, make you resilient, bind your family together tighter, and give you unbelievable adventure. But living in Shanghai offers so much more. And for this, I am eternally yours, Shanghai.

Crista Lindberg  
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