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Blue Carbon and Coastal Wetlands Youth Scientific Exchange Launched at Hainan University

From June 17 to 30, the Blue Carbon and Coastal Wetlands Youth Scientific Exchange Program unfolded at Hainan University. A 21-member delegation from the University of Plymouth in the UK gathered in Haikou City on Hainan Island for a two-week intensive scientific exchange on blue carbon ecosystems and coastal wetlands conservation to jointly build a new platform for marine science cooperation between Chinese and European youth.



Blue carbon ecosystems—including mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrass meadows—are highly efficient carbon sinks and a vital foundation for global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They are also the core of this international research collaboration. On the strength of Hainan University's academic expertise in blue carbon and coastal wetlands, the program offered a series of cutting-edge courses on ocean acidification, biodiversity responses to climate change, blue carbon and climate change, survey methods for blue carbon, environmental DNA (eDNA) technologies, etc. The participants also carried out fieldwork in typical mangrove and seagrass ecosystems in Danzhou whereby they gained hands-on experience with research methods such as carbon stock assessment, eDNA techniques, drone-based remote sensing, and plant physiological monitoring, achieving a deep integration of theory and practice.



The program featured practical workshops for innovative integration of science with art, which deepened the students' understanding of marine ecology by creating ocean-themed ceramics and biological specimens. In comparison, the laboratory sessions on eDNA techniques effectively enhanced their advanced research skills and provided valuable data for blue carbon studies. In addition, under the program, visits were organized to Hainan Progift Aqua-Tech Co., Ltd. and Tanmen Fishing Port to explore the vast potentials of sustainable aquaculture, traditional fisheries transition, and blue carbon economy.

A rich variety of cultural activities were held, including visits to the Hainan Museum and the China (Hainan) Museum of the South China Sea, an exploration of the Volcano Crater Geopark, a tour of Meilang Ancient Village, and participation in the "Phoenix Night" salon blending Li ethnic traditions with diverse art forms, significantly enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

The participants responded enthusiastically at the end of the program, and actively shared their gains and reflections. Matt Bell deeply felt the importance of international cooperation in today's era of environmental change and noted that the unique cultural experiences of Hainan and the in-depth courses on blue carbon provided the participants invaluable opportunities for both academic and career development. Beth Bower was impressed and inspired by China's innovative practices in

aquaculture. She expressed her gratitude for this remarkable exchange and strong desire to return to China in future.

Mirzan Ahammed praised the program as one of the most informative exchanges he had ever attended, stressing that the knowledge and experience gained would provide direct and significant support for his future community restoration projects in Kerala, India.

This program not only contributed youth perspectives to global blue carbon policies and carbon trading mechanisms, but also demonstrated the commitment of Chinese and European youth to work together—with vision and responsibility—to advance blue carbon science and coastal wetland conservation and shape a sustainable future.

Resonance Across Mountains and Seas: A Journey of Greek Youths to China



In June and July, over one hundred young people from Greece embarked on a journey under the YES Program jointly designed and carefully facilitated throughout by China and Greece. This program was launched in response to the important initiative "promoting the number of French students studying in China to exceed 10,000 in the next three years, and double the scale of European youth exchanges in China." They left their footprints in Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Wuhan, Luoyang, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Nanchang, and Ganzhou. Centering on three themes—Chinese Culture,

Scientific and Technological Innovation, and Discovering China, the journey fostered an in-depth dialogue and mind resonance.

► Touching the Heartbeat of Chinese Culture: Traditions at the Fingertips

Under the theme of Chinese Culture, the Greek youth traced the heartbeat of a five-millennia civilization with their own fingertips. Southwest University and its affiliated high school, the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, and Gannan Normal University each presented Ganpo culture, traditional intangible heritage crafts, ceramic art, and Wushu (Chinese martial arts), leaving the Greek youths full of admiration. Climbing the Great Wall, observing a Shaolin Kung Fu performance, experiencing the Buddhist art of the ancient capital Luoyang, sensing the cultural legacies of the Tang and Song dynasties through calligraphy and painting, touching the essence of traditional Chinese medicine, and trying their hands at pottery, porcelain painting, and the craftsmanship of mortise-and-tenon joinery—all these moments etched Chinese culture time and again into the memory of the young Greeks.



► Facing the Pulse of Technological Frontiers: The Dynamic Landscape of an Innovative China

The theme of Technological Innovation allowed the Greek youths to directly witness the vibrancy of a modern, forward-looking China. Universities such as Beijing University of Chemical Technology, South China University of

Technology, Central University of Finance and Economics, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) welcome Greek youths with carefully designed programs. From visiting the Xiong'an New Area to discussions on digital business models and entrepreneurship opportunities, to mobile classrooms hosted by leading enterprises, and to tours of laboratories in biology, materials science, environmental studies, and AI, the young visitors from Greece were immersed in a succession of cases that showed the cutting-edge development of Chinese disciplines. They witnessed the entrepreneurial spirit of the digital age and China's relentless pursuit of progress, and were repeatedly struck by the dynamism of China's development.



► Discovering the Real China from Multiple Perspectives: Memories of the Past and the Pulse of Today

The theme of Discovering China guided the Greek youths through the mist of time and space, offering a multifaceted lens on the real China. Several universities, including Tsinghua University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Chongqing University, and Nanjing Medical University, designed creative programs through distinctive lectures on fundamental disciplines and candid dialogues, enabling the Greek youths to engage with history and discover China's development from different perspectives. Whether revisiting wartime

memories of Chongqing during the Japanese invasion, walking along the ancient Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, visiting the global e-vehicle company NIO, or exploring Zhejiang Lab, the Greek youths encountered both the charm of an ancient Eastern civilization and the reality of a modern China.

Although the young Greek participants have since returned home, the warmth of history felt upon the stones of the Great Wall, the cutting-edge science and technology glimpsed in laboratories, and the cultural pulse touched along the ancient Grand Canal have already been sown as seeds deep within their hearts. These seeds will quietly germinate by the Aegean Sea and transcend geographical boundaries—when the youth recount their experiences to friends and family, when their curiosity turns into enthusiasm for learning Chinese, and when the sparks of cooperation ignite future projects, these seeds will grow into enduring greenery, linking the heartbeats of two ancient civilizations.

Discover Jiangxi: Dialogues among 25 Countries at the 2025 International Summer Camp of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics

From June 24 to July 3, 2025, 72 participants, including young scholars and faculty members from 19 universities across 25 countries, such as St. Mary's University, Brigham Young University, University of Virginia, University of Southampton, Coventry University, Aalborg University, University of Buenos Aires, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Goethe University Frankfurt, and Luxembourg School of Business, gathered in Jiangxi Province for the "Discover Jiangxi: International Youth Dialogue" 2025 International Summer Camp of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics.

This 10-day people-to-people cultural exchange helped build bridges of mutual learning among civilizations through diverse forms of activities, sowing seeds of friendship among young people from China and abroad.

► Academic Feast: Sharing Ideas Through Dialogue

Leveraging the disciplinary strengths of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics (JUFE), the camp offered thematic courses centering on youth-related topics such as higher education, digital economy, artificial intelligence, and cultural heritage preservation, bringing a unique academic pageant to all participants. Roundtable forums were held on themes such as Youth Perspectives: Global Evidence on Artificial Intelligence and Labor Markets, International Comparisons in Higher Education Development, Cultural Heritage Preservation and Inheritance of the Jingdezhen Ceramics Industry, and Chinese Culture in Films. Through these forums, the young participants from different countries engaged in discussions from professional perspectives, exploring possibilities for international cooperation within the multidimensional landscape of the digital economy and reaching consensus on cultural heritage preservation. Sofia, a student from Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany, remarked, "These dialogues made me realize that despite our cultural differences, young people share a common sense of social responsibility."



► Cultural Experience: Exploring the Essence of Chinese Culture

At JUFE's gymnasium, the participants engaged in courses of Wushu, Taiji Fan, or Taiji Sword, which enabled them to appreciate a perfect blend of elegance and strength and marvel at the authentic experience that even surpassed what they had seen in Kung Fu films. This cross-cultural display of physical expression transcends linguistic barriers, becoming a vivid gateway for the youth to understand China's tradition of "martial arts as a vehicle for moral cultivation".

At the workshop of Jingdezhen Ceramic University, the campers experienced the art of ceramic glazing. Emily, a second-time JUFE summer camper from Brigham Young University in the U.S., painted a mountain-and-river scene on a ceramic plate and inscribed the Chinese idiom "high mountains and flowing rivers" in calligraphy. She said, "This is an idiom I learned in my calligraphy class. It represents my enduring friendship with JUFE." A story was painted onto a ceramic plate—the warmth of cultural exchange took a tangible form.

► Cultural Exploration: Discovering History and Modernity

The "Cultural Exploration" journey covered Jiangxi's historical and cultural attractions and distinctive streets, leading the participants to four cities: Nanchang, Fuzhou, Jingdezhen, and Shangrao. In Nanchang, they ascended Tengwang Pavilion—one of the "Three Great Pavilions in Jiangnan"—to experience the poetic imagery of "Sunset clouds float with the lone wild duck", uncovered the secrets of the Han Dynasty at the National Archaeological Site Park of Nanchang Han Dynasty Haihun Marquis—hailed as the "Han Dynasty Bank Vault", and enjoyed a night tour at Qiushui

Square to watch Asia's largest musical fountain and experience Chinese nightlife.

In Fuzhou, they visited the 800-year-old ancestral temple of traditional Chinese Baijiu (liquor)—Site of Lidu Workshop, to gain an in-depth understanding of the brewing process. At Tang Xianzu's former residence in Wenchangli, Linchuan District, they watched Yihuang Opera, a national intangible cultural heritage, in front of the ancient stage of the Jiangxi-style Yulong Longevity Palace built in blue bricks and grey tiles, and enthusiastically donned traditional opera costumes with makeup to learn performance techniques. They also met provincial intangible cultural heritage inheritors and visited municipal studios to study Fuzhou wood carving, Linchuan bamboo weaving, and Chinese knot-tying. Under the night sky, they watched *Dreams of the Peony Pavilion*, a large-scale garden-based live performance themed around *The Peony Pavilion*—a classical masterpiece written by renowned Chinese playwright and "Chinese Shakespeare" Tang Xianzu. All the international campers, deeply impressed, said that only in China could they see such an outdoor light-and-shadow performance blending regional culture and folk customs.



► Close Interaction: Blossoming Flowers of Friendship

The young Americans participated in the event named Gathering the Strength of Youth and Building a Bridge of Friendship: 2025 China-U.S.

Youth Friendship Promotion. In this event, both Chinese and international youths celebrated together in Han-style attire, shared fragrant tea, made dumplings, and enjoyed multicultural performances. The European participants formed partnerships with their Chinese friends to serve as JUFE's English teaching volunteers to the university's affiliated high school and primary school in the "Connecting Mountains with Language, Envisioning Future with Education" program. Together, they strengthened their friendship and shared commitment to common causes. On the bus to Fuzhou and other areas, the campers sang familiar songs like Count on Me, You Raise Me Up, and Auld Lang Syne through a mobile KTV system. On this bridge of music, everyone was actively engaged, immersed in deep friendship with laughter becoming a shared memory across borders.



► Continuing the Voyage of Friendship with Refreshing Chinese Civilization

Many campers were deeply moved by the hospitality and friendliness of the Chinese people. Maria, a student at St. Mary's University in the U.S., writes: "I now truly feel that Chinese culture is inclusive and the Chinese people are exceptionally hospitable, with everyone upholding the good values of mutual assistance. This makes me eager to learn Chinese and visit China more often in the future, even to explore business cooperation opportunities." Malorie Black, from the University of Virginia,

wrote, "The activities were fantastic—both enjoyable and educational, opening our minds and broadening our horizons. We have gained a deep understanding of China—from its people and culture to its profound history, everything is impeccable. Today, our connection with China has become closer than ever before."

Driving Exchanges with Youth Dialogues —"Bridging the World: China-U.S. Student Exchange Camp" Hosted by Sichuan University

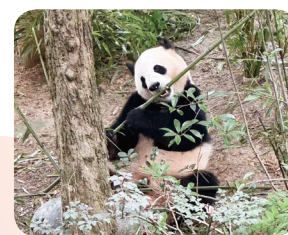
From June 28 to July 11, Sichuan University invited a delegation from the University of Redlands, the United States for a variety of exchange activities as part of its 2025 University Immersion Program (2025 UIP). The American students and faculty embarked on a multidimensional journey—exploring campus culture, tracing urban history, engaging in dialogues across time in museums, and experiencing the twin cities' connections in depth. Throughout the two-week itinerary, they delved into the rich culture through interactive exchanges while sculpturing a new understanding of China's Chengdu-Chongqing region through spirited intellectual encounters.

► Strolling Chengdu's Alleys to Experience Its Profound History and Humanistic Landscape

The first stop for the American students and faculty was the Sichuan University Museum where they explored the development and profound history of this century-old university. Through an array of historical photographs and treasured artifacts, the participants gained a vivid and profound understanding of Sichuan University and the province's rich cultural heritage. As they engaged in "a conversation with history" through these relics, they experienced the striking depth and diversity of Chinese civilization.

On July 1, the American delegation arrived at the Sichuan International Friendship Cities Exhibition Hall where, through abundant, detailed data and vivid exhibition, they learned numerous stories of communication between Sichuan Province and other friendship cities across the globe. Through an array of photos and souvenirs, Sichuan shows the world its openness and inclusiveness. Members of the delegation remarked that they were witnessing the bonds between Sichuan and the world through this exhibition and had come to a better and deeper understanding of the meaning of "connectivity".

On July 3, the delegation paid a visit to the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding and had a close encounter with China's "national treasures". Watching the adorably clumsy giant pandas munching bamboo in leisurely manners or tumbling playfully on the grass, the visitors eagerly snapped photos to capture these heart-warming moments, frequently bursting into joyful laughter. This up-close encounter with China's national treasures not only allowed them to appreciate the lively charm of wildlife, but also deepened their understanding of China's prioritization of and dedication to biodiversity conservation.



They also visited Kuanzhai Alley, where cobblestone paths, a Western Sichuan-style architecture, and a bustling local vibe make it an ideal place to experience authentic Chengdu life. Wandering between the Kuan (wide) and Zhai (narrow) alleys, they sampled local delicacies, watched street performers

demonstrate traditional crafts, and felt the city's laid-back tradition and heartfelt warmth through brief chats with local vendors. The blend of historical streets and modern living gave the members a most vivid understanding of Chengdu's unique vibrant street life as a city.

► A Chongqing Visit to Experience the Dynamic Growth of the Chengdu-Congqing Economic Circle

From July 4 to 6, the exchange program was moved to Chongqing to launch a three-day experience across the city. Strikingly different from Chengdu's topography, Chongqing—with its unique features as a mountain city and historical profundity—left a deep impression on the participants. Chongqing Library and the Chongqing Stilwell Museum, both designated as Sichuan University's teaching and practice bases, organized an array of activities that allowed the students a full immersion in the dynamism and development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle.

At Chongqing Library, the delegation first toured the History Exhibition Hall and the Yangtze River Civilization Collection. They marveled at the huge collection of ancient texts and modern lending systems, showing particular curiosity about the Ba-Yu cultural archives in the local literature section. Through rare historical documents and detailed narratives, the group had an in-depth look at the library's evolution spanning over eight decades, starting from its origin as the Roosevelt Library, gaining a systematic understanding of the profound historical legacy of the Yangtze River Basin and the enduring spirit of Chinese civilization.

On the same day, the delegation engaged in a dynamic discussion with local readers at Chongqing Library under the theme "Sport for Development and Sustainability". The

members shared successful cases from their home countries, highlighting how sports address social issues and foster community development as well as how they play a powerful role in driving social progress. During the exchange, the youth from different cultures enthusiastically introduced their local customs and cultural features, deepening mutual understanding and respect through the exchange of ideas and breathing new vitality into multicultural and inclusive international dialogue.



On July 8, a dialogue between Chinese and American students unfolded under the theme "Evolving Dynamics and Challenges in Contemporary International Relations". The discussion enabled them to delve into the core dimensions of the enduring value of historical traditions in modern diplomacy, Generation Z's perspectives on competition among major countries, pathways to bridging cultural differences, and the expanding role of arts and digital platforms in people-to-people exchanges. The session featured insightful commentary by distinguished scholars: Dr. Adrienne McCormick, Provost of the University of Redlands; Dr. Igor Luksic, Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Dr. Chen

Changning, Director of the American Studies Center, Sichuan University. This dialogue undoubtedly deepened the participants' cross-cultural awareness and broadened their understanding of one another's societies while fostering a their insight of the most pressing global issues of today.

Over two weeks of activity, the exchange program helped create a platform for in-depth and candid dialogue between Chinese and American students through meticulously designed academic seminars, roundtable forums, cultural visits, and urban explorations. The initiative vividly embodied the principle of "promoting people-to-people bonds through dialogue among youth". During the seminars, the participants had lively and constructive discussions on international relations, regional security challenges, and cross-cultural understanding. These exchanges not only facilitated the sharing of academic perspectives, but also deepened mutual awareness of each other's history, society, and ways of thinking. Beyond the classroom, the cultural activities and city interactions allowed the students to experience authentic Chinese culture in a relaxed setting where the vibrant pulse and charm of the country came alive. Through these shared moments, genuine friendships across the Pacific began to blossom.

Art as a Bridge for Cultural Exchange —Wenzhou University's Global Summer School on Chinese Art and Culture

In July, Wenzhou University (WZU) successfully held two sessions of the Global Summer School on Chinese Art and Culture, attracting 98 overseas students and educators from 11 countries including the U.S., France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Centering around art, the nine-day session this year

adopted an integrated approach combining academic lectures, hands-on artistic practice, cultural field trips, and cultural experiences, in a bid to provide international youth with a comprehensive journey into Chinese art and culture.



► Academic Lectures: Unlocking the Essence of Chinese Culture

The summer school featured a series of themed lectures. In the lecture on Interpretation and Appreciation of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture by Yang Zhenhai, Secretary of the Party Committee of the School of Music, abstract cultural concepts were translated into perceptible artistic symbols through vivid illustrations such as "the pattern codes of the Ming Dynasty blue-and-white vase with interlaced lotus scrolls" and "celadon-sky-after-rain aesthetics of the Ru glazed ware from the Northern Song Dynasty", showcasing the breadth and profundity of Chinese culture across ten fields including traditional painting, porcelain, and tea art. Liu Qingsong, Secretary of the Party Committee of the College of Fine Arts and Design, held his session at Yinxiu Film and Television Base. Through the compositional principle of "using blank space like poetry" and the use of light and shadow embodying "the harmony of yin and yang" in photographic art, he guided the participants to comprehend the Chinese aesthetic philosophy of "the unity of heaven and humanity" in photography.

In a Chinese calligraphy class, Gao Yue, a

teacher from the College of Fine Arts and Design, demonstrated the vibrant and expressive brush techniques, ranging from the elegant flair of Wang Xizhi's *Lantingjixu* (Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion) to the vigorous grandeur of Yan Zhenqing's Regular Script. During the ink wash painting session, Liang Teng, another teacher from the same college, broke down the techniques of "centered-tip brush movement" and "group outlining" for painting bamboo step by step, allowing the participants to understand the profound philosophy of "the shared origin of calligraphy and painting" through layers of light ink and rich colors.

Carmen Fahner from the Netherlands shared her thoughts: "In the calligraphy class, when I wrote the character '永' (yǒng) with a brush for the first time, it felt as if I were touching the millennia-old pulse of Chinese civilization."



► Hands-on Art: Keeping Cultural Legacy Alive at Fingertips

In the leather DIY workshop, instructors guided the participants through cutting, stitching, and polishing to create their own unique cardholders. During the paper-cutting session, the students were taught the intricate techniques of "Yueqing Fine-Grained Paper Cutting" to decode the ancient symbolism of Ouyue people's blessings, transforming red paper into modern patterns printed on canvas bags. In the fabric art class, the students were

encouraged to share their creative thinking as they crafted handmade hanging ornaments and patchwork decorations. During the indigo dyeing experience session, the participants tied cotton threads to create ice-crackle patterns and dyed the fabric with unique blue-and-white designs. At the movable-type printing session, the students printed ancient poems and decorated them with blue calico accessories to make wind chimes echoing a modern revival of timeless craftsmanship. Jack, an American participant, showed his hand-dyed bandana at the closing ceremony and said, "I'm going to hang this in my dorm and tell more people the story of Chinese intangible cultural heritage."

► Cultural Field Trips: Experiencing Ouyue Culture

The participants visited the former residence and temple of Liu Ji in Wencheng, as if embarking on a historical dialogue spanning six centuries. At Lingfeng Peak in Yandang Mountain, the "ever-changing vistas with every step" helped them grasp the Eastern philosophy of "harmony between heaven and humanity". Beneath the Dalongqiu Waterfall, the 197-meter cascade served as a powerful classroom where the students were "learning from nature". On the night cruise along the Oujiang River, a mountain-side light show presented a grand historical narrative of Wenzhou on water, tracing its evolution from the "Ancient Kingdom of Eastern Ou" to a "Modern Commercial Metropolis".

At the bonfire party, performances of dragon and lion dances, along with the dazzling display of "Da Tiehua" (iron smelting fireworks), drew cheers from the crowd. The participants joined villagers in dancing, experiencing within the fiery glow the folk wisdom of "unity and shared existence". Moreover, the trip to Zeya

offered the students an opportunity for a deep reflection on the interplay between traditional Chinese papermaking culture and modern civilization.



► Cultural Experiences: Emotional Resonance Transcends Borders

Visits to the Wenzhou Museum, Wenzhou University Hair Embroidery Gallery, Rui'an Dongli Folk Art Museum, and the Rui'an Chinese Movable Type Printing Museum allowed the participants to deeply sense the cultural DNA inherent in "Wenzhou People of the World".

As they tried on Hanfu, the attendees became "ancients" for one day. The cross-collared robe fastened to the right, the dignified aura of arrow sleeves and leather belts showed the elegance of "the Land of Propriety and Apparel". In the performance Tang Charm: Toasting the Moon with Li Bai, fluttering water sleeves revived the grandeur of the prosperous Tang Dynasty. During the Song-style tea whisking session, the participants stirred the tea foam until it gathered like snow atop the surface.

At the social evening, face-changing performances from Sichuan opera and solo pipa recitals drew waves of applause while a group singalong of Little Apple brought the house together in chorus. When a sudden rainstorm swept through Yongjia Academy, everyone huddled under shared umbrellas, laughing and calling it the "most poetic surprise".

China Is Amazing! South China University of Technology Is Fantastic and We'll Definitely Be Back Again!

From July 6 to 19, South China University of Technology (SCUT) hosted the 2025 Global Summer School of Emerging Engineering, attracting students from world-renowned universities such as the University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, Ghent University, Université Paris Cité, and the University of California, Irvine. The program was structured around three key components: academic courses, cultural courses/field visits, and industry visits designed as mobile classrooms.

The academic courses were co-instructed by faculty members from SCUT and its partner universities.



The cultural courses and field visits guided the students through the brilliance of traditional Chinese culture, with a special focus on the distinctive Lingnan culture.

The industry visits were designed to present the young visitors with an authentic living portrait of a modern China that is strong in technological development.



Student representatives from SCUT, Université Paris Cité (France), the National Technical University of Athens (Greece), Ghent University (Belgium), Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (Russia), Harvey Mudd College, and the University of Idaho (U.S.) shared their reflections and experiences. The international students believed that the warmth and hospitality of the Chinese people, the depth and richness of Chinese culture, and the cutting-edge technologies in Chinese enterprises gave them a direct and more vivid understanding of China while the academic exchanges in specialized courses allowed them to feel the sparks of innovation and inspiration. They expressed gratitude to the summer school for providing a platform for them to engage with peers from around the world and to experience diverse cultural perspectives, voicing their hope to return to Guangzhou and to SCUT for future exchanges and studies.

Faculty representatives from SCUT, Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas (Russia), and Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt (Germany) shared their reflections. They noted that the students' visit to Guangzhou had profoundly deepened their impression of China. The program helped its participants observe China's development as a window into the future of the world, opening doors for enhancing global understanding and mutual learning among civilizations.

Igniting the Sparks of Science by West Lake—A 17-Day Summer Research Adventure of 44 Senior High School Students from Europe and America

In the heat of summer, the cicadas' chorus by Hangzhou's West Lake intertwined with the humming of centrifuges, creating a fascinating symphony. The "gene editors" from

Washington, "nano-architects" from Chicago, "parents of mechanical fish" from New York, and "biomaterial magicians" from Boston—44 top high school students from Europe and the U.S. gathered at West Lake University to embark on a mind-blowing deep dive into cutting-edge technologies.



► Biology Track | CRISPR in Practice: Editing the Code of Life

While their peers were still memorizing the structure of the DNA double helix, these teenagers were already using the gene-editing tool CRISPR-Cas9 to precisely knock out target genes, making *E. coli* emit customized fluorescence under the microscope. The planimetric diagrams from biology textbooks were finally transformed into three-dimensional life codes in the laboratories of West Lake University. Ivon from Arizona, USA, was deeply moved the moment she stepped into the lab, "I had a shocking but pleasant surprise. As high school students, being able to operate such state-of-the-art equipment with our own hands is truly amazing!"



► Chemistry Track | Nano-Alchemy: The Birth of Magnetic Gold Rods

Wearing goggles, the students used magnetic forces to manipulate an invisible battlefield: turning silicon dioxide into glue, marshaling magnetic nanoparticles in a march in formation, and cloaking them in golden armor! From ligand regulation to synthesis characterization, these "molecular architects" personally crafted magnetic stir bars which were now rotating in the blueprint of a future medication delivery system.



► Mechanical Engineering Track | Failure Is a Required Course: 3D Printers Foster "Hardcore Romance"

The workbenches of the mechanical engineering track were littered with fish-shaped remnants. The day before the official competition in the water loop, the students repeatedly tested their mechanical fish in a small pool. Amid the scorching heat of the competition, they hunched over the pool, their sweat mingling with the splash as they made adjustments until their small fish could swim gracefully. Henry from the UK deeply related himself to this: "My project had gone through several failures and I had to disassemble and reassemble it multiple times. But this precisely elevated the classroom theory to university-level engineering practice. The deep experience is so unique." It was these "failed products" that taught the teenagers that science is never

about Ctrl C + V. When the 3D-printed bionic fish finally cut through the water, the cheers of the drenched young students became the most vivid footnote to engineering.

► Biomedical Engineering Track | Glimpsing the Future of Medicine

The awe of the biomedical engineering group came from the temperature at their fingertips. When citric acid met polyol, it "wove" a breathing skin scaffold! Here, biodegradable polymers were shaped into nerve conduits by 3D bioprinters. What the students touched was not just material, but the pulsating heartbeats of regenerative medicine.

When the lights in the research labs temporarily dimmed, Hangzhou, a city with millennia of cultural heritage, revealed another dimension to the students. In the gleam of bronze at the China Knives, Scissors and Swords Museum and the misty elegance of the China Umbrella Museum, they touched the thousands-year-old legacy of craftsmanship. They personally mixed natural lacquer to sketch lively zodiac snakes on sandalwood boards—a symbol of the Year of the Snake embodying the unique understanding of time of the East. Then, they carefully covered flexible bamboo frames with oil-paper umbrella surfaces. The American students marveled at "the wisdom of Eastern materials science hidden in tung-oiled patterns". A cappella singing met calligraphy brushstrokes; Taiji push hands dialogued with AI frontiers—the meeting of technology and humanities took root as dusk fell. Madeline from Alabama, the U.S. who left her country for the first time to visit a new country, said excitedly, "I really enjoy getting to know different people and cultures here and experiencing so many new ways of interaction. Everyone has been incredibly warm and hospitable, and the atmosphere is extremely friendly."

The 17-day journey at West Lake was not only a practical exercise in top-tier scientific research, but also a deep dialogue across Eastern and Western cultures. These young "sparks of science" explored the frontiers of the future in the laboratories and reflected on the wisdom of civilization in the ancient city. Their awe, sweat, reflection, and friendship together composed a vivid chapter in the growth of international young scientific talent, sowing seeds of hope for future global collaboration in technology and cultural exchange.

A Glance of Jiangnan: Telling the World about Chinese Culture Through Design



On July 25, the 2025 Jiangnan University International Design Summer School—"Bridging·Integration: Perceiving China Through Cross-Cultural Experience Design"—concluded at the School of Design of Jiangnan University. This 12-day program brought together nine students from five European countries, including France, Italy, and Germany, with design as a bridge to decode the charm of Jiangnan and for joint creation of a new chapter of intercultural integration.

► First Encounter: An Invitation to an Eastern Design Journey

For the European students, the 2025 Jiangnan University International Design Summer School was an invitation across borders and oceans.

Vitalina Levdikova from Italy said, "When I

learned about the International Design Summer School at Jiangnan University earlier this year, I knew right away that it was an opportunity I couldn't miss for anything—I must fly to the other side of the world, to Jiangnan University to take part in the summer school and experience China." Vitalina Levdikova's words captured everyone's expectation.

Emil Tetzner-Harris from the UK recalled that he had been met with an unexpected warmth in the air upon his arrival in Jiangnan: "The moment I stepped onto the university campus, I felt a mix of excitement and nervousness," he said. "But as I started exploring design from the perspective of Chinese designers, that nervousness slowly turned into awe. What especially moved me was the enthusiastic help the teachers and students extended to me during check-in for my stay, patiently walking me through the summer school schedule—it instantly made me feel at home."



► Perception: Inspiration from Cultural Texture and Classroom Learning

Sebastiano Massimo Barbagallo from Italy chipped in: We spent three days exploring the ancient canal cities of Yangzhou, Suzhou, and Wuxi. At the Yangzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Treasure Hall, tracing the patterns of celadon with my fingertips left me breathless at the richness of traditional craftsmanship. In the Suzhou Museum, the interplay of light and shadow designed by I. M. Pei was in

conversation with the essence of classical gardens, blending modern design with classical aesthetics. Under the glow of lanterns along the canal by Nanchang Street, the bustling life of Wuxi's ancient alleys turned the term "Jiangnan"—once confined to books—into a tangible, living experience.

Roméo Charrière from France, added: This summer school deepened my understanding of Chinese culture. What impressed me the most was the experience at the Yangzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Treasure Hall. The engraved traces of woodblock printing carried the warmth of history while lacquerware and mother-of-pearl inlays perfectly merged practicality with art. It was a cultural treasure trove that helped me appreciate the profundity of China's intangible heritage.

Giulio Battistoni from Italy shared his take: Learning about the stone appreciation culture in Jiangnan gardens (*Jiangnan* generally refers to areas immediately south of the Yangtze River) was incredibly enriching—especially understanding the historical connection between the land and its people, as well as the symbolism embedded in the rocks. Exploring the canal and discussing local lifestyles offered many insights into the daily lives of residents. The exquisite craftsmanship and handicraft skills, passed down through generations, left a deep impression on me and I couldn't help but admire the dedication and artistic prowess of local artisans.



► Diversified Classroom: An East-West Dialogue on Design Thinking

Elizabeth Nazarova from Switzerland said: The lectures delivered by Eastern and Western experts following our fieldwork left a profound impression on me. In Europe, instructors tend to begin with 'problems' as a way to seek solutions whereas the Chinese professors engaged us through specific design cases, guiding us to think more about human values and cultural continuity. During the sessions, the experts at times employed Western modernist approaches to deconstruct the 'thinness, wrinkling, permeability, and porosity' of Taihu rocks while at other moments, they explained Western abstract concepts through the lens of Eastern whitespace aesthetics. Though these distinct design logics had sparked a lively debate, they ultimately converged on a consensus—the pursuit of imbuing design with greater warmth and humanity. This experience broadened each participant's understanding of design through richly intercultural perspectives.



► Integration: Bridging Cultural Gaps Through Design

Lilou Mouilleron-Becar from France remarked: The design workshop has transformed me from a mere observer of traditional Chinese culture into an active creator within an intercultural design process. Our team took "Jiangnan" as a source of inspiration, integrating our diverse cultural backgrounds into the project. We condensed the shipping history of the ancient

canal into "Chuanyi Fang" (Art-Teaching Ark)—a permanently moored cultural vessel that functions both as a floating workshop where local artisans pass on their skills and as an interactive space for people of all ages to engage with traditional crafts. Imagine children learning tie-dye inside, while gazing out at the real canal landscape—a truly unique and immersive experience. The workshop deepened my understanding of Chinese culture and encouraged me to embrace multiple perspectives in design. Our team collaborated seamlessly and we were truly honored and happy to receive the Outstanding Team Collaboration Award.

► Growth: Gaining a Broader Perspective on Design Through Differences

Ainhua Nefeli Konstantinou-Kapretz from Germany chimed in: My growth during this summer school is reflected in every breakthrough I made. The language barrier initially left me struggling, but I learned to communicate through gestures and translation apps, and more importantly, came to understand the "significance of symbolic and non-verbal communication". Differences in design thinking sometimes sparked intense discussions, yet we ultimately realized that "divergence is not a barrier, but a source of inspiration for design". I am deeply grateful to the teachers for guiding us to experience China, organizing visits to the design museum, and providing thoughtful mentorship throughout our group project in the workshops.

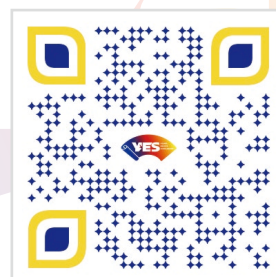
Giulia Matteelli from Italy shared her thoughts: "These past days have brought me fascinating perspectives I had never imagined, profoundly expanding my understanding of design. It has been an invaluable experience. We immersed ourselves in the local cultural context and shared insights and knowledge with numerous

Chinese and international students—such deep intercultural exchange is seldom possible elsewhere." She reflected, "Presenting intercultural design works further cultivated our ability to seek resonance across cultural differences, igniting sparks of creativity through dialogue and collaboration. I will certainly return to China and to Jiangnan University, for here lies not only the poetic charm of Jiangnan, but also fertile ground where design can thrive."

From the expectations at first encounters to thinking in tune through interaction, from cultural perception to design practice, the 2025 Jiangnan University International Design Summer School—"Bridging·Integration: Perceiving China through Cross-Cultural Experience Design"—came to a successful conclusion. We look forward to welcoming more international students to Jiangnan—where design serves as a bridge, understanding shines as a light, and deep cultural exchange unfolds along these timeless canals. Together, we look forward to continuing to write new stories of consonance that transcend boundaries.

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