

Frequently asked Questions and Answers Summer China Experience (SCE)

What is SCE?

A program started by a million dollar grant given in 2004 by Ravenel Curry to enhance the Chinese program of the Asian Studies department. This grant sponsors a two-week tour of China to incoming Furman freshmen, allowing them interaction with Chinese college students and exposing them to a different culture and language. The 2009 Summer China Experience is made possible through the generous support of Carrie and Richard Tucker.

Is SCE competitive?

Yes. Each year on average more than seventy in-coming freshmen apply to the program. Students are selected based in part on their academic excellence, but also on their desire to absorb all they can about China both inside of the classroom and out. The program is looking for student leaders who can serve as ambassadors for Furman and their home countries while in China, and who will share their experiences and knowledge with others upon their return. Many, though certainly not all, of our past participants have become exemplary Asian Studies majors. Nearly all have become leaders in some capacity across the community.

Where will this be held?

Soochow University in Suzhou, China. This is the canalled “Venice of China.” Suzhou is one of the few cities in China which retains the quaint architectural style of the pre-modern era. While so doing, however, the city has also become the country’s leading site for foreign investment. Suzhou is also a two-hour bus ride or a short train ride to Shanghai, one of the most modern cities in the world.

When will SCE begin?

Selected participants will depart on Saturday, July 11, 2009, arriving in China on Sunday, July 12th. Participants can expect to return home on July 26, 2009.

What would I have to do if I am selected to participate in SCE?

All students who participate take a full year of Chinese language their freshman year and participate in the First Year Seminar exploring current issues in China. These required courses will meet general education requirements of the university, and thus should fit quite readily into any chosen course of study.

Could I study more than one year of Chinese?

Yes! Further language study beyond one year is available but is completely optional. Furman University offers four years of nationally competitive Chinese language study.

Would I have to take the full year of Chinese?

Yes. In exchange for a free, two-week trip to China, we feel that a full year of language study that meets Furman’s graduation requirements is a reasonable expectation. We want this to be a positive learning experience for you, and one which complements and enhances your

Furman experience.

Is Chinese Language more difficult to learn than Western languages?

Well, yes and no. The vast majority of students who take Chinese at Furman have no previous exposure to the language, and perform quite well. Most students find the grammar rather simple, and focus on building vocabulary. While the writing system is quite different from those of Western languages, it is often the most rewarding part of the language learning experience. Chinese tones can be quite challenging, though Furman has excellent language lab resources and nationally recognized Chinese language faculty to help you master the language. If you would be interested in speaking with a current Chinese language student to learn more about Chinese classes at Furman, we can arrange a conversation.

Would I have to pay for SCE?

No. Roundtrip international flights, all travel within China, food, lodgings, and cultural experiences are covered by the program. The only money that participants will need is spending money and expenses related to securing passports and visas. A \$300 deposit, refundable after students matriculate in the fall, will secure space for students accepted into the program.

How many students will be going?

Sixteen students will be chosen as participants.

What will an average day be like?

The program is divided in half. The first half will be held in Suzhou, China. Students will have ample opportunity to experience the old and new aspects of Suzhou during the first week, when afternoons and evenings will be devoted to group projects and group outings. Expect to visit sites of historical and contemporary cultural significance, shop, eat regional cuisine, and attend evening shows with your Furman and Chinese friends. Mornings will be devoted to classes and discussions co-taught by Furman and Suzhou University faculty. Students from both campuses will engage, in English of course, in what we hope will be enlightening cross-cultural dialogue. The Suzhou students will be a part of the entire experience that first week – living in dorms, working on projects, and taking outings with the Furman students.

The second half of the program will be a tour of several important places in China. We're still finalizing the itinerary, but the tour will likely include stops in Shanghai, arguably the most ultra-modern city in the world, the political capital Beijing, the Great Wall, and Xian which is home to the terra cotta warriors. In addition to being supervised by two Furman professors, one of whom is fluent in Mandarin, students will be joined by local tour guides in each city. Travel and accommodations will be very nice.

Are there any health risks or precautions that I should consider?

Individual cases vary, so it's best to discuss this matter with your physician. Travelers can find health information about China at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationChina.aspx> , and it is always a good idea to carry a basic first-aid kit.

Is China safe?

In an age of some global security concerns, China remains one of the safest places in the world for foreign tourists. Crime rates are much lower than in the United States. The program directors are very alert to political and health issues affecting China, and they constantly monitor the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, State Department, and Embassy websites for any changes to the current, very stable situation in China. While this program aims to be fun and enriching, student well-being is always the top priority.

I am not sure I will decide to go to Furman. Should I go ahead and apply for SCE or wait until I've made my decision?

Go ahead and apply. It will be easier to withdraw your SCE application (and we do appreciate the courtesy) than to submit an application at the last minute. It will be impossible to submit any applications after the deadline.

What is the deadline for the application?

THE COMPLETE APPLICATION PACKET MUST BE RECEIVED IN THE ASIAN STUDIES OFFICE BY APRIL 14, 2008, NOT POSTMARKED BY THAT DATE.

Can the deadline for the application be extended?

No. The details for this trip must be finalized quickly, and so there can be no delay in the selection process if travel arrangements are to be made on time.

Can I deliver my application in person?

Yes. You may drop the completed application by the Asian Studies suite between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Can I send my application electronically and then mail other supporting documents?

No. All applications must be submitted in one complete packet. **No packets can be received electronically.** Packets can be submitted via walk-in, US Postal Service, or commercial delivery service.