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## A Steward's Adventures in China

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# A Steward's Adventures in China

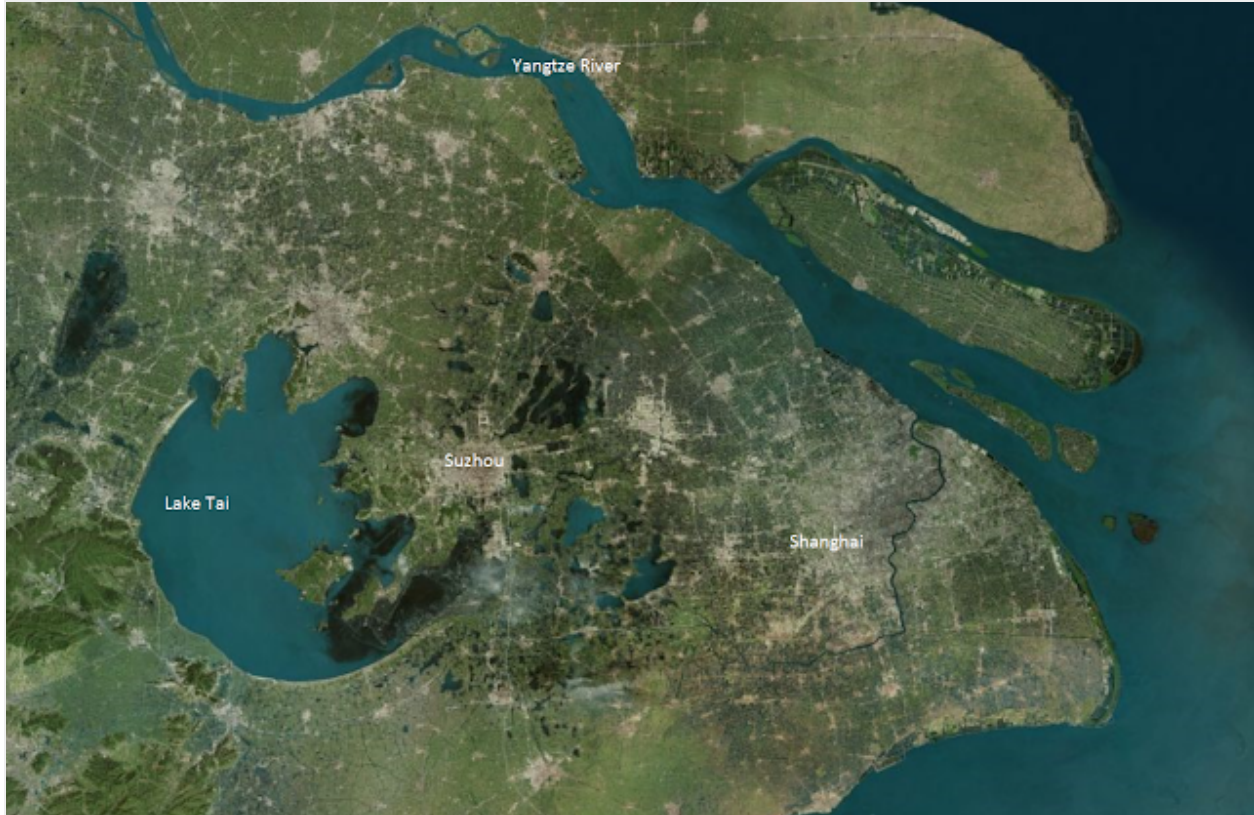
Jason Demeter, 2018 Cohort

Greetings from China!

Two weeks ago, I arrived in Shanghai for a semester of study at the University of Dayton China Institute. Since I arrived, I've been kept busy absorbing as much of Chinese culture as possible, whether that takes the form of eating duck feet and pig brain or learning to speak the language. In addition to learning about the culture, I've also metaphorically (and literally) worn my blue RS shirt by observing the water here in China.



I am living and studying in Suzhou, a city just inland of Shanghai, which was purportedly dubbed the Venice of the East by Marco Polo. As the moniker suggests, Suzhou is home to a beautiful network of canals connected to China's famous Grand Canal, the longest canal in the world. Bordering Suzhou to the left is the large Lake Tai, which is about 1/10th the size of Lake Erie, and dotting Suzhou's land are many smaller lakes. Suzhou sits in the Yangtze River Delta Plain at the mouth of the Yangtze River, Asia's longest river. The Yangtze drains a fifth of the land area in China, and flows directly into the East China Sea.



The water challenges in China were apparent as soon as I arrived; one of the first things I learned was to not drink the tap water. As the tap water can have a number of bacterial or viral contaminants, you must either drink bottled water or boiled water. After taking clean tap water for granted all my life, non-potable tap water required an adjustment.

There are also many ecological concerns with the water system around Suzhou. Lake Tai and the Yangtze rivers experience significant industrial pollution and untreated wastewater is often released into those waterways. Just like the Great Miami, the Yangtze runs through farmland, so agricultural runoff contributes to the pollution of the river and ultimately the Pacific. Over the past few decades, hundreds of dams have been built along the river for flood control and irrigation. These dams have wreaked havoc on the natural ecosystems and radically altered many lakes. Ecologically harmful damming projects continue; one of the most notable is the recently constructed Three Gorges Dam—one of the largest hydroelectric dams in the world.

My experiences in China so far have been stimulating and enlightening. Needless to say, there's still much to learn about how the Chinese people and government utilize, and neglect, China's water resources. I'm excited to see what the next three months bring.

Jason Demeter

2018 Cohort