

School Profile

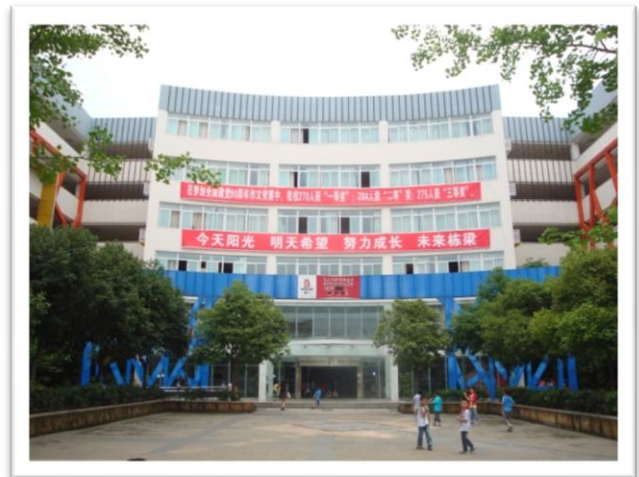
Mianyang Talent School, Sichuan.

The School

The school is actually three schools right next to each other; a middle school, a primary school, and a kindergarten. While I was teaching in Mianyang there were four foreign teachers. One teacher taught at the middle school, another at the primary school, yet another at both the primary school and middle school, while I taught at both the primary school and kindergarten.

Primary School

The Primary School has six grades. I taught eight grade 1 classes and seven grade 2 classes. I taught each class once a week. There are approximately 40 students in each class. The students have one, sometimes two, English classes per day with a Chinese English teacher. These teachers will help you with your classes. They will usually sit at the back of the classroom to ensure that the students behave, although sometimes they will just come to the door and check on the class during your lesson. The students have textbooks which they use with their Chinese English teachers. You are not expected to



teach from these textbooks; however they are a great starting point when planning your lessons. I used

the textbooks to decide what topics would interest the students, which words they should recognise, and how difficult my lessons should be. I also used the textbooks to reward my students by placing stamps or stickers into their books.

Each classroom has a similar setup. At the front of the classroom is a small platform next to the blackboard. The blackboard is magnetic so you can use magnets to stick pictures on the board. There is a large desk for the teacher. Each student has their own desk and chair. Some classrooms have a 2m x 2m space at the front of the classroom (which is great for activities and games), others do not. The student's desk arrangement is decided by their head teacher, although it is usually 6 columns of 6



desks.

Below the teachers desk is a power board so you can plug in a laptop or CD player (if you have one). If you use a laptop for sound or music, be sure to have speakers so that all the students will be able to hear. It is also possible to connect your laptop to a projector in the classroom. The projector is on the ceiling of the classroom and projects onto a pull down screen above the blackboard. In 90% of my

classes I was able to use the projector; however in some classes it was broken. There is also a document viewer which will allow you to show a document or page from a book on the projector. The majority of the students live at the school during the week. Students will be in their classrooms by 8.20 with first period beginning at 8.45. Periods are forty minutes long. There are four periods in the morning, four periods in the afternoon, and four periods in the evening. My last class was always during second period in the afternoon, so I never had to teach during the evening. The most classes I taught during a day were six. Lunch is from 12.00 until 14.30. We can eat at the school cafeteria during breakfast, lunch or



dinner for free. I usually ate there during lunch every weekday and occasionally dinner. The food is very good – rice and a selection of at least five dishes as well as a soup.

After eating I would walk back to my apartment or go to the office.

The foreign teachers have our own office. It is very large with 4 desks, a lounge area, and even a ping pong table! The students are encouraged to come in and talk with us between their classes.



Kindergarten

The Golden Apple Kindergarten has four grades; nursery, primary, middle, and preschool. The youngest students are two years old. The class sizes, by Chinese standards, are small. Nursery classes – approximately fifteen students. Primary classes – approximately twenty students. Middle classes – approximately twenty-five students. Preschool classes – approximately thirty students. The students have at least one English class a day with a Chinese English teacher, and one class a week with the Foreign English teacher. The Chinese English teacher will assist you with your lessons, helping you to plan and teach. There will also be other Chinese teachers in the classroom during your lesson, they will help if the children are too noisy or not sitting down.

Many of the students will live at the kindergarten during the week. They sleep and eat in the classrooms.





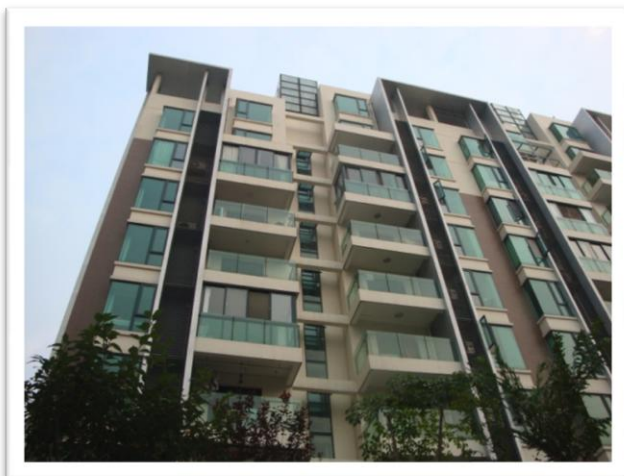
Each classroom has a 'class area', a bathroom, and a bedroom. In the morning they have breakfast followed by morning exercises. My first class was at 9.00. Lunch is from 11.30 until 15.00, which is when the children have a sleep. Then my last afternoon class finished by 16.30. Preschool classes are 30 minutes, middle and primary classes are 25 minutes, and nursery classes are 20 minutes.

The 'class area' is where you will teach. There are tables and chairs for the students. For my lessons I would move the tables to the side and have the students sit in a semicircle. There is a whiteboard

(on wheels) in each classroom. If you have a laptop, then you can connect it to the television in the classroom to show videos or pictures. The students love to sing and dance, so I would use my laptop (and speakers) almost every lesson to play music. As with the primary school, you can eat at the kindergarten for free during breakfast, lunch or dinner. I usually ate there during lunch and occasionally dinner. There cafeteria is for the teachers only, as the children eat in their classrooms. The food is sometimes great and sometimes only ok – rice and a selection of two or three dishes, as well as a soup. After lunch I would sit at my desk in the teacher's office and plan lessons, or walk back to my apartment.



The Apartment



The school owns four apartments. They are on the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh floors of the building. The apartment building has an elevator which is great if you're feeling lazy and don't want to take the stairs. Each apartment has living room, one bedroom, two balconies, kitchen, and a bathroom. The apartments are furnished. As you enter the apartment you walk into the living room. The living room has an 'L' shaped sofa, a glass top coffee table, a television, a bedside table, and a water cooler (although it doesn't cool water, it boils it). Sliding doors from the living room open onto a large balcony.

The bedroom is next to the living room. It is furnished with a queen size bed, a wardrobe, a bed

side table, a desk, and a chair. In the bedroom is also a desktop computer (mine is brand new, I never used it), telephone, and internet modem, and air-conditioner.

Across from the bedroom is the kitchen. By Western standards the kitchen is small. There are counters on two of the walls, with the sink in one corner, and the gas stove in the other corner. I have the moved fridge/freezer and the microwave into the living room to make more room in the kitchen. From the kitchen there is a door which opens onto the second balcony. This balcony is half the size of the other balcony. This is where the washing machine is located.

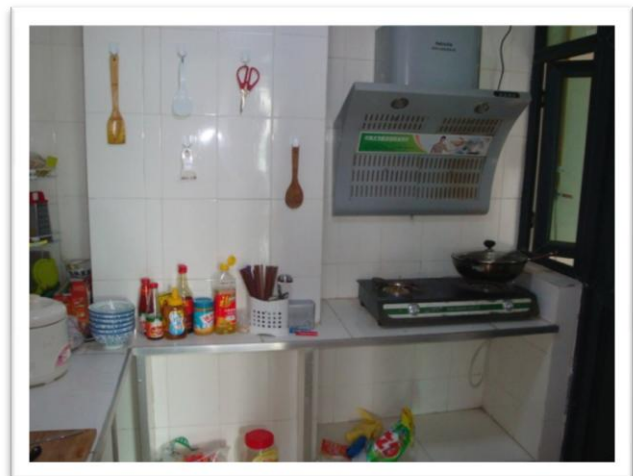
Between the kitchen and bedroom is the bathroom. The bathroom is very open. It has a shower, sink, and western toilet. There are two lights; one above the sink, and one on the ceiling. The one on the ceiling is a 'heat' light which is wonderful in the winter.



The apartments are located close to the schools, approximately fifteen minutes by foot or ten minutes by bicycle. Between the apartments and the schools are two beautiful parks. One is directly in front of the apartment complex and is open grass with a few trees. The other is between the kindergarten and the apartments. The second park has a lake, lots of paths, and plenty of trees.

Directly in front of the apartment complex is also a

bus stop which is very convenient. There are two buses which use this stop and they run frequently (approximately every 15 minutes). They both go 'downtown' and one even goes to the train station. Also just outside the apartment complex are some small stores – a few convenience stores, a bakery, a fruit store, a hairdresser, a car detailer, a women's clothing store, a wine store, ect.



City of Mianyang

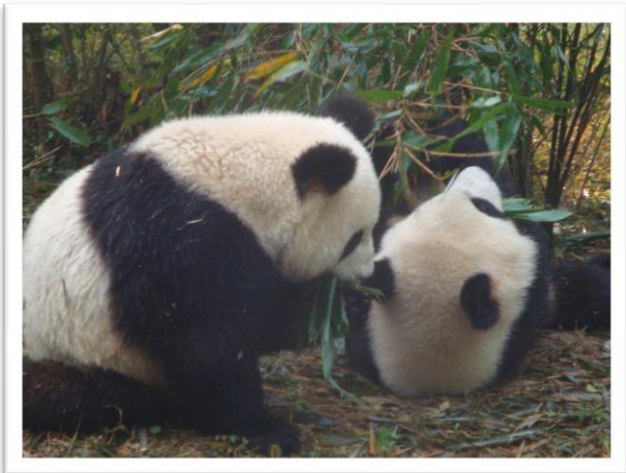
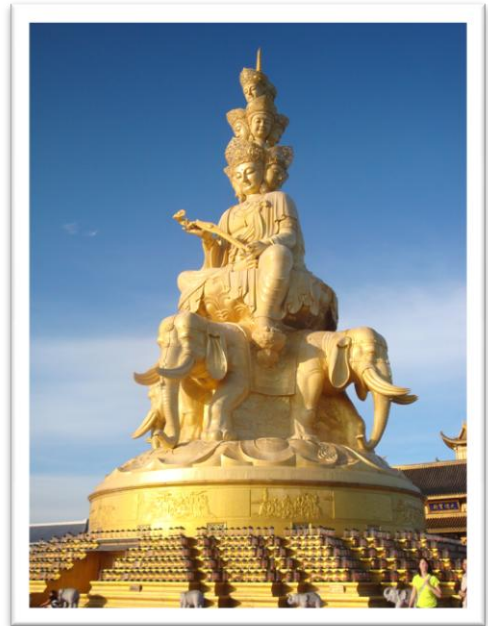
The city of Mianyang is located in Sichuan province, in Southwest China. It is the second largest city in Sichuan. The population is 5.2 million, although this includes the city as well as six surrounding counties. It is the hometown of the famous poet Li Bai.

The 'downtown' area of the city can be reached by bus (1Y, 20 minutes) or taxi (10-15Y, 10-15 minutes) from the apartment building. In the 'downtown' area there are many places for shopping and eating; large department stores, smaller franchise stores, restaurants. If you are craving Western food, then you can find it at McDonalds, Pizza Hut, or at one of the three KFCs. There is even a Walmart.

Also downtown is a large park referred to in English as 'People's Park'. The park has some monkeys, a lake with giant goldfish, an amusement area with rides and attractions for children, and plenty of areas where people drink tea and play cards or mahjong. At night there are plenty of clubs and bars, as well as a cinema which shows movies in both Chinese and

English. There is also an 'English Pub' owned by a foreigner.

From Mianyang it is very easy to travel to Chengdu (20Y, 2 hours by train). This is great if you want to travel or go on weekend trips. Destinations in Sichuan which are popular to visit include: The Panda Research Base in Chengdu where you can see and hold pandas; Emeishan National Park where you can reach the top of Mt Emei a sacred Buddhist mountain; Beichuan, a memorial city destroyed by the earthquake and landslide in 2008; Leshan, home to the largest stone carved Buddha in the world; Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve, with many multilevel waterfalls and colourful lakes.



The weather in Mianyang is moderate. Winters are short and foggy, 2°C to 12°C, snow is rare. Summers are hot and humid, 20°C to 32°C.

(photos are: Mt Emei, Panda Research Base, Jiuzhaigou)

