

A Knack for Low Cost Travel

Luo Hao

■ By Lei Na

Right after he graduated from the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics' department of economics, Luo Hao (CEIBS MBA 2018) joined Alstom, one of the world's leading companies in the rail transport market. His job took him to Paris, then São Paulo. While in the Brazilian city, he was responsible for the financial affairs of the company's biggest railway-signalling-system project.

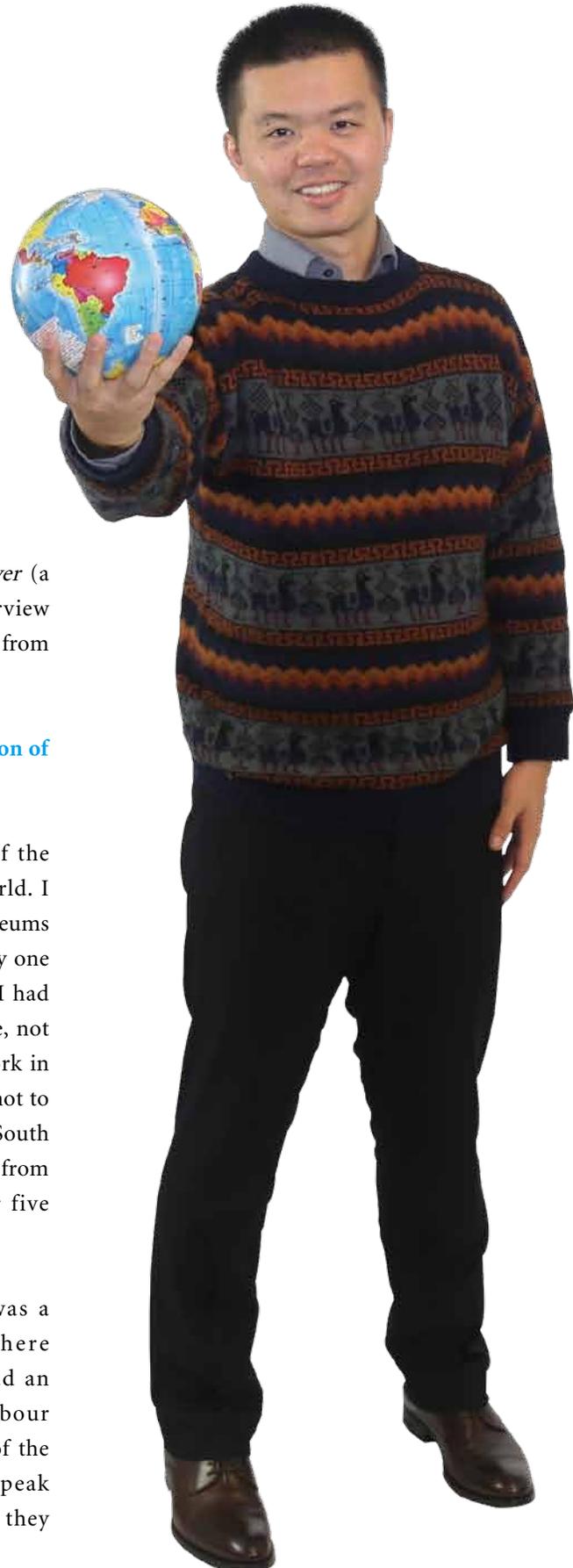
In addition to the important role he played at Alstom, Luo also found time to indulge his love of travelling and his photography skills. He's the author of *Qiongyou*, a travel guide that focuses on three cities: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil, along with Machu Picchu in Peru. As the English translation of its name implies, the guide is for those on a budget. Luo's photos and travel tips were also often carried in Chinese language publications such as *One* (an online magazine whose Editor-in-Chief is well known thought leader Han

Han) and *The Economic Observer* (a weekly newspaper). In an interview with *TheLINK*, he shares stories from his travels:

TheLINK: What's your impression of Paris and São Paulo?

Unquestionably, Paris is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. I spent my year there visiting museums and castles. However, there's only one shortcoming: its beauty was as I had imagined; it was too predictable, not surprising at all. So after my work in Paris came to an end, I decided not to stay on. I applied for a post in South America, the furthest continent from China, and I stayed there for five years.

Compared to Paris, Brazil was a different world entirely. There was graffiti everywhere, it had an undeveloped economy, the labour force was inefficient and 90% of the population was not able to speak English... On the other hand, they



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had the largest carnival in the world. During the spectacular event, there were more than two million people in each city, gathering in the streets for five days and nights. Brazil also has the four-kilometre-wide Iguazu Falls. Imagine, the running path in a typical stadium is usually 400 metres long, so you would have to run 10 laps to finish the width of the falls... Only after I went to Brazil did I realise how big the world is!

TheLINK: What advice do you have for Chinese nationals on how to fit into the local environment when working overseas?

I was the only Chinese among the company's 1,000 employees in Brazil. People often regard Brazil as an unsafe place, so I guess there were

not many Chinese applicants. When I landed in Brazil, I could not speak any Portuguese, and I experienced culture shock every day. Only after some time did I get used to the locals' habit of being late, and their aesthetics – which is so different from that of Chinese.

I was responsible for the financial aspects of the signalling-system project for three major metro lines. There were units from Brazil, France, Italy and Canada working on the €350-million project. Before the opening of Football World Cup 2014, metro line 3 connected São Paulo's downtown with the event's major venue, Arena Corinthians. It was a very convenient way to get to the arena and I took the line when I went to watch two World Cup matches.

TheLINK: You have been to many countries in South America, Europe and Asia. Which impressed you most?

I have been to 25 countries, and it's not a big number compared to the number of countries seen by some CEIBS students and alumni. However, maybe there are not so many people who are as familiar with South America as I am. It's hard to say which experience was the most impressive, because I have had so many unforgettable trips. One of them was my visit to Bolivia's "Mirror of the Sky", Salar de Uyuni. It is the world's largest salt flat. Every February, rainwater will leave a thin layer of ice on its surface, transforming it into a huge mirror that reflects the sky. At night, the ethereal curve of the Milky Way hangs overhead across the sky. It is reflected in the "Mirror



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of the Sky” under your feet, and you are standing right in the middle of a circle consisting of the Milky Way and its reflection. It is astonishing. Other unforgettable experiences include seeing pink dolphins in the Amazon Jungle; the “City in the Sky” in Machu Picchu, Peru; the sunrise at Cordillera Paine in Chile; and Mont Blanc, the highest peak of the Alps, which I climbed this July.

TheLINK: Why did you choose the CEIBS MBA, and what’s your expectation of the next 18 months?

From the moment I began to work overseas, my plan always included returning to China. During the seven

years I was away, China has seen so much change. I was shocked every time I came back home. For instance, in South America it’s impossible to use mobile payment to pay your taxi fare, but that’s very common in China now. There were two reasons I chose CEIBS as my first stop. On one hand, I want to learn more about China, which is now both familiar and strange to me, and I also want to meet new people. Now like many of my classmates, I am trying to catch up with the CEIBS MBA’s fast pace and learn how to effectively manage my time. On the other hand, I am trying to join more student organisations, and improve my communication skills as well as my leadership ability.

TheLINK: What is your plan for your post-MBA career?

I love travelling around, and initially my plan was to be in the tourism and leisure industry, helping people who want to travel or go vacationing by using my expertise and the management knowledge CEIBS is going to teach me. However, after joining CEIBS, I have learned from classmates from different industries and cultural backgrounds that there are still so many interesting industries out there. I will remain curious and keep an open mind so that I can broaden my horizons during my CEIBS study. If I find a career path more suitable for me, I may just give it a try.

