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Foreign writers pose for photos during a visit to Shaoxing of Zhejiang Province, the home of Chinese literary giant Lu Xun. — Ti Gong

## Foreign writers take in all the city vibes

**“As a writer, you should not judge, you should understand.”**

—Ernest Hemingway on Writing

Yao Minji

Seven foreign writers have begun to grasp more about Shanghai by the sixth week of their two-month Shanghai Writing Program.

“Staying here for two months has changed my views in many ways,” Bernhard Hennen, author of the German best-seller “The Elves,” told Shanghai Daily.

“Being here is different.”

The German author, archaeologist and historian is one of seven writers who arrived in Shanghai in early

September to participate in a program offered by the Shanghai Writers’ Association.

Some, like Hennen, have visited China before, but the majority are new to the country. Nobody has ever lived here quite like this before.

“I’ve been walking about 15 kilometers a day, sometimes with a clear destination in mind and often without,” said Sofronis Sofroniou, an award-winning writer from Cyprus. “What I saw and experienced on the road piqued my interest even more in understanding life here.

“It also gave me the inspiration to

write a novel. Hopefully, I’ll be back here next spring to write it.”

The residency program, which began in 2008, has so far housed 100 writers from 38 nations for two months in Shanghai. This year, the initiative urges writers to be “the messenger, connecting places that have remained distant from each other,” as well as “providing us with a unique perspective, one that allows us to reflect on ourselves from a remote vantage point.”

Shanghai Daily spoke with the seven writers to understand more about their unique points of view.