

## Lost on Planet China: The Strange and True Story of One Man's Attempt to Understand the World's Most Mystifying Nation or How He Became Comfortable

**Eating Live Squid** by J. Maarten Troost

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 6349 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 293 pages



I first arrived in China in 2006, wide-eyed and ambitious, with a burning desire to learn the language. I had studied Chinese for a year in college, but I quickly realized that my textbook knowledge was woefully inadequate for navigating the real world.

The first thing that struck me was the sheer variety of dialects spoken across the country. Mandarin, the official language of China, is based on the Beijing dialect, but there are dozens of other dialects that are mutually unintelligible. In Shanghai, where I lived, the local dialect, Shanghainese, was so different from Mandarin that it might as well have been a foreign language. Determined to master this linguistic labyrinth, I hired a private tutor and immersed myself in the language.

One of the most challenging aspects of Chinese is the tones. Each syllable in Chinese can be pronounced in four different tones, and the meaning of a word can change dramatically depending on the tone used. For example,

the word "ma" can mean "mother," "horse," "scold," or "hemp" depending on the tone. It took me months of practice to develop the muscle memory necessary to produce the correct tones consistently.

Another challenge was the sheer number of characters. Chinese has tens of thousands of characters, each with its own unique meaning and pronunciation. It can take years to learn enough characters to be able to read and write fluently. I started by memorizing the most common characters, and gradually expanded my vocabulary over time. I also found that using flashcards and writing practice were essential for improving my retention.

As I progressed in my studies, I began to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the Chinese language. The characters are often pictographs, which means that they represent objects or ideas directly. For example, the character for "mountain" is a picture of a mountain, and the character for "tree" is a picture of a tree. This can make learning new characters easier, as you can often guess the meaning of a character based on its appearance.

The Chinese language is also incredibly rich in idioms and proverbs. These sayings often contain hidden meanings or allusions to Chinese history and culture. For example, the proverb "打蛇打七寸" literally means "to hit a snake at its seven inches," but it figuratively means to strike at the heart of a problem.

Learning Chinese has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It has opened up a whole new world of culture and understanding. I can now read Chinese literature, watch Chinese films, and communicate

with Chinese people from all walks of life. The journey has not been without its challenges, but it has been well worth the effort.

If you are thinking about learning Chinese, I encourage you to go for it. It is a challenging but ultimately rewarding language to learn. With perseverance and dedication, you can master this ancient and fascinating language and open up a whole new world of possibilities.

### **Tips for Learning Chinese**

1. Start by learning the basics, such as the Pinyin romanization system and the four tones.
2. Immerse yourself in the language as much as possible. Watch Chinese films, read Chinese books, and listen to Chinese music.
3. Find a good language partner or tutor. This can help you practice speaking and listening to Chinese.
4. Be patient and persistent. Learning Chinese takes time and effort, but it is definitely possible.
5. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes when learning a new language.

### **Resources for Learning Chinese**

- ChinesePod: A website and app that offers online Chinese lessons.
- Yabla Chinese: A website and app that offers Chinese video lessons.
- HelloChinese: A mobile app that offers interactive Chinese lessons.
- Pleco: A Chinese dictionary and learning app.

- China Discovery: A website that offers a wealth of information on Chinese culture and language.



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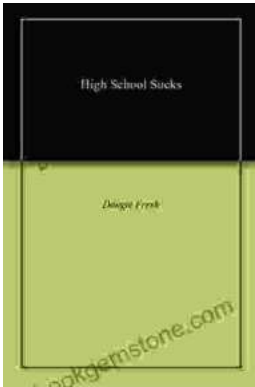
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