

# INNOVATION MADE IN CHINA LEARNING TRIP

May 10-15, 2026



On this learning trip, participants will gain practical, first-hand experience of the **German-Chinese innovation and manufacturing environment**. The program is aimed at German-speaking high-tech manufacturing companies that are already active in China or are planning future business activities there.

This is particularly relevant for companies that implement or pursue a “Develop & Made in China for China” strategy and want to understand how this approach can succeed in order to remain competitive in China and internationally in the long term.

We visit Smart Manufacturing and R&D Centers in China of:



SIEMENS



FETTE  
COMPACTING



SUNGROW



variosystems

ESTUN  
AUTOMATION



In Kooperation mit



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# Innovation in China for the Global Market

**Experience, Understand, Reflect – where it is already happening!**

## Background & Rationale

The next phase of market development is already underway for many German companies in China. Others are embarking on strategic transformations and realignments, often with a focus not just on China but on the entire Asian region. The trend is clear: “Developed and Made in China for China.”

At the same time, this localization lays the foundation for a new “China for Global” approach—enabling companies to bring Chinese innovations to international markets. Successfully localizing in China also strengthens competitiveness across Asia and beyond.

Several factors are driving this shift. Geopolitical developments, such as the trade conflict with the U.S., new EU regulations including CBAM, and evolving supply chain and de-risking requirements, are prompting companies to rethink strategies. At the same time, structural market trends are increasingly influential: Chinese companies are becoming more internationally competitive, with global leadership in innovation in key areas. Innovations from China are no longer limited to the domestic market—they are increasingly shaping global markets.

For German companies, this represents a fundamental shift: from purely manufacturing in China to actively developing and innovating on-site. Companies that do not take this step risk being overtaken by local competitors. Once again, the German automotive industry is leading the way: Volkswagen announced in 2024 that it will invest an additional €2.5 billion in its Hefei Innovation Center, while Schaeffler plans further investments in R&D facilities and teams, despite already operating six centers in China.

## Objective of the Trip

On this learning trip, participants will gain practical, first-hand experience of the German-Chinese innovation and manufacturing environment. The program is aimed at German-speaking high-tech manufacturing companies that are already active in China or are planning future business activities there.

This is particularly relevant for companies that implement or pursue a “Develop & Made in China for China” strategy and want to understand how this approach can succeed in order to remain competitive in China and internationally in the long term.

Registration Deadline	Participation Fee	Number of Participants
<b>March 31, 2026</b>  (You will be informed of the acceptance of your registration by April 5, 2026.)	<b>5.750 Euro</b>  (Price excl. VAT. International Flights and Hotels in China are to be borne by the participant.)	<b>15</b>

# Innovation in China for the Global Market

## Experience, Understand, Reflect – where it is already happening!

**The following questions are particularly in focus:**

- How can companies successfully transition from pure manufacturing to local R&D and independent innovation in China?
- What success stories and best practices exist – both from Chinese companies and specifically from German companies on site?
- How can a “Developed and Made in China for China” approach simultaneously strengthen international competitiveness?
- How can R&D and innovation management be effectively conducted in China under the given market conditions?
- How do Chinese companies manage R&D and innovation, and what can German companies learn from them?
- What concrete lessons have German companies drawn from their experiences with Chinese competitors in R&D and innovation management?
- How have German companies adapted their product development and the market introduction of new products to meet Chinese market requirements?

### Understanding Innovation in China

- Agility & Speed
- Efficiency & Scalability
- Execution Power

### What Awaits You?

- Experience firsthand how innovation “Made in China” can work.
- Discuss insights directly from Chinese and German companies.
- Network with senior representatives from German and Chinese business and research sectors.
- Gain inspiring inputs from KIT, along with comprehensive market insights from Asiapilots.
- Benefit from a professionally organized learning and experience journey, including a kick-off event before the trip and reflection workshops afterwards.

### Experiencing the Mindset

- Vision vs. Trial & Error
- Uncompromising Customer Centricity
- Winning Mentality

### Gaining Exclusive Access

- Companies
- Local R&D Hubs

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# Program (1/2)\*

Date	Activities	Logistics
<b>Sun, 10.05.2026</b>  Evening  asiapilots	Welcome and briefing of participants Impulse: China Innovation – Status & Quo vadis?	Individual Arrival
<b>Mon, 11.05.2026</b>  Morning   Afternoon 	<b>Siemens – R&amp;D und Innovation Hub (confirmed)</b> Siemens' innovation hub in Suzhou focuses on industrial AI and is deeply embedded in the local innovation ecosystem. As a leading provider of industrial automation solutions, Nestar is one of the local partners with whom new technologies are developed and tested on site in China.  <b>Variosystems (confirmed)</b> Internationally active Swiss provider of Electronic Manufacturing Services, which has specialized in the highly competitive PCBA market in China. Operates, among other things, a local rapid prototyping hub and manages its operations and product innovations for Asia from China, independently from the headquarter.  Cultural excursion through Downtown Suzhou	 Overnight stay in <b>Suzhou</b>   Location: <b>Suzhou</b>   Daytime Bus Transport   Overnight stay in <b>Nanjing</b>
<b>Tue, 12.05.2026</b>  Morning   Afternoon 	  <b>Fette Compacting (confirmed)</b> German innovation leader in the compression and filling of powdered materials for the food industry and pharmaceutical industry. Demonstrates competitive advantage through successful product portfolio partnerships in China.  <b>Estun Automation (confirmed)</b> Chinese pioneering company with various locations in Europe, successfully pursuing an ecosystem approach for automation technology in the industry.  Sightseeing and Dinner in Nanjing	   Location: <b>Nanjing</b>   Daytime Bus Transport   Overnight stay in <b>Nanjing</b>
  Evening  	  <b>Impulse   Insights   Reflection</b> Impulse: China for Innovation – Other Markets for the Margin?! Insights: How China's Innovation System functions	

# Program (2/2)\*

Date	Activities	Logistics
<b>Wed, 13.05.2026</b>		
Morning	<p><b>Volkswagen – R&amp;D und Innovation Hub (requested)</b>  Volkswagen operates more than 100 modern laboratories for software-hardware tests, battery and drivetrain validation, as well as complete platform verification. Since 2025, they have been developing products entirely in China for the Chinese market.</p>	 Location: <b>Hefei</b>
Afternoon	<p><b>Sungrow Headquarters (requested)</b>  One of the world's largest manufacturer of ESS and PV inverters. Its innovation hub focuses on research on solar inverters, energy storage, and EV charging (incl. the industry's largest EMC chamber)</p>	 Daytime Bus Transport
Evening	<p>Dinner at Lost Heaven on the Bund in Shanghai</p>	 Overnight stay in <b>Shanghai</b>
	<p><b>Impulse   Insights   Reflection</b>  Impulse: Battery Research and Perspectives in Germany  Insights: Battery Market China – Players, Trends, Innovations</p>	
<b>Thu, 14.05.2026</b>		
Moring	<p><b>Huawei R&amp;D Center (requested)</b>  Leading Chinese ICT manufacturer, building an entire R&amp;D ecosystem in Shanghai, including working on the development of chips for the Internet of Things era.</p>	 Location: <b>Shanghai</b>
Afternoon	<p><b>Sartorius Innovation Hub (confirmed)</b>  German pharmaceutical supplier whose innovation center focuses on areas such as bio analytics, continuous processing, and digitalization.</p>	 Daytime Bus Transport
Abend	<p>Shanghai by Night – Dinner &amp; Sightseeing</p>	 Overnight stay in <b>Suzhou</b>
	<p><b>Impulse   Insights   Reflection</b>  Impulse: Vertical Integration as a Competitive Advantage  Insights: (AI) Chips Made in China – Status and Manufacturers</p>	
<b>Fri, 15.05.2026</b>		
Moring	<p><b>KIT China - GAMI (confirmed)</b>  Since 2008, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology has been represented with its own office in China. GAMI connects German production research directly with international and Chinese industries in China.</p>	 Location: <b>Suzhou</b>
Midday	<p>Joint Lunch to Conclude</p>	 Daytime Bus Transport
		<p>Individual Departure</p>

\*Please note that the program illustrated might be subject to adjustments due to changing availability or preferences of the visited companies or other unforeseeable external influences.

# Your Team



## Matthias Li

Leads and organizes this delegation trip to China as an academic researcher of the wbk Institute of Production Science (KIT).



Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Patronage



## Prof. Dr. Gisela Lanza

Member of the Institute Management at the wbk Institute of Production Science of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and founder of GAMI.



## Peter Helis

A renowned expert with over 20 years of local experience in China, specialising in government affairs and cooperation between China and Europe. He is fluent in German, English, Mandarin and Cantonese and is an expert in navigating the complexities of intercultural business and political environments. Peter Helis is also the international representative of Invest Guangzhou and chief advisor to the Huangpu District in Guangzhou, one of China's most dynamic economic and innovation centres. He is one of the very few foreign experts who can explain China's social, economic and industrial policy development from an 'inside perspective'.



## Dr. Lucas Bretz

General Manager of GAMI in Suzhou and has been working since 2021 at the interface between German industry and the Chinese high-tech environment. His focus is on the development and implementation of industrial solutions in the areas of digitalization, operational excellence, and artificial intelligence in production. Under his leadership, GAMI supports German companies in building up and scaling local engineering, production, and innovation structures in China. With his experience in numerous transformation projects in China, he has a deep understanding of how companies can successfully leverage the dynamics of the Chinese market to develop high-performance, technologically leading organizations and simultaneously secure the bridges to German quality and process standards.



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## Dr. Daniel Frerichs

is an entrepreneur and manager with 15 years of experience in international cultural contexts (Asia-Europe), including ten years in management positions at Chinese and European high-tech enterprises in Shanghai. He holds a doctorate in communication science and is managing partner of the innovation scouting and foresight consultancy ASIAPILOTS Ltd. as well as founder of the Shanghai-based B2B2C communications and marketing agency Salt&Pepper. In 2020, he founded the first European economic development office of the Huangpu District (Guangzhou) in Germany and developed it into a well-known representation of the international innovation hub Greater Bay Area. As guest lecturer at the KoWinChi project of the Universities of Würzburg and FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg he teaches China's innovation clusters and ecosystem.



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**Scan and register here by March 31, 2026.**



**Matthias Li, M.Sc.**  
Academic Researcher  
wbk Institute of Production  
Science (KIT)

E-Mail: [matthias.li@kit.edu](mailto:matthias.li@kit.edu)