

**PRIME MINISTER'S SCHOLARSHIP FOR ASIA
CHENGDU UNIVERSITY, CHINA
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Purpose of going to China and how it relates to your work and/or studies?

I was fortunate to receive the AsiaNZ Foundation Business Internship Scholarship, which allowed me to travel China and intern at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) for 3 months. Though the purpose of this visit doesn't directly relate to my Masters or Undergraduate degrees, my curiosity for China was sparked by my connection to the dairy industry. As NZ's most important export market, China is a country that graces the headlines of our newspapers daily.



In conversations, most people seem to have extreme opinions on China; either very positive or negative. And, as someone who studied agricultural science, and who grew up on a dairy farm, my exposure to China focused conversations has perhaps been greater than the average New Zealander. China has always been a place that I have recognised as important, but I wanted to form my own opinion.

Having finished the internship at MFAT and returning to NZ for 6 weeks to hand in my masters project, I am now currently back in China. This has been made possible by the Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia. The Prime Minister's scholarship gives young people the opportunity to study anywhere in Asia to strengthen their understanding of other cultures and build international skills. I have been attending an intensive language Chinese course for the past 4 weeks and in soon I will start my first semester at Chengdu university where I will continue my Mandarin studies for 2 semesters. I am really honored to have this opportunity to focus on improving my language skills.

What have the highlights been so far?

Working in the Consulate in Chengdu was a big highlight. I learnt so much from my local colleagues, the Consular General, Alistair Crozier and the Deputy Consular General Michael Zhang. Although I expected that business meetings would be formal, I had no idea what they would involve. Day-to-day work life varied massively. On any day I could be researching to write a report about how local governments in China finance themselves, organising a NZ cultural event, sitting in a round table meeting or attending universities with NZ visitors.

I have attended seminars where businesses and other foreign consulates shared insights to overcome the challenges that entrepreneurs and start-ups face in China. And I have been privileged to attend meetings with NZTE (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise), as they worked behind the scenes to help Kiwis to become future exporters to China. The Fonterra and Pizza4U Quality Alliance ceremony and visit to an organic farm were of most interest to me personally. The list goes on, but every day was different and interesting. It was great to be surrounded by highly motivated people, and it has been surprising to see where Kiwis are and what they are achieving, often where you'd least expect.

Another highlight was a hiking trip over the long weekend into the mountains at Mt. Siguniang. The scenery was stunning and the air was so clear. We hiked over 50 kms in two days.

What has the trip to China taught you about life in China vs New Zealand?

China is completely different to how I imagined it would be. I must be careful not to generalise as I spent my short-time in Southwest China, which from what I've heard, is vastly different to Beijing, Shanghai and the other Tier 1 cities that are well-known to New Zealanders. Living here has taught me to appreciate our fresh air and clean environment while living with a Chinese host family taught me to appreciate the space and independence we have growing up.

China is far more developed than I anticipated, but despite this, things are not easy arriving as a foreigner with poor language skills. For example, though there are phone shops on every street, only a few specific ones in the city will allow you to buy a sim card with your passport (and not a Chinese ID). The DIDI service (China's Uber equivalent) is amazing. But until you have a Chinese bank account and connect your phone to it, paying can be a problem. I have been to only one supermarket that would accept my VISA card; they use smartphones for everything. Once these things are sorted though, getting around is a breeze. But sorting those things takes time.

How you will apply what you're learning / have learnt to you dairy sector career plans?

Asia-related skills are only going to become more important than they already are to all NZers. Especially in the dairy industry. More than 24 per cent of China's foreign milk supply, 52 per cent of cheese imports and 87 per cent of butter imports come from New Zealand. Yet domestic producers still manage a 38% premium per litre for online milk sales. And Chinese are still low-level dairy consumers; annual per capita milk production is 14.3 litres, compared with 36.8 litres in Japan and 51.7 litres in the US. So we still have some way to go and there are still opportunities to be explored. Despite recognising the importance of China to New Zealand, many kiwis, including myself, lack the confidence to engage. Like Simon Draper says: "Success in China is built on relationships and we need to understand Chinese culture and have the confidence to build meaningful relationships, or we risk missing out on opportunities". It is difficult at this early stage of my career, to say how exactly I will apply what I have learnt, however my goal is to become a fluent speaker of Mandarin, and one day combine those skills with a career in the Dairy industry to benefit our farmers.