EARLY last year, Ms Sam Yip was asked by her employers whether she wanted to relocate to their Shanghai office.

The 27-year-old business process analyst took the plunge — and has not regretted it one bit.

"I took a 10 per cent pay cut, but it was worth it," she said. Setting up base in China took her out of her comfort zone, and forced her to "start taking care of my own daily affairs".

Ms Yip and Miss Chua are part of a rapidly growing number of young Singaporeans who are travelling overseas — for work and to study.

Some go overseas on study trips, and seek employment there. For example, the NUS College Shanghai programme, which offers students a year at Pudan University and internship opportunities with companies in Shanghai, is becoming very popular.

To date, 33 students have completed the programme. By July next year, that number is expected to more than double to 73.

"Various initiatives have been taken to make the students feel at home and open up to other expatriates. There is a growing community of young Singaporeans, working adults as well as others who made the decision to study full-time in Chinese universities.

Leaving home: Business process analyst Sam Yip, 27 (left), seen here with friends in Century Park, Shanghai, says that settling up base in China took her out of her comfort zone, and forced her to "start taking care of my own daily affairs".

Ms Lim Zhi Wei, 20, had been accepted at the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, but she decided last year to take the path less trodden.

Currently studying English and English literature at the well-known Fudan University, Ms Lim is also brushing up her translation skills.

Shanghai is a favoured destination: It is just a five-hour plane ride away, and most young Chinese Singaporeans are bilingual, giving them an edge over other expatriates.

Miss Chua is now based in Leuven, Belgium, and is working as a trainee with Belgian brewer InBev.

InBev, and is working as a trainee with the company in Shanghai. She gave up her network of friends. So, in March this year, she gave up her job at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Singapore to travel to Belgium.

"My career progression is definitely uncertain, and I'm paid just enough for accommodation, living expenses and a small sum remaining for some travelling around Europe. But I believe that if I'm willing to work hard, I will be successful anywhere."

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There is a growing community of young Singaporeans, working adults as well as others who made the decision to study full-time in Chinese universities.

"Although the Chinese here and we share the same ethnic identity, our culture and thinking are vastly different.

"So whenever my Singaporean friends and I interact, we try to cook Singaporean food and we definitely get a great sense of belonging by speaking Singlish."

Once in a while, she overhears a stranger on campus speaking with a Singaporean accent and takes the initiative to strike up a conversation. Fellow Singaporean Zheng Yi, a 21-year-old second-year Chinese literature major in Fudan University, has also learnt to appreciate Singlish.

"My Chinese friends and schoolmates from other countries show a remarkable interest in Singlish. Personally, I like the familiarity it generates when I speak to another Singaporean."

But there is little worry that these young Tigers will cut ties with Singapore.

"I don't mind working overseas, but ultimately Singapore is where my family and loved ones are. I will return."

The writer graduated from Singapore Management University last year and is currently working in a tax consulting firm in Shanghai.