

NORTHWEST A&F UNIVERSITY

**Bridges of Heritage and Horizons: My
Transformative Journey Through Nanjing**

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Introduction

As an international student from Benin, West Africa, studying in China under the prestigious Chinese Government Scholarship (CSC) program, I had the remarkable opportunity to embark on an educational and cultural journey to Nanjing; a city where ancient memories, national resilience, and forward-looking innovation coexist in breathtaking harmony. This trip was far more than a change of scenery; it was a living classroom where every site visited unfolded lessons about history, identity, and progress, and offered profound inspiration for how I, too, can contribute to my country's future.

Through this carefully curated itinerary, I walked through solemn places of remembrance, stood in awe of architectural masterpieces, found moments of quiet reflection in sacred temples, marveled at China's technological leaps, and wandered vibrant old streets alive with stories and lantern light. Each place revealed to me how China embraces its rich cultural roots while boldly pushing the frontiers of modern development; a balance that I hope to help foster in my own nation someday.

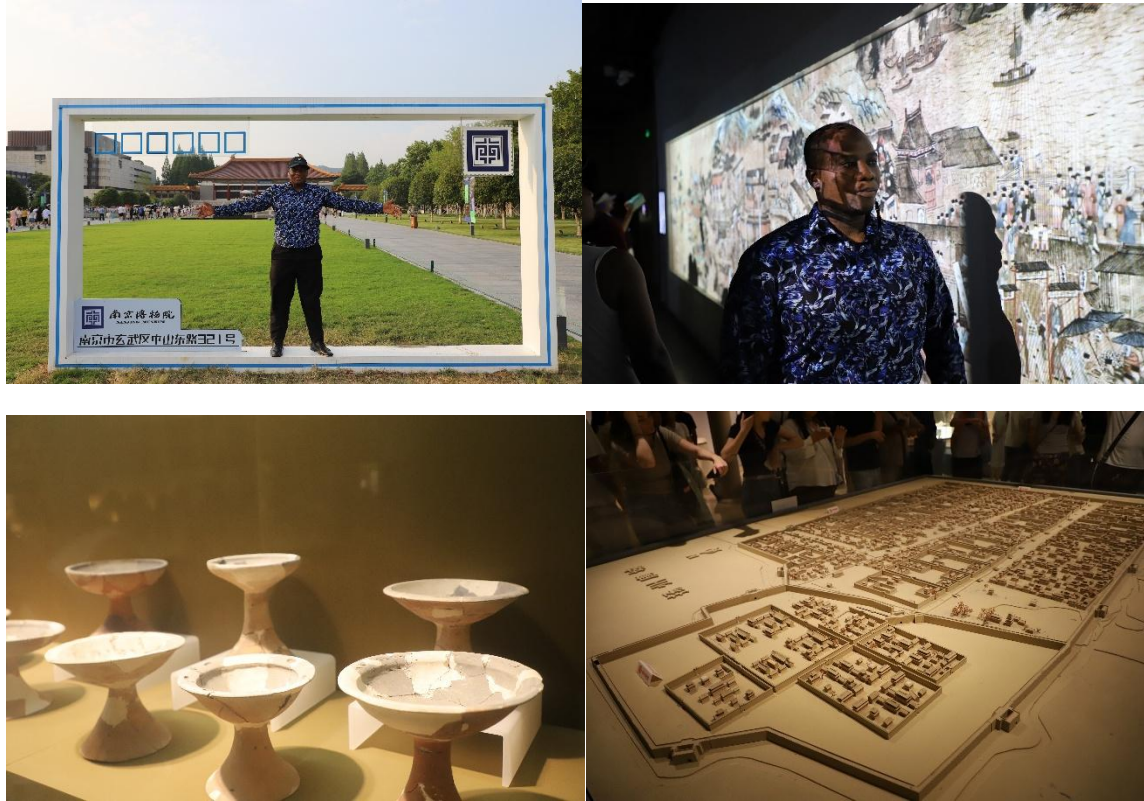
This journey was an invaluable opportunity to expand my perspective as a young scholar from Benin, to absorb the spirit of a country that honors its past while building its future, and to gather fresh ideas about how cultural heritage, education, and innovation can be interwoven to uplift a people. I am sincerely grateful to the Chinese Government Scholarship for making this unforgettable learning experience possible.

In this report, I share the highlights of each site we visited, the personal reflections and lessons I drew as an international student, and my deep appreciation for China's cultural and technological leadership; hoping my words may inspire others back home to cherish our own heritage, embrace learning, and believe in the power of global exchange.

A) Reflective Report on the Visit to the Nanjing Museum

As an international student from Benin, West Africa, selected by the College of International Education of Northwest A&F University, visiting the Nanjing Museum was a transformative experience that deeply enriched my academic and personal journey. Located in Nanjing's Xuanwu District, the museum's architectural grandeur and vast, meticulously curated collections of historical artifacts, ceramics, calligraphy, bronzes, and jade vividly showcased China's profound cultural heritage and artistic mastery. This visit opened my eyes to the vital role museums play in preserving cultural identity and educating younger generations, revealing how China's commitment to protecting and showcasing its history strengthens national pride and inspires innovation. Coming from a country with rich but often under-documented cultural heritage, I learned the importance of systematic preservation and interdisciplinary collaboration to safeguard our collective memory, which motivates me to advocate for the creation of modern, interactive museums in Benin that can inspire our youth just as the Nanjing Museum inspired me. I am deeply grateful to Northwest A&F University for this opportunity, as it has strengthened my resolve to contribute to cultural preservation and education in my home country, recognizing that preserving culture is preserving the soul of a nation, and empowering future generations through pride in their heritage is a pathway to sustainable development and shared global understanding.





B) Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall: “Remembering History, Honoring Peace”

Visiting the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was a deeply moving experience that left a profound imprint on my heart and mind. Standing within these solemn halls and witnessing the documented tragedies made me realize the resilience of the Chinese people and their unwavering commitment to peace. The carefully curated exhibitions, towering sculptures, and stark historical evidence taught me the value of remembering the past to build a better future. I was particularly inspired by how China confronts its history with dignity and transparency, using this site as a space for education and reflection to prevent such tragedies from recurring. This visit strengthened my conviction to promote peace and human rights within my community in Benin and made me appreciate the hard-won peace China cherishes today.



C) Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum : “In the Footsteps of Visionary Leadership”

At the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, I was struck by the beauty of the mountain-lined architecture and the serene environment honoring Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China. Walking up the grand steps, surrounded by nature and history, I felt the spirit of leadership, vision, and patriotism that Dr. Sun represented. The mausoleum’s design, blending harmony with the landscape, symbolizes the unity and aspirations of the Chinese people. As a student, I was inspired by Dr. Sun’s dedication to national rejuvenation and social progress, reminding me of the importance of visionary leadership for the development of my own country. This visit instilled in me a sense of responsibility to contribute to the progress of Benin, just as Dr. Sun contributed to China’s advancement.



D) Presidential Palace: “Witnessing China’s Path to Modernization”

The Presidential Palace offered a living history lesson, showcasing the evolution of China from dynastic rule to modern governance. It’s beautiful blend of traditional Jiangnan gardens and Western-style architecture highlighted the openness of Chinese culture to embracing progress while preserving its heritage. I was fascinated to stand where Dr. Sun Yat-sen was sworn in as the Provisional President, witnessing how China has journeyed through challenges toward modernization and stability. For me, this visit emphasized the importance of political stability and visionary governance, and it broadened my understanding of the complex journey nations undertake toward development.



E) Xuanwu Lake: “Whispers of History Across Still Waters”

Walking through the peaceful Xuanwu Lake was like stepping into a living painting, with its calm waters reflecting the sky and the city’s historic skyline. The rich history of the lake as a royal garden and training ground reminded me of the deep cultural layers embedded within Chinese landscapes. As I enjoyed the fresh air and tranquility, I reflected on the importance of maintaining green spaces within urban environments, something I hope we can prioritize more in Benin to improve quality of life and preserve cultural heritage. It was a reminder of the harmony between nature and modern development that China is carefully cultivating.



F) Jiming Temple: “Where Lotus Blooms Meet Silent Prayers”

Visiting Jiming Temple, one of Nanjing’s oldest Buddhist temples, was a spiritually enriching experience. The scent of incense, the peaceful chants, and the views over Xuanwu Lake created a moment of quiet reflection for me amidst the busy academic life. It made me appreciate the role of spirituality in maintaining mental well-being and community connection, values that are essential for young people navigating the challenges of academic and professional life. I left the temple with a sense of peace and a renewed commitment to balance hard work with personal wellness.



G) TopGun UAV Robotics Company: “Touching Tomorrow: Skies of Innovation”

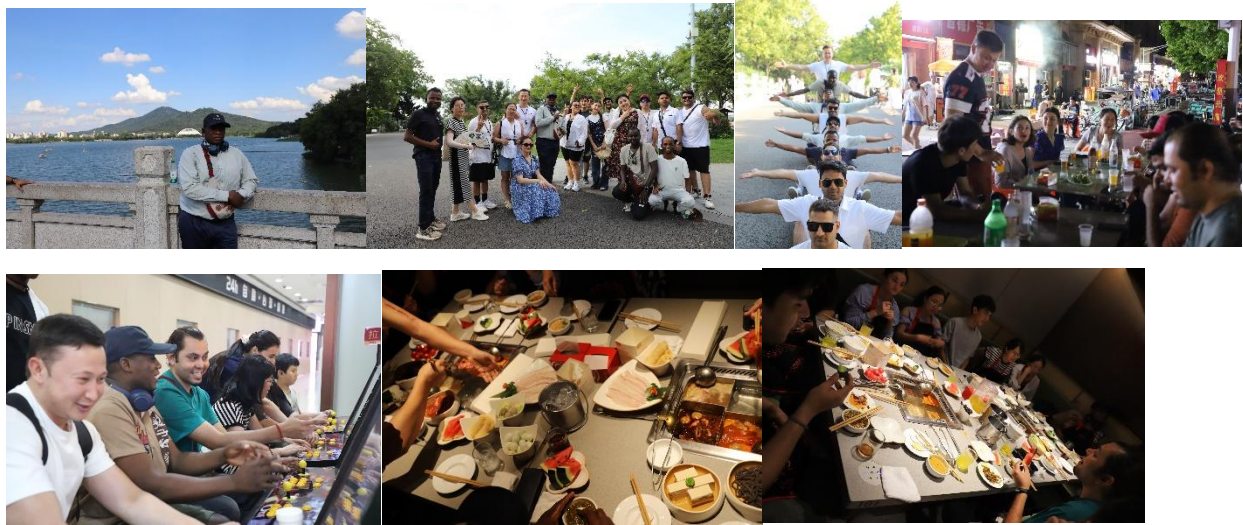
The visit to TopGun (Nanjing) Robotics Co., Ltd. was incredibly inspiring, showcasing China’s cutting-edge advancements in drone technology and artificial intelligence. Seeing how China harnesses innovation for agricultural development, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring sparked ideas in me about how similar technologies could transform agricultural practices and environmental monitoring in Benin. This exposure to China’s technological leadership motivated me to think critically about how I can contribute to technological progress in my country, especially in the fields of smart agriculture and sustainable development.



H) Confucius Temple & Qinhuai Scenic Area: “Rivers of Light, Stories of a Thousand Lanterns”

Exploring Laomendong allowed me to immerse myself in the living history of Nanjing. The narrow alleys, traditional Jiangnan architecture, and vibrant street life offered a glimpse into China’s ability to preserve its cultural essence while embracing modernization. The warmth of the local people, the colorful lanterns, and the preserved heritage buildings demonstrated the pride China takes in its cultural identity. It inspired me to appreciate and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Benin and think creatively about how to blend tradition with modernity in our urban spaces.

Ending the day with a night tour of Confucius Temple and the Qinhuai Scenic Area was a magical experience. The illuminated lanterns reflecting off the Qinhuai River, the lively streets with traditional food, and the historic architecture created a festive and welcoming atmosphere. I admired how China makes its cultural sites accessible, creating spaces where history, culture, and daily life merge seamlessly. This visit taught me the value of promoting cultural tourism in Benin as a means of community development, cultural pride, and economic opportunity, while also preserving the heritage that shapes our identity.



Conclusion

I am deeply grateful to the College of International Education of Northwest A&F University for organizing this educational trip, which has not only enriched my understanding of China's history, culture, and technological progress but has also inspired me to reflect on how I can contribute to the growth of my country, Benin. China's dedication to preserving its heritage while advancing in innovation has set an example for me, and I feel privileged to have experienced this as an international student. This journey has strengthened my sense of global citizenship, academic motivation, and commitment to community development, and I will carry these lessons with me throughout my studies and future professional endeavors.