From Spaetzle to Dumplings: Porsche's Trainee Program and my time in Shanghai

06/09/2019 On my first day of work, I was warmly welcomed by my new colleagues in the office — everyone was so kind, curious and courteous. At lunchtime, my team insisted on having lunch together and even invited me. And then, when the food was served, I realized that I now live in a country with a very different culture. First course: jellyfish. Afterward: three grilled pigeons on the table. Welcome to China!

For two months, I worked in the procurement division at Porsche China in Shanghai as part of my trainee program at Porsche, and would like to tell you about this exciting, great experience in the following.

10 graduates, 12 months, unlimited experiences: The Porsche Trainee Program

Each year since 2014, Porsche invites ten graduates to join the Porsche family by attending the one-year traineeship that takes them into the world of Porsche. Last year, I was lucky enough to be one of them. During the 12 months, each trainee passes through several different departments, including one placement that is based abroad. The individual assignments usually last 2–3 months, depending on the type and scope of the project that you're supporting. In addition to the various project and overseas stations, the trainee year at Porsche also includes a two-week assembly line internship, during which the graduates go through various production sections and get to know the actual production of the vehicles very close. Besides that, each trainee spends one or two weeks at a Porsche dealer to see where and how our vehicles are actually sold.

The individual assignments are tailored to the trainee's interests and in addition, the trainee year is enriched with different training courses and further education on various topics. All Porsche trainee contracts are open-ended with a takeover guarantee in the respective department.

My personal Porsche journey: Smart Mobility, Procurement and Controlling

My personal Porsche journey started as a trainee in the Smart Mobility procurement department in October 2018. While procurement is mostly about everything that has to be purchased from external suppliers — such as wheels, tires, seats or batteries as well as non-production material like services,

equipment, travels and much more — I work in a subteam that takes care of Porsche Smart Mobility topics from the procurement side. One of the topics me and my colleagues are responsible for is the further expansion of the Porsche Charging Service, an app service that displays available charging stations close to the customer. For a basic monthly fee, each customer can access around 70,000 charging points in 12 markets worldwide.

After that, I stayed in Smart Mobility controlling for two months, where I gained insight into the controlling activities and was involved in calculating the business cases of our various smart mobility services. To me, this was a very interesting time that broadened my view of smart mobility services.

Another part of the Trainee Program is a teambuilding week halfway through the Program. In a group of very talented people, we were sent to the German Alps for team workshops and fun events with the most beautiful mountain view. In any case, the difference to my subsequent stay in China could not have been more glaring.

From spaetzle to dumplings: Joining Porsche China in Shanghai

The most exciting part of my Trainee Program awaited me far from home, halfway around the globe to be exact. In May, I joined Porsche China in Shanghai to work in the procurement department, supporting both local and global procurement processes in the field of logistics and export, charging as well as event activities.

From the work side, I could bring in my gained expertise very well as I worked on similar projects as back home in Germany. But one thing that is completely different to what I'm used to is the working culture.

Respectful Chinese working culture and a (Digital) Infrastructure made for the efficient living of millions

Relationships and respect are highly important in each form of collaboration here. Communication is not as straightforward as in Germany — especially when working with new suppliers, it is very important to build up a good relationship before talking about business.

In addition to the world of work, there are also many differences in everyday life. For example, transport: In Shanghai, electric vehicles are omnipresent on the roads and the metro infrastructure is impressively well developed. Considering the fact that public transport in Shanghai moves about 26 million people every day, it's almost unbelievable to me that the metro and long-distance trains are always on time. Most metro lines run every two minutes, the highspeed trains are extremely punctual and highly modern with wi-fi and an entertainment media center available. During an intermediate stop, you can even have food delivered by local restaurants directly to the rails.

It's the same with payments: digital, reliable and efficient. Everyone pays by app, either with Alipay or Wechatpay. Unfortunately, both can only be used with a Chinese bank account, which is only available for stays of more than six months. So, while everyone else is ready to pay quickly and uncomplicated with his smartphone, I was always the only one who took out her purse and cash in the restaurant, supermarket, shop, kiosk, bakery or anywhere else.

Clash of culture between megacities and untouched nature, innovative power and traditional regulations

I quickly discovered that this country — or I should probably say region as I've only seen a fraction of China so far because it's impossible to see all of it within two months — has a lot to offer.

I was impressed by the size, development and atmosphere of Shanghai in all manners from day one. Even though such a megacity can be quite overwhelming at the beginning, I learned to love it — the generous people, the glaring but also extremely traditional culture, and the nature. Apart from the cities, there are areas in China with beautiful national parks and mountain views which inspired movies like Avatar. You could spend months exploring the country and nature.

But there are also downsides: Of course, I wanted to share all my impressions and pictures of the stunning countryside and keep in touch with my friends and family at home, which was quite difficult because many websites and apps such as Whatsapp and Google are blocked in China. To most of us growing up in a Western world, this is unimaginable.

Thank you, Porsche China, it was a pleasure!

Overall, I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been in China, to experience a completely different culture and to see how Porsche works in a foreign market. I now better understand the Chinese culture and different ways of working, living and socializing. Other cultural peculiarities, traditions or manners can sometimes be a little overwhelming, especially in the beginning, because we don't know how to deal with them properly. But I learned that you can get used to new surroundings quickly — and that living in a foreign culture opens up unforeseen possibilities, friendships, learnings, and success!

Thanks to all my colleagues from Porsche China in Shanghai for having me there, it was a pleasure!

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