



Next-Gen Fellow

KEVIN CROOKS: COMING TO CHINA

PURPOSE

FIRST TIME TO CHINA

This journey began as I was finishing my PhD studies at St Edmund's college, Cambridge. I received an email sent to students in the Maths dept. inviting applications to visit China for teaching and cultural exchange.

This timing fitted well with the end of my PhD, and I was keen to use my "theoretical" skills in the wider world. Having studied in the UK my whole life, the experience of a new culture was sure to be eye-opening.

It was a difficult choice to leave the "known", and live in China. But this decision became the first step in my journey.



The Global Inclusive Leadership Next Gen Program intends to help our next generations to develop character and values, and to discover their purpose, so that they are ready to take ownership of their individual journey.

Hudson Taylor

One of the exciting things about coming to Zhenjiang is its connection to Hudson Taylor. A church just 10 minutes from the school has a memorial to the missionary, in recognition of his care for the Chinese people. People remember when you love them unconditionally.

MY EXPERIENCE HERE

China is a very beautiful place, and outside of teaching and times spent with leadership events for the students, I have enjoyed seeing many of the sights in Jiangsu (the province in China). Some highlights for me are:

- ◆ Views from the 3 famous hills around Zhenjiang.
- ◆ Three famous foods: pork, vinegar and noodles!
- ◆ The Calligraphy museum and its garden.

I was struck by the **generosity** and **kindness** of the people here. Even in a new place, the people were quick to welcome me.

Zhenjiang combines countryside with high-tech industry, as a number of tech start-ups choose to be based here instead of the more expensive Shanghai areas.

A NEW CHAPTER

For my undergraduate, I was fortunate to study at Warwick. I ran a *Maths Café* for students to work on problems, while supporting each other. This, combined with two other factors from my life influenced my involvement here: my enjoyment of teaching undergraduate students, and my interest in anything technical!

On arrival to China, I didn't know how my skills would be useful. But these three formed the newest component of the "Next-Gen" centre here in Zhenjiang.

I gave challenges to the students requiring **teamwork**, alongside **creativity** and **problem solving**.

The students found they had the ability to form teams themselves, and use different skills within the team. Each challenge required design and preparation; mathematics, following a plan, and English-speaking, so all team members were crucial to their final success.

Benefits of my trip

I learned much from my travels here, including speaking more Chinese.

While here, I helped with many things such as teaching, managing the online blog, and running large group activities. I didn't know before completing these if I would be able to do them. Being challenged in these ways gave me a lot of personal growth. To quote Dr. Lo:

"You don't know you can do something. And then it's done."

Knowing that I am not just here for myself, but to serve others, is a key to making the most out of my time here. Yet through this giving I experienced friendship, growth and enjoyable times too!

"As a student in intensive training class, we just care about our study, and we compete with each other. But now we were teammates, not competitors."

A student from Team 2 (English translation)