Discover Your Interests. Find Your Voice. Enjoy the Journey.
JOIN US: May 19 - June 7, 2020
IN BRIEF

Menlo Abroad travel develops global competencies, engagement, and self-knowledge. Through facilitated curricula, service-learning, and homestay, students immerse themselves in foreign cultures, make friends, connect with communities, and use their skills to address common problems. They emerge with a better understanding of themselves and their world.¹

Menlo Abroad: China

From the heart of Beijing to the Great Wall to the cities and villages of Yunnan, this course introduces students to some of the geographic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of China, as well as the opportunities and challenges presented by China's rapid pace of change. Students develop cultural understanding and new or sustained interests for further study at Menlo and beyond. This program is offered in affiliation with Where There Be Dragons.

Dates: May 19–June 7, 2020
(Note that participants will be out of the country and unable to return for Commencement or related activities. June 7 is a required day of reflection and celebration on campus.)

Enrollment Limits: 16 students

Enrollment Eligibility: Menlo students in grades 9-11

Trip Leaders: There will be four teachers with the program: mathematics and computer science teacher Zach Blickensderfer, English teacher Rachel Blumenthal, and two country experts-instructors affiliated with Where There Be Dragons.

All-Inclusive Fee²: $5,500. Financial aid may be available. Current financial aid recipients should contact Rose Garza regarding financial aid (rgarza@menloschool.org).

Menlo Abroad service participation earns students 8 community engagement credits. Participation in Menlo Abroad is recommended for Menlo IP: Global Scholars.

1 Menlo Abroad is an elective option for M Term and is considered and assessed as a M Term course. But while other M Term courses will end on June 1, Menlo Abroad courses complete on the evening of June 7.

2 Fee includes all flights • hotel accommodation • all meals • all surface transportation • museum, park, and temple entrance fees • course preparation manual and reading materials • donations to charitable causes in the host country • instructor and extra guide fees • comprehensive risk management systems and administrative support 24/7 • Pre-course conference or visit by Dragons instructor. The fee does not include trip cancellation insurance or expenses for petty cash expenditures (est. at $100), travel medications, immunizations, and obtaining passports and visas (a visa to China costs about $150).

Interested in applying? Apply online today!
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

If you want to understand the world we live in, there's no way to ignore China. Old neighborhoods of wooden houses are demolished to make way for 80-story buildings. Streets once filled with bicycles are now jammed with shiny new cars. Buddhist monks read ancient sutras from iPads, and millions of rural farmers move between home and work in the city to support their families. New highways, rail lines, and airports are underway virtually everywhere in a race to keep up with 1.4 billion people on the move.

As in the words of the “Old Master” (Laozi), “a path traveled is no longer the same path, a road traveled is no longer the same road.” Chinese culture has long been a source of fascination and inspiration, as well as confusion and debate, to outsiders. Today, the question of what defines Chinese culture is as complex as ever. Menlo Abroad: China is a holistic program, offering students opportunities to answer this and other questions while developing meaningful relationships to the people and landscapes of China.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

After orienting ourselves to the program in pre-trip meetings on the Menlo campus, our first days in China will be spent in the ancient town of Dali on the shores of the magnificent Erhai Lake. Once home to the Nanzhao Empire, this ancient capital was overtaken in 902 C.E. to become the Kingdom of Dali, stretching from the borders of current-day Tibet to the west and Myanmar to the south. Here we continue the orientation phase of our course begun in the pre-course meetings on the Menlo campus: refining goals and norms; creating a positive, inclusive, and participatory group culture; and learning the basics of communication, navigation, and safety. In the historic city of Dali we also begin investigating the first theme: the ancient kingdoms of China, as well as an exploration of modern China’s grassroots environmental movements and ethnic minority cultures. We’ll also have the opportunity to engage with local villagers and farmers who live and work in the organic farms surrounding the guesthouse. After three full days in Dali, we will take the high-speed train to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province for our transition to the rural homestay.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

After stopping in Kunming, we will travel to the mountains outside of the city to our host families in Damoyu Village, an ethnic Yi agricultural community in rural Yunnan. The next ten days are a mixture of routine and adventure. Here we investigate the second theme of transition: mass migration from rural agrarian society into urban areas and all of the challenges that presents. We spend evenings and mornings living and working with our homestay families. As we participate in dynamic local responses to problems involving food and water we learn to interact effectively with the local community. Partnering with a local NGO, we will work with the community on such projects as bioconstruction and natural building, permaculture design, food forest management, and rural education. We will gather each morning to work on farms, engage in discussions on ethnic minorities in China, and welcome a variety of guest speakers. We will also have a day hike, outings to the nearby Qiongzhu monastery, and time to explore a nearby alpine lake. This portion of the course will immerse us into a radically different way of life and give us insight into the rich human diversity of China's rural Yunnan.

After ten days, we return to Kunming for a flight to Beijing. We will spend two days with local guides visiting important cultural sites, including the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square as well as the colorful hutong neighborhoods on Houhai Lake. The main theme here is modern China: investigating China's unparalleled scale of growth, development, and global impact. After two days in the city, we will travel to the small village of Xiangshuihu to the Kou family guesthouse. Nestled beneath the Great Wall, this guesthouse provides hospitality, spectacular views, the best food in China, and a respite from the hustle and bustle of the city. Here, we enter the transference phase of the course, reflecting on the last three weeks in China and ways to carry our experiences forward into our daily lives at Menlo and beyond. We spend the last couple of days hiking to a remote area of the Great Wall and engaging in cooking lessons. Our last morning in country, we bid the Kou family farewell and head to the airport. After returning to SFO, we reunite on campus later the next day for final reflection activities and celebratory dinner.

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Menlo Abroad: China
tradition and modernity in transition
May 19-June 7, 2020
**ITINERARY**

*Note: Itinerary is subject to change.*

**May 19  Flight from SFO to Kunming, China (KMG)**

**May 21-24  Dali**

After arriving at Kunming International Airport, we will take a two-hour high-speed train to the ancient city of Dali. After a welcome ceremony, we will engage in a group orientation to health and safety, continuing to refine course goals, expectations, itinerary, and group norms. Here in Dali we will spend three days learning from guest speakers, visiting temples and holy sites, interviewing leaders and NGO employees, and exploring the nearby Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake. We will also explore the surrounding villages and farms outside of the guesthouse to learn about local religions and the culture of the Bai ethnic minority.

**May 25-June 1  Kunming-Damoyu Village**

After several days in Dali we take the train back to Kunming for a transition into a rural homestay. Over the next seven days, we’ll spend evenings and mornings with our homestay families and gather as a group after breakfast for outings, discussions, activities, and lessons. Our focus will be on ethnic minority groups in China, particularly Yi culture in Damoyu, with an emphasis on farming and rural agriculture. We’ll host guest speakers on environmental issues in Yunnan and engage in a service project with Gooday Permaculture Center to learn about agriculture in China and help as we can to lessen environmental impacts of rapid rural development. Outings include visits to Kunming, a hike and a visit to a Ming-dynasty monastery and a nearby alpine lake. On our last night, we’ll enjoy a celebratory farewell dinner with homestay families and service project partner.

**June 2-4  Beijing**

We bid farewell to our host families early in the day and depart for Kunming where we will catch a flight to Beijing. In Beijing, we’ll transfer to a hotel in the city and spend the day exploring important cultural sites, including the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. We’ll also spend some time exploring the colorful hutong neighborhoods near Houhai Lake and Nanluoguxiang. After two full days in the city, we’ll head out of town to stay at a guesthouse nestled in a secluded village under the Great Wall. We’ll have dinner with our hosts, the Kou family, and enjoy a quiet evening.

**June 5  Great Wall**

After breakfast at the guesthouse, we’ll spend the day learning about and exploring the Great Wall and hiking along some of the most beautiful mountains in northeast China. We’ll also participate in cooking lessons with the Kou family. At this point of the trip, we start the reflection process, looking back on our time in China while also looking forward and considering how we’ll bring the experience back to Menlo.

**June 6  Flight from Beijing (PEK) to SFO**

After breakfast, we’ll spend one last morning in Beijing before heading to the airport to make the journey home.

**June 7  Menlo campus: post-trip activities and reflection; celebratory dinner.**

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1 Students must attend the final day to receive full credit for the course. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend the celebration.
TIMELINE OF APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

November 12  Announcement of Menlo Abroad programs
December 3   Applications due
December 11  Participants notified
December 18  Forms and payment due by 3:00 pm
February 25  Additional forms due
February-April Flight arrangements finalized
April 13, 6:00 pm Menlo Abroad mandatory meeting for participants and their parent(s) beginning in Martin Family Hall
May 19-June 6 Menlo Abroad (in country)
June 7        Final day reflection and dinnertime celebration (on campus)

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PROGRAM COMPONENTS

**Menlo Abroad: China** is built around interrelated academic and experiential program components intended to create the most holistic experiential immersion possible. Below is a list of these components:

1. **Survey of Development Issues:** Our program explores a range of development issues related to the fast pace of change in China and the impact this change has had on different regions and people. Through meetings with development professionals and through hands-on experiential activities, students learn how the efforts of community leaders and aid organizations both positively and negatively impact the region's people, culture, and environment.

2. **Introduction to Local Culture and Practice:** In the diverse ethnic communities we visit, we will interact with local cultural beliefs and practices. For instance, students will have the opportunity to visit a Buddhist monastery.

3. **Independent or Small-Group Study:** Students will have the opportunity to investigate individually or in small groups a topic of particular interest, availing themselves of local knowledge and resources.

4. **Language Study:** We do not expect participants to come with language skills, nor to master them. Because frequent language lessons with supportive instructors help empower participants and facilitate an ease of cultural understanding, we do expect that students will want to interact with locals as closely as they can. In Kunming, we will conduct formal language activities and lessons in Mandarin in small groups with local professional language teachers.

5. **Immersive Travel:** Traveling to traditional communities in developing countries requires students to get out of their comfort zones. In Menlo Abroad students are travelers rather than tourists. They travel in a style that enables them to genuinely know the people of the countries they visit. For adaptable participants it offers the most authentic experience and profound learning adventure. In China, students should expect a range of living situations and amenities. While all living conditions are comfortable, students should be able to cope with cold water showers and basic infrastructure in rural areas.

6. **Homestay:** Often the most challenging and fulfilling component, homestays take students to the core of their experiences. Homestays are carefully set up with each student's individual personality in mind in order to provide the best experience in cultural and language immersion possible. Each student will be placed in homestays, and the group will gather each morning to check in and engage in group activities.

7. **Community Engagement:** In our travels students will learn about themselves and each other, build strong bonds as a group through designated activities and learn about the communities they are visiting through talks and visits with local experts.

8. **Apprenticeship:** During our time at Damoyu we will have the opportunity to participate in work around issues involving sustainability.

9. **Guided Reflection:** Students will regularly meet with Menlo and Dragons staff to investigate, monitor, problem solve, and reflect on events or issues particular to the individual students. Students will journal and blog on a frequent basis.

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MENLO ABROAD ASPIRATIONS

1. Knowledge and Global Competency: Menlo Abroad programs advance students’ self-knowledge and global competencies, including intercultural capabilities, historical perspectives, and attentiveness to diversity. Through direct experience, students develop awareness of global systems and issues impacting host communities.

2. Dispositions of Global Engagement: Menlo Abroad programs cultivate internationally minded students who recognize their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet and strive to create a better and more peaceful world. Among the many positive dispositions they develop are agency, leadership, confidence, empathy, compassion, humility, feelings of interconnection, and respect.

3. Relationships: Menlo Abroad programs build sustaining relationships between students and diverse, underserved foreign communities and individuals through shared common experiences of everyday life.

4. Learning Service: Menlo Abroad programs contribute to solutions based on mutually beneficial work, apprenticeship, or study, in activities that at the same time support students’ knowledge of and appreciation for local cultures and issues at hand.

5. Connections: Menlo Abroad programs generate sustaining interest and connections with Menlo curricula and program.

5 Global competency includes the ability to investigate the world beyond the immediate environment, the recognition of one's own and other perspectives, and the ability to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences.

6 By Global engagement we mean the dispositions necessary to be connected and of service to others, including those beyond national borders.

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May 19-June 7, 2020
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This program is being offered by Menlo School in conjunction with Where There Be Dragons. In cases of programs offered in conjunction with other organizations, participants are expected to complete registration, waivers, and medical forms provided by both Menlo School and the third party organization.

By December 18: To secure a place in the program, each of the following must be submitted.

1. A check payment payable to Menlo School for $5,500. Financial aid recipients will be contacted by the financial aid office with a revised program fee.
2. Completed and signed Parent Permission and Waiver, Medical Release, Emergency and Medical Information Form - Overnight
3. Completed and signed Waiver and Release for Foreign Program
4. Completed and signed Menlo School Trip Contract
5. Copy of the participating student's current passport with visa stamp, if possible. The passport must have two blank pages and expire six months or more after the return from the Menlo Abroad trip. If participant does not have a current passport or visa, these need to be obtained and copies submitted by February 25.

If your trip involves a third party organization, health forms, equipment lists, air travel instructions, and further information about the program will subsequently be provided to you by the other organization. You may also be asked to sign a release form for that other organization.

By February 25: The following additional forms must be submitted

1. If not submitted earlier, a copy of participating student's current passport with visa stamp. The passport must have two blank pages and expire six months or more after the return from the Menlo Abroad trip.
2. A signed and notarized Parent Authorization Letter for Minor Traveller
3. All forms, including medical forms, required from any third party organization involved

Our intention is to address the goals and program elements listed in the program description, but all participants are advised that course itineraries will likely change to incorporate participant goals and interests, to adjust to the health of members of the group, or in response to weather conditions, problems with transportation, political unrest or other unforeseen problems. Regardless of such changes, we will always work to structure and implement the course so that it stays true to the original intent.

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REFUND POLICY: If the participant or participant's family delivers a written message of intent to withdraw from the program to Menlo School 30 days or more prior to departure, Menlo will refund all recoupable fees minus a $1,000 non-refundable application-processing charge. If notice of cancellation is received within 30 days of departure, the participant will forfeit the entire program fee. Any participant who returns home early will not receive any refund.

MEDICAL AND EVACUATION EXPENSES: It is the responsibility of the student and the student's family to understand the limits of any medical and evacuation policy, and to provide up-front payment of emergency services when required.

CELL PHONES: In order to maintain the integrity of the immersive experience Menlo Abroad requires students to relinquish cell phones to trip leaders upon entry into the target country.

VIOLATION OF RULES AND REGULATIONS: If a participant acts in a way that is injurious to himself or herself, people of the host country, or other participants on the trip, or generally conducts himself or herself in a way that is disruptive to the trip, we reserve the right to send the participant home without refund. Underage use of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs are cause for dismissal. Participants sent home early or who choose to return for any reason, including sickness, personal emergencies or injury, will be responsible for all medical costs and will absorb travel and related costs associated with an unscheduled departure.

CANCELED TRIPS: A full refund will be made for canceled trips that arise out of insufficient registration, though Menlo is not responsible for other costs incurred by the student or family preparing for the trip. For trips canceled due to any other circumstance that is beyond Menlo’s control, Menlo will refund all recoupable tuition.

Please contact Peter Brown with any questions at 650.330.2001 ext. 2238 or email pbrown@menloschool.org.

READ THIS DESCRIPTION CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING FORMS.