

Travelling - Planning, Costs and Advice

For most scholars, getting the opportunity to go travelling around so many different places during the new year break will have been the highlight of their time abroad, myself included; being able to see some of the world's most beautiful sights, partake in many unique activities as well as just mess around in new places with friends is something that to me is an unforgettable experience that I will think back on fondly for the rest of my life.

However, despite many countries in Asia being considerably cheaper than the west, **costs do very much add up**, especially in the smaller purchases most people don't even bat an eye at.

I decided to track my own spendings when travelling to the best of my ability, hoping that it can give future scholars and anyone wanting to visit some of these places a rough idea of how much money is needed to enjoy their time to the fullest. The total cost of travel turned out to be quite a bit more than what the majority of us thought it would be, so in anticipation of this I would recommend future scholars have plenty of money saved up so as to not miss out on their once-in-a-lifetime chance to thoroughly explore this side of the world.

Over the course of **52 days** I spent a total of roughly **£3505**. I estimate my exact amount spent to be **±£100** as exchange rates changed every day, and having to use several ATMs with different withdrawal fees meant that I quickly lost track of how much each individual transaction cost. I've put a breakdown of my spendings below this paragraph, as well as a significantly more detailed one at the end of this document:

£67/day (£33/day WITHOUT TRANSPORT OR ACCOMODATION)

£1720 DAY TO DAY

£553.98 CHINA £27.70/day (20 days)
£138.78 VIETNAM £23.13/day (6 days)
£65.84 HONG KONG £21.95/day (3 days)
£519.36 JAPAN £51.93/day (10 days)
£223.13 KOREA £37.18/day (6 days)
£218.60 MALAYSIA £31.23/day (7 days)

£1066 TRANSPORT
£730 ACCOMODATION

TRANSPORT: £215
EATING OUT: £558
TRAVELLING: £1066
ACCOMODATION: £730
SOUVENIRS: £275
CONVENIENCE STORE: £102

ACTIVITIES: £490

I would recommend setting aside a similar amount of money for travels to enjoy your time without having to think too much about costs, but if for whatever reason that isn't possible, there's definitely ways to make the experience cheaper.

To start with, **buying souvenirs isn't necessary** and I definitely spent more than most people would on them (I may have gone slightly overboard in Japan lol), reducing that spending down to roughly a fridge magnet per location already cuts expenses down by about £200. Additionally, while it's fun to go all out in trying the cuisine of different countries, food can be significantly cheaper by not buying anything too glamorous or excessive - Vietnam and China are particularly good for this, having street stalls that sell great on-the-go meals for less than two pounds. My friends and I also got into the habit of midnight convenience store runs wherever we went and, though I would do them all over again if given the chance, they're absolutely not a necessity.

Asides from the aforementioned ideas above, **cutting costs in any other areas would most likely come at the expense of comfort and convenience, as well as enjoyment.**

For purchasing flights, using Skyscanner is the best way to find the most affordable prices for the times you're looking for; the cheapest ones are typically at inconvenient hours so I'd suggest avoiding them when possible. As I was the one booking plane tickets on behalf of my travel group, I was pretty nervous about making payments on so many unknown foreign sites, thankfully I ran into no issues doing this but if you're an overthinker like me or just want to have all your purchases in one place, **Trip.com is by far the best option out there** - they charge a very minor handling fee and save passport information making the booking process infinitely easier over several purchases.

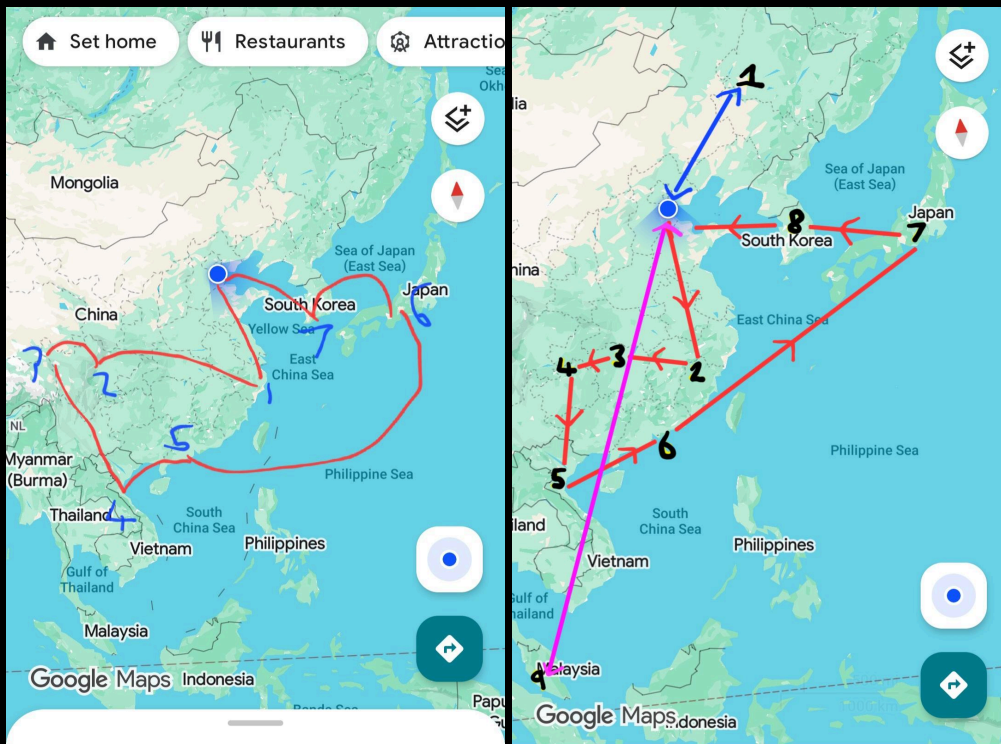
Trip.com can also be used for booking hotels and is incredibly convenient to do so, having a plethora of accommodation options that suit any group size and needs. When it comes to looking for a place for you and others to stay, there are a few main things to consider which I've listed below in order of priority in my opinion.

- 1) **Comfort** - having a nice place to rest each night **is an absolute must**. Keep an eye out for: enough beds, clean bathroom facilities, washing machines & dryers etc.
- 2) **Location** - making sure there's nearby transport links and your accommodation isn't too far out from everything **saves lots of time and money**.
- 3) **Cost** - though a 5 star hotel would be lovely, finding more affordable places to stay is **one of the best ways to save money travelling**
- 4) **Age** - this was only a problem for my group in South Korea, but some hotels require everyone to be of a certain age to stay at, but **exceptions can be made if you contact them in advance**.
- 5) **Hours** - some hotels have brutal check-in and check-out times, but the majority of the time **you can leave your baggage beforehand**.

The final and arguably most most important factor for travelling is, of course, **where you want to go and what you want to do**. We had a few different approaches to this with each

travel group - some travelled around China and returned to Tianjin before going abroad, others went in and out the country multiple times, and my group did one large circuit without returning to Tianjin until the very end. I wholeheartedly advocate for doing one non-stop trip as it saves on flight costs and maximises the time that can be spent in each place, my concern with this at first was transporting my stuff around for such a long period of time, but this really wasn't a problem as the washing facilities in each place meant I didn't need to take much clothing, meaning my suitcase was practically empty at first and I could fill it up with whatever I wanted.

Some compromises need to be made when travelling with a group as not everyone will want to do the exact same things as you. For this reason I'd highly recommend **planning travels as early as October and testing several travel routes.**



The poorly drawn image on the left was my initial idea of a travel route that I scribbled up, the numbered stops are in order: Shanghai, Chongqing, Chengdu, Hanoi, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul. I had also wanted to stop by Zhangjiajie between stops 1 and 2, as well as Taiwan between 5 and 6, but these added a lot of flight costs despite being en route so they unfortunately weren't feasible for my travel group.

The right image is the final route we took, it ended up being very close to what I had envisioned months prior with the first image, but also having the additions of Harbin as stop 1 and Kuala Lumpur as stop 9. The reason for this was that Harbin in January had temperatures as low as -26°C , thus we had a lot of heavy layers that would be difficult to take to our other travel destinations. Kuala Lumpur was a last minute addition to our travels that came about due to a sudden extension of our holidays by a week, we booked everything a mere two days prior to heading there and the logistics worked out surprisingly well, if the

same thing happens to future scholars, I'd recommend going for the impromptu bonus trip if you have funds to spare.

As far as activities go during travels, once again, [Trip.com](https://www.trip.com) is great in many Asian countries for booking and partaking in activities - they sell general entry tickets to places, and they also have guided tours that can be great for learning about history and culture. In Seoul, some of us did a guided tour of the Demilitarised Zone between North Korea and South Korea - this is something that can only be done through tour groups and is definitely worth checking out for anyone interested.

Something to keep in mind is that **these plans sometimes can and will go wrong**, some examples of this from my experience would be theme park rides being shut due to weather, last-minute time changes for activities from unforeseen circumstances, and even missing a river boat cruise by just 30 seconds. Try not to let these sorts of things get to you as there's almost more to do in these places and the overall travel experiences will be so much fun regardless.

In-addition, travelling for such a prolonged period of time meant that some people in my travel group would be exhausted at times and unwilling to make the most out of their each and every day - despite it not applying to me personally, **this is a completely understandable and valid feeling to have**. These moments can make for a good opportunity to have people split off and do different things that the collective group might not be interested in; some of my favourite experiences came from navigating the Tokyo metro on my own, exploring unique back-alley areas and spending my life's fortune on rhythm game arcade machines.

If you have any questions about anything in regards to the information above, anything you feel hasn't been addressed here, or even just any general question about living here, CISS staff are able to forward them to myself and other scholars to give a variety of answers that can help. Alternatively, I'm always more than happy to answer any questions directly on my instagram, [andrewexe8409](https://www.instagram.com/andrewexe8409) - no matter how small you think they are, there really is no such thing as a bad question.

Thank you for taking the time to read all of this. I hope it's been beneficial to you and provided some decent insight :)

11th: Tianjin-Harbin 6hrs £52 (¥493.5)

15th: Harbin-Tianjin 6hrs £86 (¥800.5)

17th: Tianjin-Shanghai 4hrs £66 (¥615)

22nd: Shanghai-Chongqing 18:05-21:15 ¥810 (Spring Airlines through wechat)

27th: Chongqing-Chengdu 1hr20 £16 (¥153)

31st: Chengdu-Hanoi 21:00-22:00 £112.20 (Sichuan airlines through Trip)

7th: Hanoi-Hong Kong 9:35-12:35 £80.80
(HK Express, ~£20 less w/o checked bags)

10th: Hong Kong-Tokyo 13:00-18:05
£128-136 (Hk Express)

20th: Tokyo-Seoul 14:35-17.45 £136.51 (T'way air through Airpaz)

26th: Seoul-Tianjin 12:45-13:50 ¥588 (Air China through wechat)

1st: Beijing-Kuala Lumpur 2:30-9:00 £91
(AirAsia X)

7th Kuala Lumpur-Beijing 19:00-1:00 £137 (AirAsia X)

£1055 total

HRB Hotel £70pp
SH Hotel £48.50pp
CQ Hotel £39pp
CD Hotel £29.40pp
VN Hotel £118.50pp
HK Hotel £78pp
JP BnB £110pp
JP Hotel £115pp
SK Hotel £14pp
SK Hostel £61pp
KL Hotel £47pp

£730 total

11th: ¥38 Dinner, ¥5 Subway

£4.61

12th: £14.80 Skiing, ¥118 Clothes, ¥35 + ¥15 + £7.90 food (big group dinner), £3.55 didi

£44.26

13th: ¥240 Snow and Ice world (student dis), ¥6 Subway, ¥62 + ¥78 + ¥33 food, ¥49 Souvenir, £2 didi, ¥20 Pool

£54.33

14th: 58p Didi, ¥72 + ¥20 + ¥35 + ¥20 food, ¥110 Festival, ¥6 Subway, ¥39 Souvenir

£32.96

15th: ¥3 Subway, ¥64 + ¥16 Food

£8.90

HARBIN TOTAL: £145.06

17th: ¥6 Subway, ¥64 + ¥42 Food

£12.01

18th: £3.22 Yu Garden, £11.80 Boat ride, ¥23 + ¥91 Food, ¥20 + ¥25 + ¥80 Souvenir, £8.48 Didi

£49.02

19th: £21.34 Pearl Tower, ¥24 + ¥35 + ¥22 + ¥36 + ¥59 Food, ¥6 Subway, £6.16 Didi

£46.63

20th: ¥25 + ¥46 + ¥40 + ¥39 Food, £4.28 Zoo, £8.28 Didi, ¥84 Pool, ¥23 Souvenir

£39.97

21st: £27.75 Happy Valley, ¥31.5 + ¥20 + ¥20 + ¥32 + ¥56 Food, ¥28 Cat Café, £8.90 Didi

£56.45

SHANGHAI TOTAL: £204.08

22nd: ¥15 + ¥54 + ¥29.5 Food, ¥9 Subway

£11.30

23rd: ¥10 + ¥59 + ¥22 + ¥11.5 Food, ¥168 Power bank, ¥37 Souvenirs, ¥6 Subway

£32.95

24th: ¥26 + ¥22 + ¥53 Food, ¥120 Souvenir, ¥14 Subway

£24.47

25th: £23.30 Chongqing 1949, ¥50 + ¥22 + ¥40 Food, ¥10 Subway

£36.01

26th ¥9.5 + ¥12 + ¥51 + ¥27 Food, ¥8 Subway

£11.20

CHONGQING TOTAL: £105.93

27th ¥45 Pool, ¥19 + ¥84 + ¥15 Food, ¥5 Subway
£17.68

28th: £5.83 Zoo, ¥42 Souvenir, ¥18 + ¥17 + ¥50 Food, ¥17 Transport, ¥16 Pool
£22.64

29th: ¥27 + ¥14 + ¥5 Food, £8.70 Didi

£13.53

30th: £4.18 Lehsan Buddha, £10.92 Trains, ¥53 + ¥28 + ¥29 Food, ¥24 Pool, ¥13 Subway
£30.54

31st: ¥37 + ¥41 + ¥15 Food, ¥17 Subway, £2.96 Grab

£14.52

CHENGDU TOTAL: £98.91

1st: £2.78 Café, £1 Grab, £1.46 Peddle boat, £3.40 Dinner, £4.82 Groceries
£13.86

2nd: £3.67 Café, £1.46 Temple, £6.73 Dinner, £2.85 Train street, £1.20 Grab
£16.03

3rd: £2 Grab, £4.71 Lunch, £5.43 Dinner, £2 Temple
£14.14

4th: £1.19 Breakfast, £1.79 Café £4 Grab, £5.20 Dinner, Groceries
£12.18

5th: £10.99 Ninh Binh, £2.97 Tips, £2.70 Grab, £2.37 Groceries
£19.03

6th: £23.50 Grab, £25.26 Ha Long, £7.43 Souvenir, £2.28 Dinner, £5.07 Groceries

£63.54

HANOI TOTAL: £138.78

7th: £2.76 Grab, \$73.3 Lunch, \$200 Octopus Card

£28.72

8th: \$87 Brunch, \$108 Souvenir, \$58 Dinner

£24.03

9th: \$54 Brunch, £1.88 Ferris Wheel, \$64 Dinner

£13.09

HONG KONG TOTAL: £65.84

10th: \$72 Breakfast, ¥480 Food, ¥10000 Suica Card, £8.59 Esim

£65.43

11th: £12.82 Shibuya Sky, ¥3531 + ¥660 + ¥2420 + ¥1760 + ¥1540 + ¥2500 Souvenirs, ¥1980 Dinner

£81.58

12th: ¥545 Breakfast, ¥2975 Souvenir, ¥1000 Arcade, ¥840 Milkshake, ¥2320 Dinner

£36.74

13th: ¥619 Breakfast, ¥6180 Souvenir, ¥720 Crêpe, ¥3410 Dinner, ¥1078 Snacks

£57.44

14th: ¥738 Breakfast, ¥5000 Suica Card, ¥980 Parfait, ¥2450 Dinner, ¥1000 Ferris Wheel, ¥773 Snacks

£52.34

15th: ¥429 Breakfast, ¥2550 Sanrio Café, ¥480 Food, ¥2000 Bowling, ¥3000 Arcade, ¥1765 Souvenir, ¥429 Snacks

£50.96

16th: ¥774 Lunch, ¥3600 Rollercoaster x2, ¥1700 Dinner, ¥1277 Food

£35.17

17th: ¥4600 Teamlab Planets, ¥1250 Lunch, ¥2000 Suica Card, ¥2531 Dinner

£49.66

18th: ¥2150 Internet Café Lunch, ¥1900 Dinner, ¥3465 Karaoke, ¥953 Snacks

£40.51

19th: ¥650 Cake, ¥1950 Lunch, ¥3000 Suica Card, ¥1000 Boat Ride, ¥1800 Planetarium, ¥1912 Dinner

£49.33

TOKYO TOTAL: £519.36

20th: ¥814 Breakfast, £4.91 Esim, £17.30 TMoney Card, ₩10500 Dinner, ₩5300 Protein shake of Despair

£34.31

21st: ₩5000 Laundry, ₩13500 Lunch, ₩2200 Water, ₩7400 Dinner

£19.67

22nd: ₩15100 Lunch, ₩41500 Souvenir, ₩17000 Groceries, ₩3900 Snacks, ₩14000 Pizza, £2 Drink

£49.16

23rd: £26.05 Spa, ₩3900 Snacks
£28.06

24th: £36.63 DMZ Tour, ₩15000 Lunch, ₩15000 Souvenir, ¥9000 Snacks, ₩10000 Pizza

£64.94

25th: £8.77 Café, £7.83 Boat, ₩23900 Dinner

£28.99

SEOUL TOTAL: £223.13

1st: £5.58 esim, £4.86 Souvenir, £1.92 food, £4.69 Grab, £10.11 Groceries, £4.70 Dinner

£31.86

2nd: £1.49 + £2.44 + £1.30 Grab, £2.93 Batu Caves, 38p Water, £7.29 Souvenir, £10 Lunch, £6.41 Groceries

£32.24

3rd: £32.08 Hard Rock Food, £2.49 Groceries, 96p + £2.59 + £1.23 Grab

£39.35

4th: £20.98 Genting Highlands day trip, £8.48 Rollercoaster x2, £2.91 switch rental, £3.08 bowling, £10.31 Groceries

£45.76

5th: £4.90 Bus, £1 + £4.14 Grab, £9.58 Boat, £6.58 Groceries,

£26.20

6th: £3.61 Food, £2.96 Grab

£6.57

7th: £3.74 Grab, £28.43 Headphones, £4.45 Food

£36.62

KUALA LUMPUR TOTAL: £218.60