

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

My Academic Journey from Nanjing to London

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Wendy (Die) Wen is a third-year direct PhD student in the School of Earth Sciences and Engineering at Nanjing University. Last September, she flew to the UK and started her journey as a visiting student in the University College London (UCL). In the last September issue, Wendy contributed to an interview article about her expectations, concerns and goals regarding the upcoming

overseas trip (Click [here](#) to view the original article). In this issue, she wrote an article to share with us an update on her recent overseas experience in the UK.

Hello to everyone reading this newsletter! It's been an enlightening journey since my arrival in London on September 25, 2023, as a visiting student from Nanjing University. These past six months have been filled with new experiences, challenges, and learning opportunities. I'm eager to share insights from my academic endeavors and everyday life in London.

****Academic Experiences****

My research under Professor Philip Mannion at UCL has been a continuation of my studies in Nanjing University, focusing on the Latitudinal Diversity Gradient during the Paleozoic. Professor Mannion's guidance has been instrumental in navigating through complex concepts and methodologies. A trip to the University of Oxford in February allowed me to engage with Professor Erin Saupe and Dr. Roger Close, whose perspectives and feedback were immensely beneficial.

The London Palaeobiology Journal Club, a collaboration between UCL and Natural History Museum (NHM), has been a forum for exchanging ideas and discussions, exposing me to a wider spectrum of paleobiological research. This networking has significantly enriched my understanding and approach to my own research.



Journal Club at NHM

Furthermore, my forthcoming role as a demonstrator for fieldwork in Dorset will not only allow me to share my knowledge but also gain insights into different teaching methodologies.

****Life in London****

Adapting to life in London offered both excitement and challenges. Embracing local traditions, such as coffee breaks and pub gatherings, enriched my daily life. Initially, fitting in was difficult, but gradually I began to understand local dialogue and cultural nuances, from public transit details to regional dialects and social topics. Special thanks to Sarah, who is very kind and often explains unfamiliar words or phrases to me.

Unexpectedly, financial management became crucial, leading me to appreciate budgeting and meal planning. Every weekend, I engaged in grocery shopping, cooking, and exploring budget-friendly food options through the ToogoodTogo app. My weekends transformed into adventures in nature, offering serene escapes from the bustling city life.



Top left: Celebrating Chinese New Year at Qian Xiao's House.

Bottom left: The Chinese group from the Department of Earth Sciences at UCL traveling to Bushy Park on a Sunday.

Right: Celebrating Christmas at Jacquie & Norm's House.

Special appreciation goes to Professor Graham Shields and Dr. Ying Zhou for their wonderful Christmas event, which introduced me to traditional celebrations and customs. Similarly, Dr. Jacquie Drake and Professor Norman MacLeod's hospitality during their Christmas party offered another genuine taste of British festivity. I'm thankful for the community feeling shared at Sarah's potluck and the memorable New Year celebration hosted by Qian Xiao, showcasing the variety and richness of foods, including the delightful trifle and mulled wine, unique to this part of the world.

Reflecting on my time in London, I am grateful for the academic opportunities and personal growth I've experienced. The blend of rigorous study and cultural immersion has been profound. I look forward to continuing this journey, embracing new experiences and challenges in the months ahead.