

Country/Town Visited: Shanghai, China

One of the best things that has happened to me since moving to Shanghai was finding [BEAN](#). A global volunteer organization that helps unite people by involving them in charitable causes. The Shanghai BEAN chapter is packed with volunteer opportunities ranging from playing mahjong with the elderly to reading to migrant school children. Not only do they offer opportunities to give back, but also to kick back with fun parties and networking nights.

Since joining BEAN I have volunteered at a migrant school, where we taught English and played dodgeball. These particular students belong to migrant families who come from provinces outside of Shanghai. The migrant schools are often underfunded and the teachers inexperienced. Getting to run and laugh with a group of foreigners is probably a unique experience for these students. I know I had a blast with them!

I have also been to a cat shelter, well it is now a shelter, but it didn't start out that way. It all began with a man who loved cats, he loved them so much that he ended up with around 200 of them. <http://scaashanghai.org/>, an amazing organization for abandoned animals, stepped in and offered to help as long as the man didn't take in anymore cats. Right now there are a little over 100 cats who are really sweet and love the attention volunteers give them.

The third volunteer event I attended was at the Shanghai Healing Home, which is an orphanage for babies with cleft-palate or cleft-lip deformities. The home was started almost three years ago by an expat couple, and now is able to house over 30 babies. It is a bright, happy place and the babies are just adorable. I go most weekends and look forward to it all week. While I am there I forget about everything else in the world, it's almost therapeutic. I know there are many charities around the world who need help, but I can promise anyone who is looking to donate to a good cause that every bit you give will benefit the babies. It costs about 9,000 RMB per operation and 3,500 RMB per baby per month for basic care. The Home is largely funded by donors, so if you have a little or a lot to give, keep them in mind. If you would like to help by purchasing diapers and other similar items, or you just want to learn more, you can do so by visiting their website <http://jamieweidner.squarespace.com/healing-home>

With BEAN, I have run around the city with a camera checking off tasks for a photo scavenger hunt (cricket fighting, doing tai chi in the park, holding a baby with split pants), it was crazy. Think The Amazing Race involving a bar as a checkpoint, and you have an idea of what it was like. I have also ridden around in a double decker bus filled with kegs and other goodness woo-hooing my way around the city, waving at all of the pedestrians and woo-hooing again when they waved back. I have dressed up as a Ninja Turtle, and hung out in a pirate themed rum bar. I have been back stage at a music festival and threw giant red balloons into the crowd while 30 Seconds to Mars played behind me.

If you want to meet awesome new friends, volunteer in and around Shanghai, and have a blast, then check out BEAN. <http://shanghai.beanonline.org/events>. You will be loving life

even more than before. I know I do.

Rating system

Would you recommend volunteering at BEAN: **Yes**

Overall rating: **5 out of 5**

By: Lindsey