

# NZCA Winter Camp 2010

Allen Yip



Firstly, I'd like to thank Janet Joe, Virginia Chong, The New Zealand Chinese Association and Guangdong Overseas Chinese Office for creating an amazing cultural experience. It was one of the most life-changing experiences I've had so far and one, which I will be talking about for many years to come.

## *Reflections of Winter Trip 2010*

### **Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School**

The time spent at the school was the most memorable, as each day brought new challenges such as Shaolin Kung Fu, Mandarin classes, local shopping, Chinese calligraphy, knot tying and basketball. Being a physical kind of person, I enjoyed the intensity of Shaolin Kung Fu the most but I would probably be the worst at it.

The Mandarin classes were great, no better way of learning Mandarin than being in China with a comforting group of New Zealand-born Chinese. It was always interesting when it came to putting our Mandarin to the test at the local markets, some times we were met with faces of confusion. Most of the time, you could get away with not speaking Mandarin but it involved a lot of pointing, finger counting, calculators and smiles 😊

The Chinese calligraphy was very challenging, it involved a heap of precision with the wrist and hand. It took a few, by few I mean twenty attempts to get my Chinese name written and apparently my name was written in simplified Chinese. Now I have cut out and framed my name in Chinese calligraphy 😊

Knot tying was a great experience as we were being taught by the local students, some of whom could speak pretty good English and some others could not speak any. We learnt to tie those intricate knot/good luck charms, while trying to practise our Mandarin. Everyone got really into it, plenty of smiles and heaps of laughs.

The school was a great place to hang out and get to know the other winter campers. There were basketball courts, 300-meter track, soccer pitch and hundreds of local students, so there was plenty to do in our spare time. We even had a break dance show with the break dance group at the school.

Some people might say the accommodation at the school was pretty bare but it was good to start with the bar low, so we can appreciate the amazing accommodation later in the trip. Honestly, it's not that bad.

### **Shenzhen**

I knew very little about Shenzhen when my family visited a couple of years back. This time around, I learnt about the city's economic success, huge floating population and high tech goods manufacturing. The day in Shenzhen was spent inside of the Magnificent China and Minority Culture Park, which was a well-timed break time from the school/ancestral villages.

### **Ancestral Villages**

Even though my family's ancestral village could not be tracked down, I enjoyed and valued the experience and insight of ancestral village tour. It was very special to be able to touch, smell, hear and see the places that your relatives may have lived. Most of time was spent exploring the villages and observing the reuniting of relatives.

Coming from New Zealand, which is renowned for the clean green image, and travelling to the ancestral villages in Guangzhou, was quite a change. It was sad to see the depressing all concrete villages, poor water quality and piles of garbage. This experience has given a true appreciation of how lucky people are in New Zealand.

### **Hangzhou**

Hangzhou would have to be one of my favourite places in China so far, partly because I like colder environments; it was around 5 degrees Celsius. It was a good change to see Hangzhou's beautiful West Lake and the green hillside. We spent one of the days cycling around West Lakes, which is by far the best way to see the lake as you get to enjoy more of the scenery, plus it's a good way to work off the fatty Chinese food. Speaking of food, the street food in Hangzhou is pretty amazing, the midnight noodle and skewer stalls are always worth the midnight stroll. We also experience the West Lake boat cruise, General Yue Fei's Memorial, Hangzhou green tea tasting, the Ling Yin Temple and a Song Dynasty performance.

### **Xitang**

Xitang is the home to the famous 'Mission Impossible' movie action scene, starting one Tom Cruise. The quick stop off in this water town was interesting, as I had never heard about Xitang before. The town was renowned for the manufacturing of buttons, which we learnt about in the button Museum and we also explored the town in small wooden boats powered by old fragile looking men. Apparently you can rent out the original Xitang waterside homes and enjoy the traditional accommodation. The restaurant for lunch that day was amazing, good seafood, plenty of spice, definitely ticks all my boxes.

### **Shanghai**

Spent plenty of time travelling on the bus before arriving to the massive city of Shanghai. This massive city was surprising easy to navigate, thanks to amazing subway network. We visited the Shanghai Television Tower not to go up the tower but to visit the Shanghai History Museum, which explained the history of the western influence on Shanghai. Everyone in the group was excited to visit the tailors market, which offered tailored suits, jackets, shirts and jeans for a

ridiculously cheap price. I ended up getting a traditional Chinese jacket and a pair of blue jeans. I had some problems with the orders but they were resolved with help from Janet 😊 we had a couple of days off which we spent shopping in the nearby department stores and underground markets. Note - the clothing in Shanghai is noticeably dearer compared to Guangzhou. We also visited Madam Tussauds Wax Museum, that was the easier and cheap alternative to see the famous Chinese people e.g. Yao Ming, Jackie Chan etc. It was great for photos too, so don't forget your camera.

The nightlife in Shanghai is quite good, mainly because of the large expat community. We visited a couple of places, all very cool and relatively close to the hotel. You'll also notice the drop in temperature because of the more northern position of Shanghai, be prepared to wear plenty of clothes.

## **Beijing**

Beijing was an interesting experience as I injured my knee, which left me limping/ on crutches for the rest of the trip. The health system in China was surprisingly fast and efficient, it was also dirt cheap; only 5.5 Yuan = \$1 NZ. I'm not one to stay inside and rest, so I spent the rest of the Beijing Tour on crutches. That was fun for about 5 minutes but I managed to still see Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, and Olympic Stadiums (Birds Nest & Water Cube). It was a mission and a half to get around on crutches but it was well worth the effort.

Recommendation – Do not injure yourself, especially the lower half your body 😊

Peking Duck in Peking is absolutely amazing, definite recommendation.

One more thing, Beijing is really cold. Wearing everything you've got. Just kidding, just buy warm gear you need to Beijing, it's super cheap.

## **Conclusion**

Having been on the China Winter Camp I can now fully understand who I am. That in itself is invaluable and I would totally pay \$7000+/- for an experience like this again. I have so many amazing memories and stories from the trip, it is truly the best overseas trip, ever!

I would definitely recommend this trip to any New Zealand born Chinese who is seeking a cultural experience to find their identity. Lastly, I would like to thank Janet Joe for organizing the trip and especially for taking care my injured knee during the month overseas.

Allen Yip  
January 2011

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# Winter Camp 2010

Ashleigh Ngan

I had wanted to travel to China for some time now and had heard that the New Zealand Chinese Association ran a tour for young Chinese New Zealanders however I didn't know much about how it worked or had known of anyone that had previously been on the trip. After looking into it further, it was the opportunity to have an individual's ancestral village visit organised for you, thus supported by the NZCA and the overseas Guangdong Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, which helped me make the decision to apply. As I am unable to understand the language it seemed like this option would offer me the most opportunities to fully immerse myself in the Chinese culture and learn as much as I could about my roots on my first ever trip to China.

We spent the first two weeks at the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School in the Tianhe District. We were fortunate enough to stay in the international dorms, two to a room, where we learned how privileged we are at home to be sleeping on comfy beds with soft mattresses every night. We woke up at around 7.30 each morning, and experienced Chinese language and calligraphy classes and kungfu lessons. At the same time we found there was more than enough time to explore the school grounds and interact and practice our new language skills with the local students at the school shops, who were all extremely friendly and willing to practice their own English language skills with us.

We were given three lessons in Shaolin Kungfu during our first week, where we were taught basic stances and learnt about the discipline and respect that is involved in the art. While our bodies were tired and sore after three continuous days of lessons, we were grateful for the exercise and the opportunity to learn about this ancient art and so were a little disappointed when several of the sessions were cut short. The "friendly" basketball game with the teachers and students also gave us a chance to become involved with the school community. The school also made sure that we were fed extremely well, with Chinese breakfasts, lunches and dinners all provided, and apart from the odd occasion were delicious when hot. It was interesting to see how the style of food gradually changed the further down South we travelled.

At times we were free to visit the local markets where we first saw how completely different the way of life is over there. Our first free day was in Shenzhen where we visited Magnificent China, miniatures of all the famous landmarks and attractions in China, and went to the Minority Culture Park and Show. From the various acrobatic shows and kungfu performances we attended we learned that the Chinese definitely love their lasers and coloured lights. Visiting the father of modern China, Dr Sun Yat Sen's Museum was also enjoyable as my knowledge of Chinese history prior to the trip was somewhat limited.

Visiting my family's ancestral villages was definitely a highlight for me. We visited my Gong Gong's village first in the Xinhui area. I was fortunate enough to return to the village with my sister and two cousins so we all felt very privileged being the first of our relatives to return since my Gong Gong first moved to New Zealand. It was such a humbling experience to see where they came from and to visit those that remembered them. We were lucky enough to meet my mum's first cousin and even though we had no close connections or memories of the place, feeling the strong sense of community was enough to make the visit even more memorable. It was also amazing to be able to visit my Yeh Yeh's village in Yuen Har in the Bai Yun area. It was great being able to pay my respects to my relatives and explore the house he was born and grew up in but it was also sad to learn that his old school had been knocked down to make more room for the neighbouring Joe Village double ancestral hall. The overall visit with the village officials was however quite rushed. It was interesting to see some of the other villages as well, and how technology (e.g. ATM's) had been incorporated into hundreds of years old village squares.

We arrived in Hangzhou, a popular destination because of its beautiful scenery and picturesque settings. We took in the peacefulness of the area while biking around Westlake and the Causeways (witnessing the

crazy drivers on the road firsthand) and while taking a relaxing cruise on the lake. The fresh air was a nice change from Guangzhou and the other major cities we would soon experience.

On our way to Shanghai we visited Xitang water town and a local silk factory. With our bodies still aching from all the walking, kungfu lessons and basketball games, we all decided to go for a massage followed by some karaoke. The Huangpo river night cruise introduced us to the Bund lit up at night. A highlight of Shanghai was the tailors market; three floors of individual stores with racks of clothing and magazines for you to look through, every item able to be made to your individual size and ready for you to pick up in a couple of days time.

Despite being sick for a couple of days, there was still more than enough time to see and do everything. During our free time in Shanghai we were able to go Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum and experience the underground metro system, which allowed you to quickly travel from place to place with ease. Shopping in Shanghai was great because of the underground markets where you could purchase fakes for extremely low prices, having all become accustomed to the all important process of haggling. Our Chinese language classes from the school helped us out a bit here also. Our hotels were often in close proximity to malls and underground markets which was convenient. Sightseeing in Shanghai also involved going to see the China Pavilion built for the 2010 Expo and trips to Macca's and Pizza Hut were welcomed as a break from the delicious but constant stream of Chinese food.

Where Shanghai showcased its bright lights and its city's modernity, Beijing was rich in history. Where Shanghai was cold, Beijing was freezing reaching -11 degrees during our stay. We visited Tiananmen Square and the Temple of Heaven as well as the Forbidden City and the Great Wall both of which amazed us with their sheer scale. The Ming Tombs and Sacred Way all had a rich history behind them and we braved the cold in order to see the Bird's Nest and Water Cube in the Olympic Village. The food markets were a memorable part of Beijing where we all tried various animals including starfish and scorpion and street food for cheap prices.

We were excited to fly to Hong Kong even though it meant our trip was coming to an end. Hong Kong was great for shopping, the malls were huge and it was fun to discover smaller boutique stores off the main roads. Shopping hours were from 11am to 11pm so you were able to take your time and fit as much as you could into the day. Highlights of Hong Kong include going to Ocean Park and heading to Macau for the night to see Cirque du Soleil at The Venetian, before trying our luck at a few casinos. I was lucky enough to have extended my stay in Hong Kong for a week so was able to take my time and see everything that I wanted to before heading back.

I'm extremely glad to have had the chance to go on the trip. Having spent five weeks together and because of the smaller group, I feel as though we all got to know each other well. I am able to take away amazing memories of this trip having experienced it with such a great group of people. It is structured enough so that you get to see all the important landmarks and attractions but is also flexible so that you're able to fully experience the unique culture of each city. As well as this, the trips back to the ancestral villages are opportunities that are invaluable and shouldn't be missed. Thanks to Janet for her impeccable organisational skills and for offering us the chance to experience a trip like this, the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and the New Zealand Chinese Association.

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# **THE BEST OF CHINA WINTERCAMP 2010**

**By Jacqueline Wong**

You could say I'm a Kiwi through and through. I grew up with a swimming pool down the road, relishing hearty BBQ's on Sunday nights, and being entertained by a giant array of computer games ranging from Sega Mega Drive to Playstation 2 and Xbox as well as no lack of fields or beaches to play touch rugby to my heart's content. But most importantly, we could proudly boast New Zealand's clean green image.

While I still have fond memories of singing a Chinese song about Springtime at Chinese prechool and listening to my mum speaking Cantonese to Porpor and doing my best to guess what she is saying (generally via facial expressions and gestures), my dad nicknamed me a 'banana'. So when the opportunity arose to travel to China with a group of 17 young New Zealand Chinese and a knowledgeable Tour guide for 4 weeks, I grabbed it without hesitating. It really was a 'trip of a lifetime' and I endeavor to describe below some of the main highlights of the trip which made it memorable.

## **Guangdong Chinese Vocational School**

We were privileged to spend our first two weeks at the Guangdong Chinese Vocational School where we could enjoy strolling through the campus grounds, practice our Mandarin with local students and participate in various cultural activities such as calligraphy and learn kungfu from a Shaolin Master. Participating in three intense sessions of kungfu was my favourite part of the first week because it tested our physical strength, endurance, coordination and mental agility in an environment which demanded respect and discipline. (yes that means no laughing!!) We learnt some basic moves called 'Gong Bo Xie Xing' and 'Ma Bo Dan Bian' plus some defensive blocks.

Unlike previous groups, I was relieved to discover we did not have to face the challenge of showering over a squat toilet. The rooms were spacious and tidy with normal flush toilets. The beds were not conducive to a good night's sleep as the mattress was very thin and I could feel the slats dig in when I lay both on my back and side. We tended to our sore backs by treating ourselves to cheap massages when we traveled outside of campus.

The school offered us a wide range of Chinese dishes from fried noodles, dim sims, Chinese buns and Jok for breakfast to full-on 8 or 9 course meals for lunches and dinners. I appreciated the effort that was made in providing us a variety of dishes each day.

In Shenzhen, we spent a day at The Magnificent China and Minority Culture Park and Show which features miniature replicas of many of China's famous landmarks including the Great Wall, Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, and Terracotta Warriors. This park was beautifully landscaped (only slightly dampened by a mother pulling down her child's pants and letting him squat in the middle of the footpath!) and a popular tourist attraction, building up our anticipation of the next few weeks of our trip.

## **Visiting Ancestral Villages**

We spent a whole week visiting everyone's villages on both sides of the family. Despite the cumbersome hours spent on the bus, visiting my ancestral villages with my sister and cousins was a special experience because this brought a whole new level of understanding and appreciation of where my family is from and the sacrifices and risks they took to get to New Zealand. At times I was a little overwhelmed but amazed at the friendliness of the people in our villages and that there are people still living there who are related to us or knew my grandparents and uncle. At the Wong village (dad's side), named Gwa Leng, we climbed the tower (with a drawbridge) which had been funded by money that had been sent back to China from

New Zealand. At my mum's dad's village, we were the first in our family to view an up to date family tree. I really enjoyed visiting other people's villages as each one was unique but the common factor was all houses were built within such close proximity and poverty was immense. The officials assisted in helping us locate the village and the teachers who translated for us were brilliant.

The remaining 2 weeks flew by as we were able to adapt the true 'tourist' persona as we struck countless Asian poses in front of Chinese icons, attempted to haggle for the illustrious pee-pee boys in the crowded markets (I think I won at 2 yuan each) and heightened our taste buds with all the delicious street food such as scorpion, deep fried ice cream, syrup-coated fruit skewers and even starfish.

## **Hangzhou**

Our time spent in Hangzhou was probably one of my favourite parts of the trip, in particular, I loved renting the bright red and yellow, very-low-to-the-ground bikes, equipped with all you need to survive a Bike Tour around Westlake and the Causeways: a basket and friendly bell, which really should have been a horn to mark our presence on the perilous Chinese roads. Point to note for future Wintercampers, just because the pedestrian light is green does not mean you are free to cross safely and without incident. To our sheer dismay, every time we placed a foot on the crossing and took even two steps, cars, buses and taxis would bowl past us at 30km/hr with blaring horns. Another highlight was visiting the Dragonwell Tea village, located on Phoenix Mountain. We were given Grade 2 LongJing tea to taste, which is considered the National Tea of China, and I happily purchased a large tin to take home.

## **Shanghai**

Shanghai was bustling and vibrant city, where the old clashes with the modern. We visited the Shanghai History Museum in the Pudong area, Nanjing Rd (shopping!), The Bund and went on the Huangpo River night cruise. I especially loved visiting Yu Gardens which occupies an area of 20,000 square metres. Pavilions, halls, rockeries, ponds and cloisters were uniquely shaped and detailed. Yu Gardens was a place of tranquility. Another highlight was the Old Shanghai Bazaar which was overflowing with Chinese souvenir and food stalls and everyone went on a (successful) mission to locate the famous Xiaolongbaos. Everyone took the opportunity to get tailor-made coats, suits, dresses or jeans at the four-storey high Tailors Market. Huge thanks to Janet who was buzzed on her cell and beckoned to a shop number xxx where she then proceeded to explain in Chinese the design of clothing we wanted and even managing to bargain down the price as well, then BUZZ, onto the next person.

## **Beijing**

The first thing we noticed about Beijing was the dramatic temperature change (lowest was -13 degrees in the morning) so be sure to pack lots of layers especially those trusty thermals and no, jeans are NOT practical to wear when you are climbing the Great Wall!! It was an incredible feeling to stand at the top the Great Wall at Juyong Pass and to understand the significance it had in China's history. The steepness of the wall did not deter us from the 2 hour walk. I also enjoyed the Hutong Tour where 2 people were tucked into the back of each Trishaw with a thick woolen blanket to protect us from the bitter cold wind and driven by a bike.

## **Hong Kong**

Our final destination was Hong Kong where we were given 'free days' and I can say that everyone shopped to their heart's content. It felt a lot more westernized compared to China's cities. We went sightseeing the first morning to Aberdeen, Repulse Bay and Victoria Peak. A day was spent at Ocean Park where I was transported back to my childhood and relived my fear of rollercoasters. As a celebration and to conclude our one month adventure, the girls wore their newly purchased heels and cocktail dresses and the guys in their smart suits, we took the ferry to Macau to see Cirque du Sorlei and placed our bets at the casinos.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Janet, Virginia and the teachers and officials who were involved in making the Wintercamp 2010 the success that it was. Without a doubt, I would recommend every Kiwi Chinese young person to participate in this trip. Not only do you make some amazing friends but you learn a lot about your roots and family history. I am now even more determined to keep studying Chinese and perhaps one day go back there again.

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## **NZCA Wintercamp 2010 –**

**Jonathan Gee**

Participating on this trip turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. Not knowing what to expect, in a country I have never been to before, had to be one of the most exciting and full on experiences I've ever had. Visiting ancestral villages made me appreciate our cultural and ancestral history. It also made me appreciate how lucky we are with our current living conditions compared to what our ancestors used to live in. This trip definitely lived up to its expectations and more and I would certainly go back in the future.

### **Guangzhou**

Arriving in Guangzhou was our first look of what China was all about. Tall buildings, lots of people, motorways, street food and smog indicated that we were in a huge city. Staying at the GD Overseas Chinese Vocational School for 9 nights was our first experience in Chinese culture. The first culture shock encounter was the beds. Sleeping on beds made from a wooden base and a very thin mattress made sleeping an interesting ordeal, especially after a hard days workout from Kung Fu. One thing I will never forget is being woken up at 6.30am to traditional Chinese music being blasted as a wake up call.

At the school, we participated in 3 Shaolin Kung Fu lessons. This certainly sorted out who could endure the most pain. Apart from the pain, it turned out to be one of the most enjoyable activities we did. Watching the Master show us the moves so quickly and precisely was a sight I will never forget. Another enjoyable activity we did was the Chinese knot tying class with the local students. It turned out to be a great way to interact with the students and to try out our Chinese speaking skills. The Mandarin classes were challenging but our teacher made it much easier to learn. These classes ended up being very useful for our future travels throughout China as we were able to talk to the locals more confidently. The Chinese calligraphy lesson was very interesting but took a lot of time and practice. It would've been great to have another lesson to brush up on our techniques and character strokes.

During our nights at the school, we explored the local streets and found it very intriguing to see what was out there. It was a real eye opening experience to also see how Chinese people make a living from the street markets.

### **Ancestral Villages**

One of the main reasons why I decided to come on this trip was to visit my ancestral village. It was definitely an experience I won't forget in a hurry. Going back to my Yeh Yeh's ancestral home village was important to me as I gained a better understanding and appreciation of where my roots are from. It was also intriguing to see others' ancestral villages and how unique they all were. Although we were pushed for time visiting my village, it was well worth it and would recommend it to others who are considering going on this trip.



## **Hangzhou**

After a weeks worth of visiting villages, it was nice to relax and see this sites of Hangzhou. This was one of the most picturesque cities I'd ever been to with the backdrop of the lake. The lake cruise was a great way to see the city from a different view and to see the famous landmarks of Hangzhou. We visited the Dragonwell Tea village where we tasted a range of teas. Here, we learnt that there's much more to just drinking tea and that there are many benefits from it. An afternoon was spent riding bikes around the lake. Cruising along the lakeside was a great way to see the beauty of this famous place and made for some very nice photos. Later that night we saw the Song Dynasty show. It was very impressive with amazing acrobatics, dances and costumes.

## **Shanghai**

While we were on our way to Shanghai from Hangzhou, we stopped off at the Xintang watertown. This town was amazing as we saw how people lived there everyday. When we arrived in Shanghai, we explored the city centre and walked down some of the well-known streets. Later that night we got to see what Shanghai was like at night on the Haungpo River cruise. All I can say is that Shanghai looked very dazzling with all its lighting displays on the skyscrapers. We also went to the Shanghai tailors market to buy some suits. It was definitely money well spent! During the other days on Shanghai it was full on as we saw the Yu Gardens, Old Shanghai Bazaar and an Acrobatic show. On our free day, a group of us decided to visit the wax museum and shopped at the department stores.

## **Beijing**

When we first arrived in Beijing, the first thing that hit us was the freezing cold temperature. Our days here were full of sight seeing and learning about Chinese history. Walking the long distances slowly overcame the intense cold as we walked through Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. It was also amazing to see the whole lake frozen up at the Summer Palace. Later that night we were treated to another show, this being the Legend of Kung Fu. Our free days were spent shopping at the Silk Street markets and trying the food at Wangfujing road. It was definitely an experience I will not forget trying scorpions and snake. Walking around different stalls to see what they had to eat was not for the faint hearted or people who have a fear of insects.

## **Hong Kong**

Our time in Hong Kong was mainly free time with a half-day tour around Repulse Bay, Aberdeen and Victoria Peak. Coming here was one of the highlights and was wishing we had stayed longer. Our days were filled with lots of shopping, eating and exploring. Spending a whole day at Ocean Park was a great deal of fun and would definitely go back if I had the chance. It was certainly an entertaining day with everybody on the trip. With our suits that we got tailored in Shanghai, it was time to dress up and hit Macau Island for the night. It ended up being one of the best nights on the trip as we watched Cirque Du Soleil Zaia at the Venetian Hotel. Great friends, casinos, live bands and our last night together as a group was a night that I will not forget.

For future trips, I would recommend staying longer, as 4 nights was not long enough to comfortably see everything in Hong Kong.

In the end, this trip was undoubtedly the best I've ever been on. A big thanks must go to Janet for organising the trip. Everything ran smoothly and all the expectations of the trip were surely met. I came back with many unforgettable memories, stories, 6000 photos and 17 great new friends. A trip of a lifetime indeed!

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# Winter Camp 2010

Kimberley Young

Getting onto the plane I was nervous as I hardly knew the other 17 people wearing green t shirts sitting around me. But when we touched down in Hong Kong for the first time I knew I would be ok.

Arriving at the school was a unique experience with kung fu lessons, chinese and calligraphy classes. The kung fu lessons were enjoyable yet tiring and the other classes were just not my thing. At night when we were allowed to leave the school as a group was one of the highlights as we got to experience real china, bustling through the back streets making sure you weren't run down by a scooter or bicycle! The ancestral village's was very moving, seeing where my grandparents were from and had grown up.

Shanghai was my favourite city we visited. The bright lights and skyscrapers made me feel more at home. Even though still dirty it was a lot cleaner than most areas. We got a lot of free time here so I used it to my advantage and did a lot of shopping. I do remember the hotel being a little creepy, Melissa and I were in a room of our own on a floor separate from the rest and we heard strange noises all night long leading us to joining our beds together and never closing the bathroom door.

Hong Kong was a definite highlight although a bit too busy for my liking. I enjoyed how shops and markets were open much later and there was so much to choose from. I would have to say Macau was the favourite part of the trip for me, seeing the cirque du soleil show and experiencing gambling to a whole new level.

All in all I thought the China trip would be a bore and waste of time but I learnt a lot and would like to go back to the villages with my family but I definitely wouldn't go back for to live there!

# Wintercamp 2010 – A Trip of a Lifetime

Maxine Young

Before this trip I always thought I would go back to see where my ancestors came from before they settled in New Zealand. Not only was this my first big trip overseas but the first time traveling to China. I was intrigued to see what the next month would be like for me and my fellow wintercampers. Here is my summary of the wintercamp 2010.

## Guangzhou District

Our time at the GD Chinese Vocational School was a really good way for us as a group to get to know each other. It was like being on school camp all over again, while taking part in activities and classes. The accommodation was nice, tidy and had all the basic requirements. The bed was hard but I found it to be quite welcoming after a long day! I really enjoyed the food at the school it reminded me of the food at home and I have tried new dishes which I would not have otherwise. Kung Fu was intense and our coach was strict which helped me work and try harder. We learnt some basic self-defense moves that can be applied to sticky situations. Chinese lessons and calligraphy were fun, they also helped me understand some basic Mandarin which was helpful for the rest of the trip. However when my Chinese wasn't so good I found the point, nod/shake head, smile technique to be very useful.



In between classes we had a chance to interact with the local students and teachers through activities such as sport. We played a couple games of basketball, one was the girls vs. the teachers, I thought it would be a friendly game and after kung fu I was lagging a bit. The teachers were on form and sure gave us a run for our money! All of the students were very friendly and curious about us. It was nice to bond with them and be part of their school community.

My favourite part of Guangzhou was visiting my ancestral villages. Each village had its own character and specialty. My brother came on the trip last year and really liked going back. He didn't tell me many details as I think he wanted me to experience our village for myself without expectations. I didn't know what to expect. It was surprising how emotionally connected I felt at both villages. The opportunity to see where and how my grandparents lived was very interesting.



Visiting the villages has helped me identify with my Chinese heritage, and I respect my ancestors more after seeing how they lived back then.

I am glad we went to the Asia Games



but I wish we got to see the athletes performing rather than just the prize giving. I enjoyed exploring Magnificent China and Minority Park. The miniatures were a great way to see what was install for us later on in the tour.

## **Hangzhou**



If I had to describe Hangzhou in one word it would be picturesque! The surroundings are beautiful from the Westlake to the pagodas. Hangzhou was one of my favourite cities. It was our first taste of China's winter gearing us up for Beijing. Since I am from Ohakune I embraced the cooler temperature. Our two days here was jam packed with exciting activities such as the Westlake cruise, Dragonwell tea tasting, Song Dynasty Show, General Yue Fei Memorial Hall, Lingyin Temple and shopping at Hefang Street. The bicycle

ride around the Westlake and Causeways was by far my favourite! I hadn't been on a bike for a number of years and the idea of riding on the road in China made me a wee bit nervous. However all my worries vanished as soon as I started to pedal, it was an awesome afternoon of burning energy and having a laugh.

## **Shanghai via Xitang**

Xitang like Hangzhou is also very pretty. After the short boat ride, I enjoyed walking around this small village, which had a variety of quaint stores and visiting various museums.



Shanghai the city of opportunity. It was here that I practiced my bartering skills. The tailors market was the perfect place to get anything made, with



so many choices it was hard to choose. It was only a fraction of the price in New Zealand. We were fortunate enough to see a lot of sights in Shanghai, my favourites included the Shanghai Expo as there was just so much to see and the Yu Gardens were very serene.

## **Beijing**

China's capital did not disappoint with the crisp temperature (below 0c) and truly amazing sights. I layered on thermals, hat, scarf, gloves and coat before venturing out to the various destinations each morning. I was impressed by the workmanship and intricate detail of the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace. The Great wall really made humble. I have a huge respect for those who created it. Beijing is where I perfected my bartering skills at the three markets we visited and mastered the subway system.

## **Hong Kong**

It was our last stop together as a group, I could not believe where the time had





gone and I felt excited but kinda sad when we arrived. Hong Kong basically was three and a bit days of free time. It was filled with shopping and eating mostly. I really enjoyed going as a big group to Ocean Park and Macau. Ocean Park was a fun day going on rides, playing games, eating chicken with plastic gloves and overall one of the best days! The next afternoon all the boys suited up (thanks to the tailors market in Shanghai) and all the girls glamed up (thanks to the Hong Kong stores) and we headed on a wee ferry ride to Macau for a night to remember! One of the highlights was going Cirque Du Soleil, which was incredible. The only bad thing was the ferry ride back at 6am. It was a tad rough. It felt like we were back on a rollercoaster at Ocean Park!

The Wintercamp 2010 was one of the best experiences of my life. Not only did I make new friendships but I got to explore some of China's most amazing cities, see some of the stunning sights, eat so much delicious food, experience Chinese culture first hand and it allowed me to find out more about myself. This would not have been possible without the organisation and hard work of the New Zealand Chinese Association, Virginia Chong and especially Janet Joe. Thank you for making this opportunity possible for young Chinese New Zealanders. Also a huge thanks to my fellow winter campers for really making this trip, truly a trip of a lifetime for me.

I would definitely recommend this trip to any young Chinese New Zealander who is interested in learning more about their Chinese roots and having fun at the same time.

### **For Future Wintercampers**

A few things that I had or wished I had when going on the trip:

- Pack lightly, there is soo many shopping opportunities!
- Don't worry if you forget anything its really cheap over there to buy.
- Power plug and multiplug (plugs in China and Hong Kong are different)
- Take panadol, stuff for cold and antinflam (kung fu is intense, walking up stairs afterwards is not fun!)
- Hand sanitiser, baby wipes, small packs of tissues come in very handy with the bathrooms.
- If in doubt ask Janet she really knows all!

### **For Future Wintercamps**

- Kung Fu, I have heard that in the past years the wintercampers have learnt a whole routine which I would have liked.
- I would have liked a couple more Language and Calligraphy classes I was just getting the hang of it when we finished.



# NZCA Wintercamp 2010 Report

By Kristen Wong

I had always intended to go on this trip after hearing lots of great feedback about it from previous Wintercampers. The trip was extremely well prepared and truly one of the best experiences of my life. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and I made some lifelong friends on this trip. We managed to see a lot of different areas around China and even though most of it was organised for us, we also had a couple of free days in each city and many free nights to do things outside of the tour as well. I couldn't possibly put into words all the great moments experienced on this trip, there are far too many to list, however, in this report I will attempt to describe some of the highlights.



## First stop: Guangzhou

The trip started in Guangzhou with a series of cultural classes which introduced us to a few basics of Chinese culture. These included Mandarin, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese knot-tying classes and of course Shaolin Kungfu. The Mandarin classes were useful especially since we would be spending a lot of time in areas which are predominantly populated by Mandarin speakers. However, with such a limited time in which to learn a language, I believe a stronger emphasis on useful simple phrases would have been helpful for the rest of the trip. The calligraphy and knot-tying classes were a lot of fun and by the end of the calligraphy class we were all able to write our names in Chinese characters. The knot-tying classes were a lot of fun and gave us an opportunity to interact with the students at the school and practise our Mandarin as well as helping them with their English.

The accommodation at the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School was adequate with all the essentials provided. Our rooms fortunately had western toilets. The beds, which consisted of a hard wooden plank covered by a thin mattress, were not the most comfortable for our two week stay but they were tolerable. The school had plenty of facilities to keep us occupied with table tennis tables, basketball courts, large fields, a tuck shop full of goodies and internet for those with laptops (but not wireless). I would suggest taking insect repellent as most of us got bitten while in Guangzhou. The school was also situated within walking distance of a supermarket and Longdong Pedestrian Street which contained a few markets and various shops. The food provided by the school was plentiful and mostly traditional Chinese food. It took a while to get used to fried noodles and sponge cake for breakfast though.

We also played two 'friendly' games of basketball during our stay at the school. The first game was between the girls against the school teachers. Many of us had not played basketball before so it was very challenging and the game got quite physical. However, it was a lot of fun and at half-time some of the boys on the trip jumped on court to help us out.

### **Ancestral Villages**

Visiting our ancestral villages was a huge highlight of the trip. I was able to visit two of my ancestors' villages and have a look inside their houses which are now empty. Our visits also gave us an opportunity to meet relatives still living in the villages. Prior to the trip, my sister and I didn't know we even had relatives in one of the villages so we were able to meet quite a few members of our family and it was an unexpected surprise and a very moving experience especially since my grandmother passed away a couple of years ago.

We were also able to visit everyone else's villages and where they came from. There were a variety of villages; some were small and rural, while others were busy and more industrial. The lifestyle is very different from what we face in New Zealand and we all appreciated gaining an insight into our ancestors' lives.

Some of the villages were a fair distance from the school so we travelled by bus and stayed in smaller cities by the villages. While touring the villages we spent a day at Shenzhen Magnificent China & Minority Culture Show which was a lot of fun. There were miniature replicas of all the famous sights in China, bumper boats, archery, trick horse riding shows and cultural shows. Fortunately, in Guangzhou, we had good weather with barely any rain and we were comfortable simply wearing shorts and t-shirts most of the time.



**Dressing up at Shenzhen Magnificent China**

### **Hangzhou**

Hangzhou was one of the prettiest cities we visited with the beautiful West Lake. Biking around the lake was another highlight for me. I hadn't ridden a bike in years but you truly never forget how to ride a bike and within a few minutes we were racing along the roads like the numerous Chinese locals that flew past us along the roads. We all stayed together as a group and stopped often to take photos of the beautiful scenery.

While in Hangzhou we also visited the Dragonwell tea village to learn about Chinese tea and Xitang watertown where Mission Impossible 3 was filmed. We travelled through the town in boats.

### **Shanghai**

Shanghai was one of my favourite cities on the trip. We went to the Tailor's market where most of the boys

got suits made and most of the girls got cashmere coats made. They were cheap and the quality was good. They have a lot of samples there to choose from and books of designer clothes if you didn't bring pictures. However, I would warn against getting jeans made as these did not turn out as well as the coat I got made.

One night in Shanghai we went to the Peace Hotel, which is famous for its jazz band, and then walked down the Bund. This was one of my favourite nights of the whole trip. I liked the modern feel of Shanghai as well as the gorgeous buildings in the French concession area.

I would also recommend the markets under the Science and Technology Museum. There was a huge variety of bags goods and we found some good bargains. However, the shop-keepers knew immediately that we were foreign so we had to be careful not to overpay for our purchases.

Transport in Shanghai was cheap, easy and efficient. We had two free days in Shanghai and were able to easily navigate our way around the city. In our free days we went shopping and some people went to the World Expo site where the China exhibit was still open. I would also recommend the restaurant People's Seven for future Wintercampers.

## **Beijing**

The best sights were in Beijing. This included the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and the Sacred Way. The Great Wall was an amazing sight. We were all bundled up since the previous day had reached -10° C. However, the day we climbed the Great Wall, it was a lot warmer and I had to take off a lot of layers and carry them up the wall. A smaller group of us went up the higher path, which was a bit of a struggle, but the view was worth it. At the top we felt we had truly accomplished something and it was amazing feeling to be standing on top of such an important piece of history.



**The Great Wall of China**

We stayed in Beijing for 6 nights and which provided us with a few free nights to check out the Beijing nightlife. Sanlitun was a great area which contained many restaurants, bars and street food carts. We also went to see pandas in Beijing and they were gorgeous. Beijing was also home to the Wanfujing food street where I tried scorpions and starfish. Some of the group also ate spiders on skewers which were massive! I wasn't brave enough for that, though it was entertaining to watch.

There were also some great markets in Beijing such as the Silk markets which were very close to our hotel. At first it was difficult to bargain and we had to get used to the aggressive store owners but by this point we were becoming experienced at bargaining. We started getting used to haggling in Mandarin. Once we got the hang of it we managed to get some very cheap bags, wallets, electronics and pretty much anything



we wanted. The markets were huge and completely overwhelming. I really enjoyed Beijing but it was really cold and thermals, big jackets and layers were essential.

### **Hong Kong**

Most of the time we spent in Hong Kong was free time. The first morning was spent on a short tour which took us to Victoria Peak, Aberdeen and Repulse Bay. But after that, most of the time was spent shopping. There are many shopping areas in Hong Kong: Tsim Sha Tsui, Mongkok, Central and Causeway Bay. There are lots of international brands as well markets such as the Ladies' Market.

We also went to Ocean Park and Macau; I recommend going to both of these places. We managed to get tickets to Cirque de Soleil at the Venetian in Macau and it was an amazing show. It was relatively easy to catch the ferry to Macau and was a great last night for our trip. I stayed on in Hong Kong with several others for a few more days and then went on to Taiwan before heading home. However, when most of the others left on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December it was sad to see them leave. We had grown close in the month that we spent together but I feel privileged to have been a part of the Wintercamp group of 2010.

### **Recommendations**

I would suggest that during the time at the school we could have fit in more classes (especially Mandarin classes) or perhaps tried to have them closer together so we could have more free time at the end of the day rather than spread out during the day. I found that there was a lot of free time spent in between classes and meals waiting for the next class.

Also, we did divert from the itinerary quite a bit, especially when we were touring around the ancestral villages. This made it a bit difficult but understandably things do change on the day. If possible, it would have been good to find out a bit earlier if the itinerary had changed.

Apart from that, I loved the trip. I enjoyed the balance between all the organised sightseeing and free time, which enabled us to see all the sights and make the most of our time away.

### **Final Comments**

First, I would like to thank Janet Joe, Virginia Chong and the New Zealand Chinese Association for making this trip possible. There is so much work which goes on behind the scenes to provide this amazing opportunity and a completely unique experience. In particular, thanks to Janet for all her work and patience. She was a never-ending source of information, whether we were asking about local restaurants, directions or Chinese history.

Also, thanks to the Guangdong Overseas office for enabling us to visit all our ancestral villages and for all the hard work that they have done for us.

Finally, to future Wintercampers, I have met so many new lifelong friends, had an unforgettable experience and have developed a stronger connection to my Chinese heritage. I would highly recommend this trip to anyone considering it.

# **(Scorpion) Tails from the Orient**

**Jeffrey Fong – Winter Camp 2010**

There's nothing like being greeted by an unreasonably hard bed at 4am. Though that fact quickly drifted away into my deep and tired sleep. We had just made it to Guangzhou, our home base for the next two weeks. First impressions? Hazy, hectic and blurred by a lack of sleep, I predicted that I would find it slightly difficult to trace back any links or ties with my ancestral homeland from such a different and alien place. The city was so busy, so raw, so...fresh.

Chinese lessons, where very few of the group pronounced their own Chinese name correctly the first time, suggested that tying my life back to Guangzhou would be even more difficult than I had imagined. Despite leaving lessons feeling like I had a speech impediment, I longed to learn even more mandarin phrases and words that I could use in everyday life. We made a few friends at the school on the way, mostly from the highly enjoyable knot tying class after which I ended up on the cellphones of about 5 teenage girls (and I'd just like to claim that one of them said I was handsome). Meanwhile, kung fu brought on the opportunity to perform something uniquely powerful and explosive which agreed with some sort of prehistorically ingrained virility inside of me, but seemed to disagree with my personal lack of physical fitness and old rugby injuries. How on earth was I to relate back to this foreign land?

Well I did.

The real turning point was the first excursion to visit villages. The overhead conversations at the Guangdong overseas school were not actually spoken in Cantonese, the language my mother had told me off in until the age of 7 or 8, but in Mandarin as the school students were from outside the Guangdong province. I can hear Cantonese being spoken when I hear it, and it seemed like a completely different language being spoken at the school. Our first village outing was to Xintang, my mother's ancestral region. Now I wouldn't say it all came flooding back to me, but I could start to hear significantly more Cantonese tones and understand the occasional word.

My first village visit was to Gwa Leung, a large and seemingly deserted old village to the north east of Xintang. Unfortunately, my grandmother Wong Foon Yin's home had succumbed to the aggressive overgrowth of a banana plantation and very little of an actual home remained, only a dark brick shell in the corner of a block. This was still very interesting as I could see the size of the house and I still felt some sort of 6<sup>th</sup> sense connection to the place even though I had never met my grandmother.

Having gifted a few blocks of New Zealand's finest, Whittiker's chocolate, to the village contact my parents had set me up with, my next village was to Tien Sum, my grandfather Ng Loong Eung's ancestral village. The ancestral home was small, dark, damp and still being lived in! What a humbling experience. The inhabitants were living with the same primitive facilities if not similar conditions as my grandfather 70 years ago. I was told the house was being rented to immigrant families who would move into the area for work, and from the short glimpse of their lives in Tien Sum, I can only imagine how grateful my grandparents were to move to a more rewarding life in New Zealand. My grandfather died when I was 5 and I only have one vague memory of him, that he could kick start a ceiling fan by reaching up and giving it a whirl. At 5'10" it would have been pretty cramped for him to be stretching out in such a humble abode. It was a particularly enriching experience, especially going for a helmetless motorbike ride (my second for the trip but something I would NEVER consider in New Zealand) back to my relative Bun Foon's house and sinking some strangely refreshing soya peanut drink. The village was lively and the group enjoyed the friendliness of the local kids.

If I could quote one of my fellow students "I speak the most Cantonese when I'm two beers down". Though I wouldn't condone alcohol as an educational tool, our experiences in Xinhui would suggest otherwise. After a few bottles of the tasty local brew "Pearl River" we headed out to town at 2am in search

of an adventure. A group of us lads ended up 200m down the road from the hotel at a local street seated restaurant fraternizing with a large group of night-owl local students devouring some delicious congee with the same Pearl River's in hand. What a great time we had! From the very depths of my mind came several useful Cantonese phrases and words. Both groups had a great time and understood at least 40% of what the other was saying, a great percentage for a group of self proclaimed non-Chinese speakers. Turns out I knew a lot more Cantonese than I really knew and though the language barrier remained extremely vast, I was feeling much more comfortable around the shops and villages than before.

My final village was 40km from the city of Kaiping. I felt this was far different from the other villages we had visited on the trip. My grandfather Fong Wah Noon had come out to New Zealand before the war and died well before I was born, but my grandmother Au Woon Sui and my eldest uncle had lived here before coming out in the late 1940's. As I walked into the village, with the very friendly Kaiping officials in tow, I thought that the experience could end up humbling and sobering much like my previous ancestral homes. After following my relative Hok Leung, who I could hear clearly chirping away in my father's familiar Tze-Yup dialect, I was lead into a surprisingly grand house. I received a warm welcoming from both my village relatives and the local officials who seemed to want to take hilariously posed photo's of me inside my ancestral home, which I enjoyed posing for immensely. Several officials had come especially to meet me and experience my ancestral retracing and seemed genuinely ecstatic to see an overseas Chinese make his way "back" to China. The village, although it was a bit messy seemed cute and simple, likely due it's remoteness from the major cities. I would have to say I enjoyed this village visit the most.

The overseas vocational school was terrific for the trip. I particularly enjoyed meeting the local officials which they had contacted and seamless organization of our stay. I think all the students enjoyed the company, friendliness and services of Jesse and Peter on our village visits. And I don't think they boys will ever forget Miss Li's delightful attire and challenging Mandarin lessons.

I don't think I could ever claim to be completely connected to my ancestors, but coming to Guangdong, visiting my villages and experiencing a snippet of modern Chinese culture was a long overdue journey into my interesting heritage in an amazing place. I loved the place and loved the people. How proud I am to come from Guangdong.

### **Guangdong: Ancestral exploring**

**Best food:** Rice paddy eel in rice and roast goose

**Highlight:** Meeting the locals, visiting "real China"

We were met in Hangzhou by an icy northerly that would plague us for the rest of the trip. Attire of shorts and fluorescent snot coloured green t-shirt were swapped for jeans and three top layers. Now beautiful is not really a common word in my vocabulary but it really does best describe Hangzhou and the West Lake. The streets were clean and neat while the lake was perfectly picturesque with ornate bridges, low hanging trees, boats and pagodas. Though I did really enjoy Guangdong, Hangzhou was such a refreshing change, even the breakfast room had an amazing view of the lake. We also made memorable purchases of comical animal beanies to shield us from the cold up north.

### **Hangzhou: The Beautiful City**

**Best food:** Charcoal grilled baby squid and fresh rice noodles from street vendor trolleys

**Highlight:** Low riding on bicycles around the west lake

Next was Shanghai. We started off pretty lost. The city was so large and I was inexperienced on the tube system. I had high hopes for the city, touted as the New York of China, but I was pretty disappointed to begin with. We struggled to find streets crowded with stylish metropolitans and fluorescent billboards. So I slept on it. The next day we crossed the Pudong river to the Pearl TV tower where I was starting to get more and more impressed with Shanghai by amazing skyscrapers. After a well lubricated river cruise we hit the town for the first time to an amazing underground club filled with Chinese, French, British and

Americans, a real multicultural city. I was finally starting to really enjoy Shanghai! Getting a few tailor made suits was a personal highlight. We hit a part of Shanghai called the French concession. The western architecture made the area really comforting and the many side streets and wrong turns always led to something interesting. We made a great habit of exploring off the main roads onto the “beaten tracks” and back streets and found great shopping, food and insight to the Shanghainese. A trendy restaurant called People7, tailored for expats, was a change of pace from the usual Chinese cuisine and relaxing, classy evening listening to the Shanghai Peace hotel jazz band topped off what ended up being my favourite city.

### **Shanghai: A Cosmopolitan Experience**

**Best food:** Shenjian bao – fried soup dumplings

**Highlight:** Being a real city slicker for a few days

Our penultimate stop in Beijing was a test against the elements. -11°C! I’d never been to a cold climate before and the coldest day in ten years was a huge test. I wrapped up tight in about 7 layers to climb the Great Wall and ended up removing most of them. Some of the historical buildings were grand and neat, though most only felt 50 to 100 years old rather than the actual 600 due to the large amount of renovation work. Now we all know Chinese people have this marvellous habit of spitting a lot, and I tried to avoid standing in spit in the streets, but in Beijing the spit was frozen solid! Much more hygienic. The Great Wall after 2.5 hours of sleep and a big night out proved a fantastic resilience test for the group. I’d like to think my Chinese name is carved at the top of the west tower of the Juyongguan section of the wall, but it is probably written wrong and will be carved over in a few months, but I have a photo anyway.

A more memorable moment was rush hour, alone in the city with the worst traffic IN THE WORLD. I managed to get on the 5<sup>th</sup> train that came by because the previous four were all full! Everyone was jam packed like a bunch of sardines and I couldn’t even reach anything to hold onto.

### **Beijing: Culturally Cold**

**Worst Food:** A disgusting spider from the Wangfujing street night markets

**Highlight:** Scaling the Great Wall

Overall I had a really enjoyable trip. I loved the people, the places and the group I travelled with. I will never forget my trip to China.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **-Brent Loy**

When I was enrolled to go on to the China Wintercamp last year, to be completely honest, I didn't know what to expect and whether I would enjoy it much. Just the idea of going to a completely foreign country with no real knowledge or previous experience like this was daunting, as well as next to no Mandarin or Cantonese language skills!

I've heard of all the overwhelmingly positive responses from my relatives who've been on the Wintercamp trip in the previous years, how much they were begging to go back and still reminisce over it, but I was still wary of how much of a culture shock it could be for me.

How my previous expectations were wrong, well, not entirely wrong, but it's been a mostly positive experience!

The first city we stayed in was Guangzhou. On our first bus ride from the airport to the School we were staying at, we got our first glimpse of what to expect from China. It was exactly like all the

various photos and movies we had seen of China. At first, it didn't sink into mind as it was so surreal, just being in a place that was so different to anywhere I had ever been before. The suburb we were staying in certainly isn't the fanciest or cleanest of places. People playing cards on the sidewalk, dogs running around, crowded narrow, dark alleyways. But that's what made it SO AMAZING!

At first, arriving at the Guangdong Vocational School was a bit difficult to adjust to. We had to wear uniform shirts in three goofy colours, lime green, plain white and YELLOW! Yellow?! Yellow is a disgusting colour to wear as a shirt! All the students at the school stared at us in these retina burning shirts! But I guess it kinda made sense for us to wear these shirts as we were still getting to know each other and it made it easy to find each other in the city. The beds were hard, book thin mattresses that squeaked at the tiniest bit of movement. The bathrooms are very different and not so easy to get used to. The breakfast I find unusual for that time of day. I'm more used to having toast and cereal and not savoury food like houfan noodles, so I bought a box of Corn Flakes. It came with a Hello Kitty toy. That was awesome! I didn't mind the lunch and dinner meals though. The quality was surprisingly good and there was a lot more variety than what you'd get back at home. Also there was free internet! Always essential for keeping in contact with friends and family back home!

I found all of the classes very interesting and educational, however it was all a bit rushed, but that's understandable with the small amount of time we have available at the school. Kung Fu, while it did give us a good work out, I think it strained our legs a bit too much, especially with the strict teachings of the stances, exercise routines and the long walks during the day. It was still a nice introduction to kung fu, but I still don't think it's quite for me, especially with the amount of intensity and concentration. I reckon I preferred the push ups....

I really enjoyed the language classes, even though I'm not that much closer to understanding mandarin. We only did three fully condensed classes and it really felt as if we were racing through the entire lesson to get through as much as we could. I understood the different vowels and sounds, but as soon as we got to the tones, it did get a bit confusing. It still showed us what to expect from learning the language and if I probably put some more time in to doing more lengthy classes, I could probably get in to it a bit more.

We only did one calligraphy class and I found it rather difficult. I'm not sure whether I was doing my strokes wrong or whether it was my brush, but my all my strokes didn't turn out so fine and were rather messy and inky. Also I think the teacher wrote my name down wrong at the beginning of the lesson and I copied it, and was later told I wrote my own name down incorrectly, which was annoying.

We also got to know the students at the school. We got to meet up with the students for a small class in ribbon making! A class full of 16-18 year old girls helped us make the china ribbon and a bracelet! My partner didn't speak any English and proceeded to lazily teach me how to make a ribbon. Somehow I think her attention was somewhere else... The girls in our group also got to have a not so friendly game of basketball with their mixed team of female students and teachers. The teachers played real rough! Lots of pushing, shoving, yanking, pinching and pulling! I have no idea where they learned how to play basketball!

The most interesting part of the trip was initially the part I was least looking forward to, visiting the ancestral villages. I thought I would be repulsed by how backwards these ancient villages would be and how I'd feel like a fish out of water! But I found it very welcoming and interesting to explore, especially knowing where everyone's grandparents or great grandparents would have grown up and how different it is to where I was growing up. They didn't have all the luxuries of my modern technology or wealth and the living conditions weren't the nicest but they had a back to basics charm to them and how they had to actually put some manual work for everything they

needed. I also found the locations beautiful in both conventional and unconventional ways. The villages are surrounded by beautiful rivers and lush vegetation, but grimy in the village. I still found it very interesting to look at and it certainly made for some interesting photography subjects and compositions.

I also visited my own ancestors' villages. Even though I couldn't speak Mandarin or ever met each of them before, they still welcomed me with open arms and treated me as if I had been a part of their family for years. I saw my grandmother on my dad's side's house, my great grandfather on my dad's side house, where my grandfather was also born and my grandfather on my mum's side's house. They were all very small and the houses looked as if they were in a very tightly knit community. My grandmother did tell me how she grew up in a very tightly knit community house and she'd used to sleep in big bunk beds with her friends and tell stories all night as a kid, so I found it interesting going back to the same place she grew up and spent most of her childhood.

Next up was Hangzhou! The weather was a lot colder than Hangzhou but nothing we weren't used to back home in Auckland. And just like Auckland, weather has its constant ups and downs. Hangzhou was a lot smaller than Guangzhou and more like it's shopping districts than the rougher areas. The accommodation was also very nice! We were staying in 4 star hotels from now on! Actual beds! (though they were still rather rock hard) Better bathrooms! Air conditioning that actually works! It was the first time we could get out of our uniforms too.

We had a tour guide named Bob who routinely takes tourist groups through Hangzhou and Shanghai. He was pretty cool. He took us on a boat cruise across the freezing Westlake. We visited the Dragonwell Tea Village...which was more of a shop trying to sell us tea. Saw a stage show called 'The Romance Of The Song Dynasty' at this Chinese Cultural theme park, which like many of the stage shows on this trip, was filled with loads of acrobatics, cheesy sound effects, pretty bright lights and dancers. One dancer of note had this really crazy awkward look on her face. Many photos were taken. We also visited the Hangzhou Buddhist Temple which was 10 times larger than anything here. Lastly, we went for a two hour bike ride around the Westlake. Having not ridden a bike for over 5 years or ever before on a road with traffic, it was....challenging for me. Riding with traffic was hectic, especially getting used to riding a bike again and trying to keep my balance. Also scooters are the WORST to drive with. They will weave in and out between cycling lanes and get in your comfort zone, they don't show any courtesy whatsoever.

Before heading to Shanghai, we stopped by the Xi Tang Water Village, mostly known for its water canals, being the filming location for Mission Impossible 3 and its Button Museum! We took a Pleasure Boat ride up the river, counted the times we had seen Tom Cruise's face plastered over their message boards and ate one of the nicest Chinese restaurants I had ever eaten at! Also we saw the world's largest button! I am amazed!

The next stop was Shanghai, and the weather gets colder and more miserable, but it didn't stop us from enjoying the sightseeing and shopping! We got to learn about the history of Shanghai at the Shanghai Wax Museum, located at the bottom of the Oriental Pearl Tower (which we didn't get to go inside...). Took a scenic boat cruise down the Huangpo River to view the cityscape and it's bright lights. Wandered through the beautiful Yu Gardens and its interesting rock formations (No really! They were pretty cool!). Checked out the French Concession, which is basically just another shopping street filled with stuff we can't afford. Watched an acrobatics show without the cheesy storyline. Oh my god! It was intense, the air conditioning was turned off and the place was boiling! Oh yeah and the acrobatics were pretty crazy too! Just loads of plate spinning, magic tricks, chair stacking and motorcyclists in roller cages! And in our time off, some of us checked out the Shanghai Art Museum and observed many Chinese cultural artifacts, ate at some really bizarre 'secret' restaurant called People 7 (A+ would go there again), went to The

Jazz Club in a fancy five star hotel and lastly, checked out the China Pavilion, built to be apart of the Shanghai Expo 2010. The building was huge and had this ultra-modern design. It was built to show off all of China's bright ideas for the future, as well as how far they have come. All of the displays were just....amazing.....I can't describe it with words! In fact, even if I were to describe it with words, it still wouldn't do it any justice. So go see it for yourself! There was a downside though. Huge, HUGE queues.....

Finally, we got to Beijing and the weather was at its absolute worst! And it did stop us from enjoying the outdoor sightseeing, well, it did for me! It was freezing, windy and dry! Fifteen minutes outdoors, with your face uncovered and you'll be whimpering in pain (\*personal experience)!!! For a Beijing winter, you need layers and layers of clothing for every part of your body! You can't leave a single bit of skin exposed! The Beijing days left my feet and face numb, so very numb. I can't actually remember much from the Forbidden City or Tiananmen Square because it was so freezing.

What I do remember from Beijing was riding in rickshaws through a small suburb called Hutong and going up Hutong's Drum and Bell Tower for a drum show. It also had a really nice wide view of the city, as well as a really high and steep staircase! Saw another theatre show called Chun-Yi and The Legend of Kung Fu, which wasn't all that different from the previous stage shows we saw to be honest. Chilled outside the Olympic Village's Birds Nest and Ice Cube. There was lots of whinging and group hugs to get us through the frosty winds.

Then there was the Great Wall! It wasn't actually as cold that day as I thought it was going to be, even up the Great Wall! But I was still dressed for the occasion that it would be really cold. Wore 4 layers for my body and 3 layers for my legs, which included these horribly baggy snow pants! I probably had the most amount of layers on and my whole body was boiling and dripping with sweat (I needed a shower right after we got back to the hotel). Gross! There were two routes we could choose from, the easy scenic route, with its rather low peak and easy going stairs or the hard route, with it's extremely high peak, extremely steep staircases and an extremely low number of people trying to sell you crap. I chose the hard route with Jeff, Nick, Tom, Matt and Kristen. It was more tiring than hard walking up the steep stairs but we made it to the top of the section we were heading up in about 40 minutes or so. It was pretty cool though, a few gusts of wind here and there, great views and photo opportunities.

Then we headed to the famous Peking Duck restaurant. Apparently all the world's famous leaders eat there when they're in Beijing. The service was really quick! They kept bringing out new dishes the second we finished one and kept swapping the plates of the dishes we had half eaten on to smaller plates. No idea why that was necessary but it sure kept them busy. It was like they were watching our every move! Would not waiter at that restaurant. The food leading up to the main dish, the Peking Duck, was really nice! Lots of food I could actually eat too! Then we came to the big finish, the Peking Duck dish! Peking Duck is just sliced duck served on small round pastry wraps, put with hoisin sauce and spring onions. Oh, but I usually don't like Peking duck! It was rather average, I liked the spring onions, that added a lot of flavour to it and the duck wasn't as fatty as the ones back in NZ but the duck was still flavourless. Oh what an anti-climax. The rest seemed to love the Peking duck though.

Just before we left Beijing and China, we couldn't have possibly gone on this trip without seeing pandas! We visited the Beijing Zoo and headed straight to the panda enclosure with the other flood of tourist groups. They were pretty awesome! Awesome beyond words! Amazing! Most of them were napping and eating, but some came up to the window and pawed at the glass, not that I got to see any of that, there was a whole crowd by the glass. Couldn't see anything! Bah! Not that I blame them, they're so cuddly! Who doesn't like pandas!?

For the very last part of the trip, we spent our time in HONG KONG! For our first official day in Hong Kong, we went on a quick bus tour. Drove around the main Hong Kong island, took a short boat cruise around the bay (and we had to pay \$10NZ for it ourselves!), saw a beach with statues and stones of Buddhist importance, got taken to another jade jewellery factory and ended the tour at lunch time at the peak of Hong Kong, The Peak. Took a steep cable car ride down back to central Hong Kong. In one of my photos, some guy photo bombed my photo! I looked back at him and he just stared at me as if he didn't know what just happened. Sneaky sneaky! Then we did some shopping.

We decided to visit Ocean Park. It was a lot better than I expected (I really wanted to go to Disneyland but no one else wanted to go, still bitter)! Went on the mine carts twice, the Flash twice (a claw that swings a a spinning wheel around, was more scared that my jade charm was about to fall off my neck, had to put my chin down to my collar to stop it from falling off! Good view from the Flash though!), the Abyss (Like the Fear Fall, kinda short, not high enough, only one big thrill on the ride), the Eagle (a rather tame carnival like ride that spins three wheels of 6 cages around. Just made me really dizzy), the Ferris Wheel (Good view! Long set up time because they had to keep rotating to let people on to the different gondolas), The Raving Rapids (A nice short log flume ride. Was at the front but I didn't get very wet. Maxine and Allen outweighed me!), the Dolphin and Seal show and The Dragon (The park's only roller coaster. Everyone else rushed to the back of the roller coaster, as I went to the front. Cowards. It had been temporarily suspended all day till the afternoon. I don't think it was running at full speed, but it was still fun I guess.). At the end of the day, we thought we'd take a ride on the gondolas down to the lower part of the park. When we got down there, we realised we had only experienced one half of the park! Sure, the side we were on had all of the thrill rides, but they had a whole load of different attractions on the lower part of Ocean Park, including a hot air balloon ride! Awwww!!

To round out the whole trip, we decided to go out on a high note. A trip to Macau! We all got dressed up in our tailor made suits from Shanghai, except me as I never bought one, so I had to borrow one off Johnny. We took an hour ride Turbojet ride there around 6pm. The ride was incredibly rocky and it was difficult to keep your balance when you were out of your seat. Seat belts were invented for a reason!

To start off the night, we watched Cirque Du Soleil's Zaia at The Venetian Casino. This was by far the biggest show we had seen on the trip. Even though none of it made much sense, it was still an unforgettable visual spectacular. The huge spherical theatre was made just for the show and it made full use of all the theatre. The show not only took place on the stage, but above and all around the audience, making it that much more immersive. We had seats all the way at the back but we still had a good view of everything, whereas if you were sitting all the way at the front, you wouldn't even know that half the show was happening behind you.

Last stop on Macau Island was The MGM Casino. I'm usually against gambling anything other than \$2 Instant Kiwis but I thought I'd give it a go. I put down 100 hong kong dollars (\$20NZ) on a gambling card and headed towards the slot machines as there's no skill required! Ten minutes later, I was down to 50 hong kong dollars so I stopped playing. Wasn't fun, could've spent that \$50 on McDonalds or something! By 2.30am, I was already pretty bored and tired but everyone else was just getting started! So I left right away, took another hour long ride back to Hong Kong on the TurboJet and was back home at 4am. Apparently the rest weren't ready to leave till 4.30am. Problem was, the last boat left at 4am. I was wise to leave early, even if it was alone.

I found this trip so far to be a complete world of difference and astounded that I am living in a place I have only seen through the media, with my own eyes. I am glad I got out of my comfort zone to explore this entirely different place. Looking back at this trip, I will never forget this once in a lifetime experience.



The China Trip Wintercamp was an amazing experience. It was a fantastic opportunity to explore Chinese culture from its source. Our first destination was Hong Kong. We only stayed here for a few hours in transit before departing for Guangzhou where we would stay at the Guangzhou Overseas Vocational School.

When we arrived at the school, we were introduced to our rooms. Our beds were a plank of wood with an extremely thin mattress on top. We did not expect this. The food at school was similar to home style Chinese cooking. We ate foods that we were familiar to us such as soups, rice and stir-fried vegetables and meats.

The Shaolin Kung Fu classes were very intense. It was painful to be in horse stance in front of the very strict master for even a minute. After the class finished we were all drenched with sweat and aching all over. It was awesome to experience learning Shaolin Kung Fu under a genuine master. We also got the privilege to witness our Shaolin Kung Fu coach in action at the school's Kung Fu performance. His performance of the drunken sword technique showed off his true martial arts skills.

It was a pain to come back to rock hard beds after a painful intense day of Shaolin Kung Fu as our bodies were aching after each class. However, the Shaolin Kung Fu classes were extremely fun and I wish we had more classes to learn more techniques.

Chinese class was a breeze for me as I had previously spent 3 years learning modern Chinese (Mandarin) at The University of Auckland. I do believe that these classes did benefit the other students on the trip. I think it would have been better to have more Chinese classes, to give the others the ability to attempt to speak Mandarin at the local markets.

Returning to our ancestral villages was a humbling experience as it was the first time that most of us got to witness poverty and village life in China, as well as the places that my grandparents grew up. When I went back to the Yee village in Taishan, I was greeted by an old lady from the village. She showed me the house where my grandfather had grown up. It was a great experience to see where my ancestors came from.

When I went back to the Joe village, it was such an eye opener to have my grandfather's brother show open up and show me the exact house where he and my grandfather grew up. At Joe village, I paid respects to my ancestors by burning pieces of paper in front of food as an offering to them. It was also a privilege for my relatives to take me out and show me around Guangzhou.

It was great to go out and wander the streets of the various towns that we visited such as Tai-Shan and Beijing Road. Staying at hotels during our trips to the villages were a treat as we were able to take a break from the wooden beds and relax in luxury. It was also good to go out to restaurants and indulge in some of the best of Cantonese cooking.

However, I do find the Chinese food in Guangzhou much oilier than the Chinese food served up in Chinese restaurants back up. I must admit that in China, there is a major emphasis on freshness as seafood is picked out of their tanks live, and cooked straight away.

When I went shopping, it was awesome to see genuine China prints of DVD concerts of my favourite Hong Kong artists for a quarter of the price I would pay in Hong Kong. However, when I played them back on a laptop, it was annoying to find that these genuine DVD's had misleading details on their covers such as the ability to take off the Karaoke subtitles, which are available in the Hong Kong prints. This was annoying, but I guess that is what happens with all Chinese goods.

I would like to say thanks to Jessie and Janet for making the experience at the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School a memorable one.

We caught a flight from Guangzhou to Hangzhou. When we arrived, we were met by a strong cold breeze. Our tour guide for Hangzhou and Shanghai, Bob, met us at the airport and gave us an overview of Hangzhou as we travelled in a tour bus to our hotel.

After checking in at the Lakeview Hotel in Hangzhou, we immediately hit the shops. The first block of shops we hit were the clothing factory outlets where big brands such as Adidas were hugely discounted. Shopping was a hit in Hangzhou as there were the big brands that we were used to.

On our second day in Hangzhou, we went to the Dragonwell Tea village where we sampled various types of first grade tea. We also attended the Song Dynasty show which told the story of Hangzhou. This show had incredible production value, showcasing moving seats and water features built into the stage.

On our third day in Hangzhou, we went to the General Yue Fei memorial hall and Lingyin Temple to learn about historical Chinese heroes and culture. In the afternoon we took in the sights whilst taking a relaxing bike ride around the Hangzhou Westlake.

On December 09 when left Hangzhou for Shanghai, passing through the Xitang Watertown on the way. Xitang Watertown was one of the filming locations for Mission Impossible 3 and is a little town in which boat is the main form of transportation through the town. In Xitang we visited the button museum where they showed us the old fashion way of making buttons out of oyster shells.

The next day we went to the Oriental Pearl TV tower to visit the Shanghai History Museum. This museum told Shanghai's history through wax sculptures. This was very interesting as it gave a visual insight in to what old Shanghai looked like. We also visited the Shanghai Silk Museum and were given a tour and demonstration in to how silk is made to produce items such as duvets. Janet also took us to the tailor's market where I got a white leather jacket made. I took in photos of Jacky Cheung wearing the jacket i wanted and in 2 days, it was ready for collection.

At night we took a cruise around the Huangpo river. This cruise gave us great opportunities to photograph both the old fashion European architecture and new modern architecture of Shanghai.

On Saturday December 11 we visited the Yu Gardens, which was a man made garden feature. We also visited the Old Shanghai Bazaar which was a market type area. However, because Ashleigh, Maxine and myself were so tired, we decided to have a coffee and sleep for our entire free time allowance at the Bazaar. At night we attended the Shanghai acrobatic show. It was amazing to see these Chinese acrobats perform sophisticated physical movements.

Sunday was our first free day in Shanghai. A small group of us went to the Madame Tussauds wax museum. Here we got to take photos with our favourite celebs in wax figure form. After we headed to the markets underneath the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum. Here we got to practice our bargain skills, often paying a fraction of the price we were first offered.

At night, a group of us met up for dinner at Pizza Hut. We ordered too much and in the end gave our left overs to a homeless man and hotel staff.

Beijing was the coldest city of our China. On one of the days the temperature got down to -11 degrees. According to our tour guide, Oscar, this day was the coldest day in Beijing for 10 years. In Beijing we went to many historical places such as The Great Wall of China, Tiananmen Square, Summer Palace and the Forbidden City. It was a blast climbing the famous Great Wall as we all felt a sense of accomplishment. We also went out to see the famous Bird's Nest stadium and Water Cube at the Beijing Olympic village. The Bird's Nest was huge and its design is amongst the best in the world. However, since it was so cold, we decided to quickly take a look and hurry to a hotel for lunch.

Hong Kong was my favourite city out of the lot. We were allocated free time our entire duration in HK. Hong Kong was especially good for shopping due to the timing, as we arrived just in time for the major sales. Some of the group's favourite shopping spots were the Mong Kong and TST areas. I extended my stay in HK for 2 weeks and whilst I was there I also got the chance to see and meet many big name HK celebrities such as Aaron Kwok, Andy Lau, Charlene Choi and Alan Tam.

I believe that this Wintercamp is a great opportunity for Chinese New Zealanders to back and discover their roots in China. It is also a good opportunity to explore some of the fascinating sites that China has to offer. At the end of the trip, shopping in Hong Kong is a bonus for everybody.

It would have been great to be able to visit the Hengdian World Studios, which is the world's largest film studio, and the Shaolin Temple. These places could be somewhere that future wintercampers may get to go.

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## **NZCA Wintercamp 2010**

**Thomas Cheung**

Going on the NZCA Winter Camp was hugely rewarding experience. They were some of the most enjoyable weeks of my life. I recommend the trip to all other young New Zealand Chinese looking for an adventure. Below are some of my thoughts on the trip.

### **Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School**

Although the rooms were a far stretch from the hotels we stayed in for the rest of the trip, they added character to our stay in Guangzhou and gave us insight to student life in the city. I had everything I needed and access to the internet was a bonus. The mattresses were very thin; I had to lie on the duvet to sleep comfortably. Food was very nice and although it was a little oily, it was great to have hot food available for breakfast. I appreciated having a full sit down lunch and dinner, the quantity and variety of the food was great. I found the staff and students to be very friendly and welcoming. We enjoyed being able to socialise with the students in our down time at the shops on campus.

### **Shaolin Kungfu**

Really enjoyed the Shaolin Kungfu lessons; the first lesson was difficult but doable. However I felt the lessons got a little easier as we progressed which was a little disappointing. I enjoyed being pushed physically and mentally and would have preferred a bit more of a challenge. I also thought that three lessons were too few, although that was due to scheduling conflicts. The teacher was great, I liked that we were taught practical techniques, and I would have loved the opportunity to learn more stances.

### **Cultural Classes**

Despite my translator being unable to translate and my knot-tying girl forgetting how to tie knots and every girl in the room shunning me to have their photo taken with Jeff, I had a lot of fun at the knot-tying class. Interaction with the local students was one of the highlights of the stay at the school, so it was great to have a class with them. I think the trip would benefit from more classes similar to this. The Mandarin classes were helpful and were taught at a good pace. I feel they would have been more useful for the rest of the trip if there was more of a focus on common phrases towards the end of the classes. The calligraphy class was enjoyable, although I needed a little more guidance as I rediscovered that I'm pretty useless with a brush in hand.

### **Ancestral Villages**

The ancestral villages were very well organised, especially considering the logistics. Despite the large number of villages I visited I still found each one to be engaging. It was quite an experience being able to interact with the locals and gain an understanding of their way of life. It was great to be able to go back to my villages and learn more about my extended family. I was fortunate enough to meet my grandfather's brother's son at my dad's village, he came across as a very friendly man, despite the fact that I was unable to understand anything he said. His tall, strong stature and deep booming voice made me suspect that I had received the short end of the genetic stick.

## **Hangzhou**

Hangzhou is a beautiful city with a great bike transport system. We stayed at the Lakeview which had a great view of the lake (!). It was nice to be able to enjoy the view each morning with our buffet breakfast. The most memorable part of our stay in Hangzhou was the bike trip around the lake, it was a beautiful ride and a nice, laidback way to spend the day. We also, visited the General Yue Fei memorial, saw a night show went to the Hefang street markets and went on a boat cruise on the lake. I would definitely recommend the attractions before the Song Dynasty Show, especially the walk under the big Buddha and the haunted House. If you're up late, there's also an awesome street food noodle stall to be found.

## **Shanghai**

Shanghai was one of my favourite destinations on the trip. I definitely recommend getting something made at the tailors market, if you're careful and find a good stall it can be well worth your money. We also visited the Shanghai history museum, the Yu Gardens and Old Shanghai Bazaar and saw an Acrobatic show that featured an amazing magician (where does she keep all those doves?!). Shanghai also has some amazing nightlife, it is definitely worth making a reservation at People7 and trying to find The Shelter.

## **Beijing**

Beijing was very cold, apparently one of the days we were there was the coldest in 10 years (-11!). I found the best way to keep warm was to own an animal hat and to keep moving, jumping photos help! In Beijing we did a lot of sight-seeing including, Tiananmen Square, Mao's Mausoleum, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Summer palace, Ming Tombs and the Sacred Way and the Great Wall. It was fun to watch the locals hanging out at the parks, dancing or playing hacky sack to stay warm and practising calligraphy with water that froze to ice on the ground. The Great Wall was very impressive; it was very rewarding climbing up the harder route; I'd say it's the best way to get yourself back on track in the morning if you're feeling a little worse for wear from earlier. The statues at the Sacred Way were cool; I wanted to get on top of a standing elephant but had to settle for settling on a camel. The markets at Beijing were fun, the people at the stalls were friendly and fun to chat to. I bought a plate I didn't really want because I felt like bartering and had a lady fall over trying to chase me down for a sale. It was also an experience to try authentic Peking Duck and see how the dish has changed since it has been introduced overseas.

## **Hong Kong**

I am always happy when I get a chance to go to Hong Kong and it was no different on this trip. The highlights were probably Ocean Park and Macau. I had loads of fun at Ocean park and we stayed there for much longer than anticipated, I discovered that I do in fact get a little motion sickness and that the jellyfish are as awesome as I remembered. Macau was a crazy 12 hour side trip that included an amazing Cirque du Soleil show, a nice yum char dinner, a pretty seedy club, some embarrassing dancing, a not very successful stint at the MGM Grand and a long trip back to Hong Kong. It was great to be able to hop onto the MTR and go wherever we wanted, although the fares were a little more expensive than what we had become accustomed to in China. As with the other cities I felt I needed more time, we were only just getting a feel for the shops before it was time to go home.

## **Random Tips:**

- Get a DSLR before you go on the trip, not after. You will be unable to take photos with it on the trip if you do not get it until after the trip is over.
- On your free days make an effort to eat at the local restaurants (the dodgy looking ones), the food is super cheap and among the best tasting food you will eat on the trip. McD's is quick and easy, but you can get that anytime and anywhere in the world (taro pies aside).

- If you are out late, seek out the street food (skewers especially). It may look like food poisoning 101 at first glance, but they cook it in front of you and it tastes amazing.
- Learn how to squat! It is the best way to rest after too many hours wandering around markets. Eventually you will learn that Asian squat toilets are superior to their Western equivalents.
- Try and find the Crystal Jade Restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. You will have to wait, but they have *amazing* Xia Long Baos.

I had so much fun on this trip; I made great friends, went to amazing places and ate fantastic food. I would like to thank NZCA for putting on the Wintercamp and the Gaungdong Overseas Office for being so accommodating. Special thanks to Janet Joe for organising the trip, being a great, extremely helpful guide around China.

Firstly I would like to thank NZCA for giving me the chance to go on this great trip. As I was growing up as a Chinese New Zealander, I have always felt displaced as to where I actually came from. This trip has given me more of an understanding of my roots.

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**Stephen Lowyim**

My name is Stephen Lowyim, i am Chinese, i was born in Auckland, New Zealand, i am 22 years old and I attended the NZCAs (New Zealand Chinese Association) 2010 Winter Camp to experience true Chinese culture, to learn more about my family roots and see where i am from. It was an easy decision for me to choose to come on the camp because ive been involved with the chinese community for most of my life and ive heard a lot of good stories and experiences from friends about the trip. On the morning of the 21st of November i met the other 17 people that were attending the camp and that i would be with for the next month. At the airport everyone was friendly introducing themselves and getting to know each other, i knew it was going to be a good trip already. After being randomly paired up for our 11 hour flight to H.K where we transfer to China we were off.

The classes at the school we stayed at in Guangzhou; For four straight days we had to attend some Kung-fu classes which i was looking forward to. We arrived to a very strict teacher that looked like he wouldn't accept any mucking around. At first it was physically hard and tiring but after the first day we got used to the drills and the training. By the last day we knew exactly what to do and how to do it, it felt and looked good as a group. Maybe im tougher now. We had 2 Chinese classes where we learned some basics like how to pronounce words in mandarin and say some common words and phrases which was good for us when we had free time looking around shops and going to restaurants, i remember "how much?" and "excuse me". Another class we had was our Chinese calligraphy class, it was interesting learning the different strokes that make up each Chinese character but it was very hard to execute. In the end we were lucky to have had a good teacher that just wrote our names for us to take home. My most favorite class was the one where we met and interacted with some local students. Each person in our group had a translating student and a person to help show them how to tie different Chinese knots that make up bracelets and other things that represent good luck. Overall the classes at the school were very enjoyable, some of the best times i have had in a school class room.

A major highlight was visiting my ancestral village in Xin Hui. It was amazing that there is a little place in china who actually knew and cared who you are! I am still astonished to this day that Janet actually found a village rally that took us in as if they were our immediate family. Because

no one from new zealand had returned to my fathers village before, everyone there that greeted me was so excited to see and meet me i felt like a celebrity. I was excited and overwhelmed but i was lucky i had Janet and Jessie (our helper/translator from the school) to help us communicate. I can understand a small amount of cantonese however, upon arrival to my village I did not stand a chance of understanding what they were saying. Going to my mums village in Xin Tang was great too, but there was a lot less to learn because my grandfather still keeps in touch with our relatives there. It was an invaluable experience I will never ever forget.

During the trip I quickly learnt the bargaining skills required to make a purchase in a market. During our first experience was at a shopping market, sales people would grab us by the arm and/or chase us down the street just to make a sale. We soon learnt our own tactics such as acting as though we weren't interested then making an offer at 10% of the asking price. We would then work up from there. This process got tiring after awhile as we weren't able to walk into a shop and purchase something without an argument. At times the process got abusive, but we loved every minute of securing a bargain! (Or was it a bargain?!)

What was also fascinating was that the markets survived on selling counterfeit goods. It was an exciting prospect that we could purchase "top quality fakes" at a fraction of their price. But I soon realised that I had a suitcase full of "junk!" After our shopping experience in china, it was refreshing to purchase real products and the basketball gear that id been waiting the whole trip for in Hong Kong. Another purchasing note...we went on a lot of nice tours seeing sites, trying nice different teas, seeing how silks made, learning about jade and at the end listening to the deals everyone has trying to sell us their products at the end of our tours... beware! Try not to get hustled.

As we travelled up the north of china the culture and environment was completely different to southeast china. It could have easily been mistaken for another country! Everyone was taller, bigger, spoke differently and seemed wealthier than the people in Guangzhou. As a Cantonese New Zealander, I felt it hard to connect to this part of china as "my home." If Janet had taken us to Japan, I wouldn't have known the difference. The environment was also less polluted which was a pleasant surprise. Hangzhou was the first north china destination we went to. Janet organised a lake cruise during our first day in Hangzhou. The lake haze, mountains, and temples were a dead spit of the old fashion Chinese paintings we all saw at our grandparents' house. It was an amazing experience for us all and many great photos were taken that day.

During our bus ride to Shanghai we stopped off to a "water village" for lunch and sight seeing. This was the place where Tom Cruise shot a scene for "Mission Impossible." It wasn't difficult to see why they chose this place! This place had the most confusing man made canals you would ever see. It was picturesque with uncharacteristic white-bricked village with all the north Chinese traditional fittings. I particularly enjoyed the lunch we ate there. It consisted of really tasty fried fish. Too many flies around was a down buzz though. Shanghai was portrayed by the media as a commercial growth Mecca. Therefore we all had immense expectations of the city. After visiting the shanghai history museum, it was plain to see that the city had undergone extreme modernisation and development. It would definitely be one of the cities of the world that you must see in your lifetime. However, the place was simply too massive and spread out for tourists like us to fully appreciate in 5 days! Shanghai, as Janet quoted, are "the best tailors in China." We went to a fabric market to select fabric to make suits, shirts and dresses from the tailors. The selection of fabric and suit makers was amazing. The tailors were keen to make us tailored made clothing for any style imaginable. It only took 1-2 days to complete. However, the quality of clothing was variable. The tailors were cheap and therefore some bad quality was not a big deal. Mine was good, pants a little long, the cut and lining of everything else was sweet! Some people got too big or too small so an extra day of alterations, one guy had a tailor not even show up with his suit... was pretty dodgy but ended up all good and we got the suit. It was all part of the experience.

In Beijing we visited China's most famous attractions. Temple of Heaven, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, the Ming Tombs and of course the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China met all expectations. We had a couple of hours to explore the wall but we certainly took longer as this is something to cherish for the rest of our lives. The climb is certainly a lot harder than it looks on TV. The steps were at a 60 degree angle in places, either 1, 2, 3 or 4 bricks high and well worn from foot traffic. Both the girls and guys struggled at times. Suggestion, don't go clubbing and get wasted before the climb or you'll end up having people on trip spewing on the wall. Clubs in Beijing were awesome!, Check out the clubs at Workers Stadium. You must check out the food street and try something new!, Most out of it I had was snake, small scorpions and big black king kong scorpions.

The whole experience would not have been as good as if it were not for the people! Heaps of us were strangers at the start, everyone knew someone but became good friends with everyone at the end. It was also good for some who do not have many Chinese friends. Instantly connections were made and we were a little sad when the whole experience ended. There was also one couple who fell madly in love with each other. So another good reason for the trip is to find your Chinese husband or wife.

With the contingent, we had a few awesome nights out drinking and singing karaoke. These were some of the best nights you'll ever get.

Some of the highlights include karaoke near the beginning of the trip and seeing everyone come out of their shells, cheap massages, visiting my villages and eating all the great food!

I would very much like to thank my Mum, my Dad, Janet and the NZCA for giving me the opportunity to go on an amazing trip of a lifetime. Since coming back, my stories have convinced others to seriously consider going on this trip. I hope this trip will continue to be organised and supported as it is an invaluable experience for all NZ Chinese.

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## **2010 Wintercamp Report**

Nick Law

Prior to leaving, I had only heard fantastic stories of the NZCA wintercamp, and that it was going to be the trip of a lifetime. Along with all the anticipation, I also found myself quite nervous as I was about to embark on a month long trip across China with minimal knowledge of the language, and a bunch of strangers. After all the goodbyes, photos and awkward introductions, we arrived in Guangzhou after briefly stopping in Hong Kong. It was not my first time to China, but I knew this trip was going to be a totally different experience to anything else.

In Guangzhou we were staying at the Guangdong Overseas Vocational School, where the sleeping arrangements were the first of many surprises on the trip. Solid wood beds in an otherwise sterile environment, became the first talking point on which the group bonded. Apart from that however, the facilities were nice albeit sometimes humorous, and we felt very accommodated amongst the other students. For the first week, time at the school was spent learning and participating in new cultural experiences. We had Mandarin lessons, learnt calligraphy, and had daily kung fu lessons. I felt we should have had more Mandarin classes as it would have been nice to be able to take a bit more away from this trip, and it would have also allowed us to hold more conversations around the rest of China. My first experience of the language barrier was during the Chinese knot tying lessons with local students, which was still thoroughly enjoyable.

Coincidentally, the Asia Games were being held in Guangzhou at the same time we were there, and we were lucky enough to be able to go to one of the events. Even though the experience was short-lived, to be a part of an Asia Games atmosphere was quite special.

Our second week at the school comprised mainly of visiting our ancestral villages. They were our first real excursions from the school, and our first our first relent from the tiring kung fu. For most people on the trip, this was their first time visiting their ancestral villages. It really was an eye opening experience as we got to witness first hand, the hardship and difficulties of which grandparents had to deal with in their childhoods. The Chinese squat toilets were hard enough for us.

Going to everyone's villages remained interesting, yet grew a little tiresome towards the end. It was quite disappointing to have to rush through the Bai Yun villages due to organizational/logistical problems, but nevertheless was still interesting and insightful.

Whilst on the road visiting villages, we also stopped and saw a few sights. Dr Sun Yat Sen's museum was a particular highlight amongst the educational outings, and Magnificent China was a jaw-dropping experience. The hotels that we stayed at were all very pleasant, and it was quite interesting to see how the food changed between districts.

Before leaving the school, we played the local students in basketball, and were treated to a kung fu display. The overall school experience was nice, but as there was a curfew, uniform, and limited things to do in our free time, I think we were all eagerly ready for the "real" tour of China to begin.

Our next port of call was Hangzhou. Along with Beijing, it was a place I had never been before so was very excited. It did not disappoint. It was our first experience of the colder temperatures, but was ambient for exploring the beautiful city. The tour guide took us on a tour of the West Lake, to a tea tasting, and to memorial halls and temples. These were interesting, but the definite highlight was biking around the West Lake ourselves. The shopping and nightlife was also a new experience and helped us to discover some delicious street food. One of my favorite stops on the trip, Hangzhou was definitely amazing, and for me would be reason enough to go back to China.

Our bus tour then took us to Shanghai. A long ride, but I was broken up by a pleasant detour to the Xitang water town. The "Venice of the East" was quite amazing with canals as roads, and their obsession with Mission Impossible (after a scene was filmed there).

The first night in Shanghai was spent in a way that was becoming quite regular; aimlessly exploring the city. The bright lights of Nanjing Road, and the hustle and bustle on the streets was the perfect introduction to another amazing city. Our tour guide continued to take us to local attractions, and the Shanghai history museum, Yu gardens, and the Huangpo river night cruise were all memorable. The Shanghai acrobatic show was also very impressive, yet the infamous Peace hotel jazz band was a personal highlight of mine. The Shanghai cuisine and especially the xiao long baos will be sorely missed.

The cold Beijing weather had been the topic of much discussion, but I don't think anyone was actually prepared for how cold it turned out to be. Being -11 degrees sort of detracted from the sightseeing, but walking through Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City was still very impressive. Our new tour guide, Oscar, was quite insightful, and even though we managed to see a lot of things in such few days, I thought he did quite a thorough job. The Olympic village was amazing to see first hand, but the pandas at the zoo enclosure were the best. The peking duck dinner was one of the best meals on the tour, but we also went to the Beijing wild food street where we ate things like scorpions, spiders and starfish.

When the left Beijing for the tropical Hong Kong, we knew we were drawing near to the end of the trip. Apart from an initial brief tour of the city, it was all free time so we were able to do as we pleased. A lot of the time in Hong Kong was spent shopping, but as a group we also had a day at Ocean Park, and went to Macau. The nightlife throughout the trip was quite impressive, but Hong Kong and Macau was a great way to end the tour. I think we all enjoyed the glamorous night out in Macau, and especially the 6am ferry home.



It was definitely sad to say goodbyes to a fantastic group of new friends, but this trip is something that will be remembered forever. It was a great way to see China, and was so much fun but at the same time educational..the total cultural experience of a lifetime. Thanks so much to Janet, the NZCA and everyone who made this trip possible. It was amazing and I highly recommend to all future participants.

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## **2010 China Winter Camp Report**

Michael Lee

### **Guangzhou**

After a 15-hour journey, we arrived safely in Guangzhou where the first stop of our magical trip would be to a late yum char supper. Straight away, we were exposed to the wonderfully weird foods I was warned about. Then it was off to the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Vocational School, where we would be residing for the next couple of weeks. First impression of our new digs? Not impressed.

Activities at the school included intense Shaolin Kung Fu classes which were tougher than anticipated but also fun, Chinese language classes which were also tougher than expected, not quite so fun, but educational none the less. Interacting with the students during a knot tying lesson was quite enjoyable, especially after the sixth time I tried and finally succeeded in tying the knot.

Visiting my ancestral villages was the highlight of this part of the trip for me. I had previously been to my Dad's village before, but that was when I was younger and didn't really appreciate what was going on. Visiting the house that Dad grew up in and helped build, and seeing the drastic change in lifestyle influenced my outlook on life. It was also the first time going to my Mum's village, which was also cool.

### **Hangzhou**

There was a noticeable drop in temperature upon our arrival in Hangzhou, the romance capital of China. We were greeted by the friendly face of Bob, who was to be our tour guide for Hangzhou and Shanghai.

Hangzhou is famous for it's incredible lakeside scenery. Bob told us that people say when they going to sleep, they are going to Hangzhou because visiting the city is like entering a dream. A truer word has never been spoken. Our bike ride along West Lake was surely one of the highlights of the trip.

### **Shanghai**

Ah Shanghai, my favourite city in China. As a global city, it exerts influence over finance, commerce, fashion, and culture. Apart from a few cultural activities, we were left to our own devices.

Special mention has to go out to People 7, a nifty little restaurant and bar located not far from our hotel. With an entrance door as tricky as a box of monkeys and toilets as confusing as something, visiting this place was an adventure and a half.

### **Beijing**

Beijing a.k.a Peking, the metropolitan capital of the Peoples' Republic of China, was sightseeing time. Our itinerary was chocka full of touring with our new guide, Kenny. Once again, the guide was very informative and was always telling the most fascinating stories.

Visiting the Forbidden City on what some said was the coldest day Beijing had witnessed in 10 years was a memorable experience. The animal hats we bought in Hangzhou turned out to be a wise investment.

Walking along the Great Wall, perhaps the most recognizable monument of China and one of the seven modern wonders of the world was a superlative opportunity, was something that I've always wanted to do, and now something I can finally say I've done.

Beijing was also where we tried some of the more exotic foods I have seen, all conveniently located along the one street. Delicacies sampled included scorpion, centipede, starfish, and shrimp dumplings. To top the night off a car exploded in the middle of the street.

## **Hong Kong**

It was nice to return to warmer climes in Hong Kong, where we were mostly left to do our own thing, with only a half-day tour organized for us. We made the most of our limited time there, going to Ocean Park for a day and also losing a few dollars in Macau, as well as ample time to shop and eat. My most memorable elevator ride also happened in Hong Kong.

Looking back on my experience on the NZCA Wintercamp in 2010, it is unbelievable to recap how much we achieved in so little time. The feeling of being tired has crept back into my mind on how I felt during the trip. I also realized how fresh I am during the course of the trip. To look back and see what we did, what we achieved, and what we experienced during the trip makes it all worthwhile. Alas, two pages is not enough to describe all the wondrous occurrences on this once in a lifetime trip.

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**Melissa Kwan**

Initially, this adventure of leaving the familiar to reside for a month in the unfamiliar; began with an early flight to China, with a 5 hour stop over in Hong Kong. Visiting 5 of China's cities; revealed a lot about the Chinese culture and way of life. Most notably, the key highlights of this winter camp for me; would have to be experiencing the foreign; that included the Chinese food range, beverages, the people in China and generally the whole experience of being a real tourist travelling on a tour bus with other young New Zealanders.

Guangzhou was our first destination. Following our arrival we had our first supper; a late night Yum-cha. These late night eating habits seemed to be the norm in China; and would only be the start to our late night food visits.

Our base in Guangzhou was at a school; which accommodated both international and local students. At this school, we had three days of two-hour sessions in Shaolin Kung-fu. Although the sessions were physically demanding, they were manageable and I actually enjoyed them. For instance, in one warm-up drill; we were meant to carry another with our arms; instead us girls gave piggyback rides instead. We also had Chinese and calligraphy classes. Both provided practical introductions to the art; where we also learnt the appropriate stroke orders for painting our names.

As a team we also participated in a game of basketball; one game with the local teachers and another with students. Although the majority of our tour team didn't even play basketball; it was good fun. It was interesting to see how rough some teachers played, as one teacher actually lifted Stacey off the ground. All in all; our social games of basketball didn't leave us with too many injuries; I only ended up with a sore thumb joint, Maxine ended up with a swollen palm and Ashleigh a sore finger.

It was a good experience staying at the school as it really gave us the opportunity to be immersed us into a Chinese learning environment. Roaming the school and getting to know the local students was also a fun experience.

For a decent chunk of the trip; we spent it traveling to every persons village. Visiting the numerous villages left a lasting impression of how vast the contrast is between our comfortable living in western society and that of China; which seemed to exemplify an ethic of working to live; rather than living to work. For example in one village; the street was lined up with many women making jeans; whilst their children sat nearby. Guangzhou was the first city where the training and learning on techniques to bargain had to begin.

Hangzhou was the city where may of us purchased animal hat's which we wore throughout much of the trip. A major highlight in the city of Hangzhou; was our bike ride around the West Lake. This is the famous lake featured on the Chinese 1 Yuan note. Riding around this lake made me feel like a kid riding in a scene in The Sound of Music. The natural surroundings and landscape of the causeways and trees were picturesque; and riding along side the busy roads was pretty exciting.

Shanghai was the city where majority of the group had clothes tailored. The tailors market contained an extensive selection of tailors. To find a good tailor; seemed like the main objective here. A key thing to consider would be the reliability of the tailor. There was one case where Johnny's suit was delayed; so a deal was made to collect the suit later at 9 pm; when the market was closed. At the time it felt there could be a possibility the man may not even show up. This night was made more memorable as it was raining; and we had the experience of hoping in then out of a taxi into another; due to a clueless driver. The old Shanghai bazaar; attracts many tourists. This naturally calls for higher prices. so sometimes it really does pay to bargain; because you never know how low you could actually get the price down to. In the case of a mini mah- jong set, one set was purchased outside the main shops in the bazaar for 15 Yuan; while someone else purchased theirs for about 65 Yuan.

A Shanghai highlight would have to be following people to the back streets; which housed many hidden stores selling mass loads of counterfeit goods. The stores are not what you expect for a back street; hidden store. Bright, clean and attract many foreign customers.

As we entered into Beijing; there was a steeper temperature drop. The Great Wall was the landmark I loved most in Beijing. The food here was also more extreme. Visiting the food market; there was such a vast variety of special foods like scorpion, starfish, silk worms, snake, spiders and more. Even though Beijing was the coldest city we went to, we had the most nights out here on the trip; to a club called Vic's.

Residing in Hong Kong after spending weeks in the other cities, felt different. For starters; the toilets weren't squats. The tour initially set aside four days in Hong Kong; however I stayed beyond the four days; and felt that just four days in Hong Kong is still not enough time to travel around Hong Kong. If people want to sightsee, shop around in different suburbs, go to a theme park as well as visit Macau; it may feel too rushed.

During our time in Hong Kong; visiting Macau was a great way to end the tour. We watched a Cirque Du Soleil show which was amazing; and stayed in the casino till our 6:30 am ferry back to Hong Kong. Visiting Macau should definitely be on the list of things to do whilst in Hong Kong.

I am not a connoisseur of milk tea, however I did realise the milk tea throughout China seemed to lack the whole 'milk' flavor, but I was still hooked to them. China fails at milk tea for the effects it has on the stomach. However, Hong Kong had much better and stomach friendly milk teas; so I'd recommend people to save milk teas for Hong Kong. Mc Donald's; was everywhere. Within many points in the trip, Mc D's was a common quick food joint for many of us; with the Taro pies being a big China novelty.

I must say, this tour has been well compacted into a one month time frame. I myself; would not have been able to squeeze in let alone organize such a tour personally. Overall the meals we had in every city were

very adequate, with a large variety of dishes. There was plenty of food; and you are very unlikely to go hungry on this trip. The accommodation in each of the cities were very decent and of high standards.

I absolutely recommend this trip to people who want to see where their origins come from and experience touring China with a young group. It's been a fantastic opportunity.

\* \* \* \* \*

## China Wintercamp 2010

**Amanda Ngan**

In the early morning of Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November, our group of 18 met at the airport. Our faces were filled with excitement (as shown by the many group photos taken at the gate!). I felt like I'd been waiting for years to go on this trip to China, and now we were finally about to leave! I'm not sure about the others in the group, but I tried to leave without any expectations or assumptions of what it might be like; go there with a completely open mind.

After a long plane ride, our first experience of China was in Hong Kong, where we made a brief stopover and visited a mall. It was completely overwhelming. Even though I am an enthusiastic shopper, the crowds were so huge that I had no energy to look in the shops. We carried on with our journey and after finally landing in Guangzhou, we found ourselves having Yum Char for supper at 11pm! During the trip I never got used to seeing all sorts of animals lined up outside in cages, ready to be cooked and eaten. That first night we saw an alligator in a cage at the restaurant, and it hit me that we were now in a country with a very different culture.

While in Guangzhou our accommodation was Guangdong Vocational School, where we saw first hand how dedicated the students in China are to their studies. On our first morning we were witness to a 6am wake up call which blasted a Britney Spears song throughout the school on their speaker system! Highlights at the school included calligraphy, mandarin and Kung Fu classes. The Kung Fu classes in particular gave us a taste of the challenge and discipline involved in the martial art, and our master had very high expectations. A "friendly" basketball game played by us girls against the female teachers of the school surprised us all as they were a lot more competitive and aggressive than we expected! Another highlight was being able to meet local students at the school. They were always eager to practise their English with us and show us around their school. Many were surprised to find out we did not speak Mandarin or Cantonese.

Being able to visit the ancestral villages of almost everyone in our group was fascinating. It was surreal to be standing in the actual houses and communities our grandparents had left behind. It was interesting to observe the diversity between different villages in terms of their architecture, as well as the resources they produce (e.g. jeans, mandarins, bananas). The reality of the hard life that people in these villages have really hit home when common sights included seeing people surrounded by piles of jeans as they stitched them by hand, or elderly women clearing huge banana trees on the back of their bicycles. Some of the living conditions of the local people were really poor, and especially when using village facilities like communal squat toilets, it reminded us of how lucky we are to have such

comforts everyday at home. It was humbling to observe that these locals, however, appeared content and happy in their surroundings.

When we departed for Hangzhou, we were looking forward to seeing some other areas of China. While Guangzhou seemed like a city overflowing with markets, people and vehicles (of all different kinds and in different conditions!), Hangzhou had a welcoming calmness and although much colder, was a picturesque city surrounded by beautiful lakes. The city is regarded as a romantic town and many newly married couples often visit to take their bridal photos here by the lake. On a first walk around the city it was evident the city was constantly changing and new buildings were frequently being built. This was one of my favourite places on the trip and we all enjoyed cycling around Westlake and the Causeways, although it was a little daunting at first to be riding on a different side of the road with so many other vehicles. We also experienced some local nightlife and sampled and bought the local Longjing green tea.

Three days later, we departed for Shanghai which many of us had been eagerly awaiting. Shanghai did not disappoint as it was an impressive and diverse city with many skyscrapers but also quaint buildings in the areas with French influence. We kept busy as we sampled some smaller locally run restaurants and ate fresh noodles and hot pots, watched an old famous Jazz band at the Peace Hotel on the Bund, went to the Shanghai History Museum, and shopped on and around Nanjing Road. We were also lucky to be able to visit the China section of the Shanghai expo, but without the extreme crowds and queues which had to be endured when the official Expo was being run. The exhibits inside were quite overwhelming as they were huge and very detailed. Another highlight was also visiting the Tailors' Market which was 3 floors high and filled with tailors who made everything to measure including suits for the guys and coats and dresses for the girls.

When we arrived in the capital, Beijing, we frantically visited UniQlo (which we had become very familiar with) to buy extra thermals, pants and beanies as it was much colder, with temperatures in the negatives. We visited all the main historical sights including Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace. Our tour guide Oscar gave us a detailed introduction to the rich history of China and I am looking forward to learning more about it in the future. We were grateful to have a pool and sauna to go back to in the evenings at our hotel. We didn't let the cold nights stop us from trying some local bars and clubs, sampling the delicious street food (including some of the more unusual and less desired items such as fried starfish, scorpions and centipedes), visiting the cute Pandas at Beijing Zoo and of course walking up the Great Wall of China. It was surreal to see the Wall with my own eyes, and the sheer length of it caught me off guard. It was pretty amazing to think that it's all man-made.

Hong Kong was great as we had just a few organized activities and had freedom to choose how we spent our time. It was fun to jump on the subway and visit the different areas of the city, and we spent a lot of time shopping, eating and experiencing the nightlife Hong-King style. We visited Ocean Park and celebrated the end of our China adventure with a visit to Macau where we watched a Cirque de Soleil production and tested our luck at gambling. For those of us that stayed on in Hong Kong, it was strange and sad to wave the others off as they headed back home.

While I'll admit that I did have some reservations about travelling with an organized group (as I love the freedom and spontaneity to explore unfamiliar places), I can honestly say that I had an amazing time experiencing the history and culture of this fascinating country. I would recommend the trip to any NZ-born Chinese. I've made some close friends, tried

lots of new food, and taken too many photos to sort out! I had a lot of fun travelling with an awesome bunch of people and will always remember it!

Also... Thanks to you Janet Joe for all your efforts to organize all of us and for always passing on your valuable and interesting knowledge of China on to us. With your help, we were able to see so many amazing places in such a short space of time

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## **NZCA Wintercamp 2010 –**

**Jonathan Gee**

Participating on this trip turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. Not knowing what to expect, in a country I have never been to before, had to be one of the most exciting and full on experiences I've ever had. Visiting ancestral villages made me appreciate our cultural and ancestral history. It also made me appreciate how lucky we are with our current living conditions compared to what our ancestors used to live in. This trip definitely lived up to its expectations and more and I would certainly go back in the future.

### **Guangzhou**

Arriving in Guangzhou was our first look of what China was all about. Tall buildings, lots of people, motorways, street food and smog indicated that we were in a huge city. Staying at the GD Overseas Chinese Vocational School for 9 nights was our first experience in Chinese culture. The first culture shock encounter was the beds. Sleeping on beds made from a wooden base and a very thin mattress made sleeping an interesting ordeal, especially after a hard days workout from Kung Fu. One thing I will never forget is being woken up at 6.30am to traditional Chinese music being blasted as a wake up call.

At the school, we participated in 3 Shaolin Kung Fu lessons. This certainly sorted out who could endure the most pain. Apart from the pain, it turned out to be one of the most enjoyable activities we did. Watching the Master show us the moves so quickly and precisely was a sight I will never forget. Another enjoyable activity we did was the Chinese knot tying class with the local students. It turned out to be a great way to interact with the students and to try out our Chinese speaking skills. The Mandarin classes were challenging but our teacher made it much easier to learn. These classes ended up being very useful for our future travels throughout China as we were able to talk to the locals more confidently. The Chinese calligraphy lesson was very interesting but took a lot of time and practice. It would've been great to have another lesson to brush up on our techniques and character strokes.

During our nights at the school, we explored the local streets and found it very intriguing to see what was out there. It was a real eye opening experience to also see how Chinese people make a living from the street markets.

### **Ancestral Villages**

One of the main reasons why I decided to come on this trip was to visit my ancestral village. It was definitely an experience I won't forget in a hurry. Going back to my Yeh Yeh's ancestral home village was important to me as I gained a better understanding and appreciation of where my roots are from. It was also intriguing to see others' ancestral villages and how unique they all were. Although we were pushed for time visiting my village, it was well worth it and would recommend it to others who are considering going on this trip.

## **Hangzhou**

After a weeks worth of visiting villages, it was nice to relax and see this sites of Hangzhou. This was one of the most picturesque cities I'd ever been to with the backdrop of the lake. The lake cruise was a great way to see the city from a different view and to see the famous landmarks of Hangzhou. We visited the Dragonwell Tea village where we tasted a range of teas. Here, we learnt that there's much more to just drinking tea and that there are many benefits from it. An afternoon was spent riding bikes around the lake. Cruising along the lakeside was a great way to see the beauty of this famous place and made for some very nice photos. Later that night we saw the Song Dynasty show. It was very impressive with amazing acrobatics, dances and costumes.

## **Shanghai**

While we were on our way to Shanghai from Hangzhou, we stopped off at the Xintang watertown. This town was amazing as we saw how people lived there everyday. When we arrived in Shanghai, we explored the city centre and walked down some of the well-known streets. Later that night we got to see what Shanghai was like at night on the Haungpo River cruise. All I can say is that Shanghai looked very dazzling with all its lighting displays on the skyscrapers. We also went to the Shanghai tailors market to buy some suits. It was definitely money well spent! During the other days on Shanghai it was full on as we saw the Yu Gardens, Old Shanghai Bazaar and an Acrobatic show. On our free day, a group of us decided to visit the wax museum and shopped at the department stores.

## **Beijing**

When we first arrived in Beijing, the first thing that hit us was the freezing cold temperature. Our days here were full of sight seeing and learning about Chinese history. Walking the long distances slowly overcame the intense cold as we walked through Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. It was also amazing to see the whole lake frozen up at the Summer Palace. Later that night we were treated to another show, this being the Legend of Kung Fu. Our free days were spent shopping at the Silk Street markets and trying the food at Wangfujing road. It was definitely an experience I will not forget trying scorpions and snake. Walking around different stalls to see what they had to eat was not for the faint hearted or people who have a fear of insects.

## **Hong Kong**

Our time in Hong Kong was mainly free time with a half-day tour around Repulse Bay, Aberdeen and Victoria Peak. Coming here was one of the highlights and was wishing we had stayed longer. Our days were filled with lots of shopping, eating and exploring. Spending a whole day at Ocean Park was a great deal of fun and would definitely go back if I had the chance. It was certainly an entertaining day with everybody on the trip. With our suits that we got tailored in Shanghai, it was time to dress up and hit Macau Island for the night. It ended up being one of the best nights on the trip as we watched Cirque Du Soleil Zaia at the Venetian Hotel. Great friends, casinos, live bands and our last night together as a group was a night that I will not forget.

For future trips, I would recommend staying longer, as 4 nights was not long enough to comfortably see everything in Hong Kong.

In the end, this trip was undoubtedly the best I've ever been on. A big thanks must go to Janet for organising the trip. Everything ran smoothly and all the expectations of the trip were surely met. I came back with many unforgettable memories, stories, 6000 photos and 17 great new friends. A trip of a lifetime indeed!



# New Zealand Chinese Association 2010 Winter Camp Report

Matthew Phua

The Winter Camp is an experience I will not soon forget. It was the most amazing month travelling through China, experiencing new things, and learning more about the country that my ancestors came from.

## Guangzhou

Our journey into China started in Guangzhou, where we stayed at the Guangzhou Overseas Chinese Vocational School. This was an experience I would have been unable to have without attending the Winter Camp. Students as well as teachers lived on campus. Up to four students shared a room, and everyone ate together in a huge multi-level canteen. It was like a mini city.

In their spare time, the students played pool or sat and chatted on the tables beside the small snack shop, or played sports. They played soccer on the large field surrounded by a running track, or basketball on one of the many courts. They also played outdoor badminton, and table tennis. One night, some of the students took us to a tiled area in front of a building where some students practiced breakdancing. They were really talented as they danced and spun to loud hip-hop.



In addition to the many local students, there were a large number of foreign (mainly Russian) students all keen to learn Chinese – a skill that will no doubt become more and more of an asset in the coming decades.



We stayed in rooms similar to the local students. Our mattresses were very thin – only the thinnest layer of foam covered hard wooden planks. Every morning, I awoke to old Chinese pop songs blaring from the loudspeakers, with a stiff back and sore shoulders, but I wouldn't want to have changed the experience at all.

Over the course of a week, we attended Mandarin, Chinese Calligraphy, and Kung Fu classes. We also attended a Chinese knot tying class in which local students taught us how to make Chinese knots. The students were very friendly and it was one of the best times at the school. The school's Kung Fu program attracts students from all over the world. Our *jiao lian* (coach) drilled us in the midday heat, in pain as we held our horse stance positions. He was very strict, and I liked his discipline and passion for his art. Later, at a demonstration in front of the school, he showed us his impressive techniques, filled with high kicks and leaping backflips.



We explored nearby local markets. The streets were a cacophany of a thousand people all speaking Cantonese at once, music pumping out from every other store, the rumbling of heavy trucks, and the beeping of horns. We walked through back streets selling everything from cell phones to fresh vegetables. Delicious steam carried the smell of fresh dumplings and sweet smoke drifted from the many barbeque meat skewers. Overhead, a mess of wiring tangled between buildings as if the locals had helped themselves to the electricity.

We saw the most interesting food in Guangzhou. Many restaurants have live animals in the entrance. Apart from the usual fish and seafood, we saw alligators, snakes, toads, turtles, bees fermenting in Chinese wine, and perhaps strangest of all, an emu tied up outside, dwarfing the small calf it stood next to.



We were lucky enough to be in Guangzhou while the 2010 Asian Games were on. The school managed to organise tickets for us to attend an event. The games were held in Guangzhou University City, a massive area housing ten universities, with facilities good enough to hold world class sporting events. It was very impressive.

The second week in China was devoted to travelling around the Winter Campers' villages. Going back to my village, *Sun Gai*, was surreal. It was a strange feeling to go to a place where life is so different from New Zealand, and yet know that I actually came from there. I imagined what it would be like living in *Sun Gai* had my ancestors had not decided all those years ago to take a huge risk coming to New Zealand. I also felt very privileged to live in a time where it is relatively easy for me to make this journey back. Much easier than my ancestors' journey to New Zealand.

The group's ancestral villages were unique and varied. Many of the villages now manufacture jeans as the main source of industry. Another village was once very prosperous, with large, multi-story brick and tile houses, and a massive guard tower built in past times not only to protect the village, but also as a symbol of wealth.



Further out, we visited some more agricultural based villages. Time seemed to have passed these places completely. Chickens peck at the dry dirt for insects beneath the shade of the massive leaves of banana trees. Villagers in *dǒu lì* (conical hats) tend to their neat fields of brilliant green vegetables in ways unchanged for centuries – scooping water from the wide, lazy river into buckets dangling either side from a stick across the shoulders. Ingenious motor vehicles had been assembled from random parts of other vehicles. An old horse drawn cart had been adapted so that in the place of the horse sat an exposed engine atop two front wheels attached to the cart by a long metal stalk with motorbike handles for the driver to control. A group of young children played basketball on the dusty concrete court in the centre of the village laughing and screaming as all kids do.

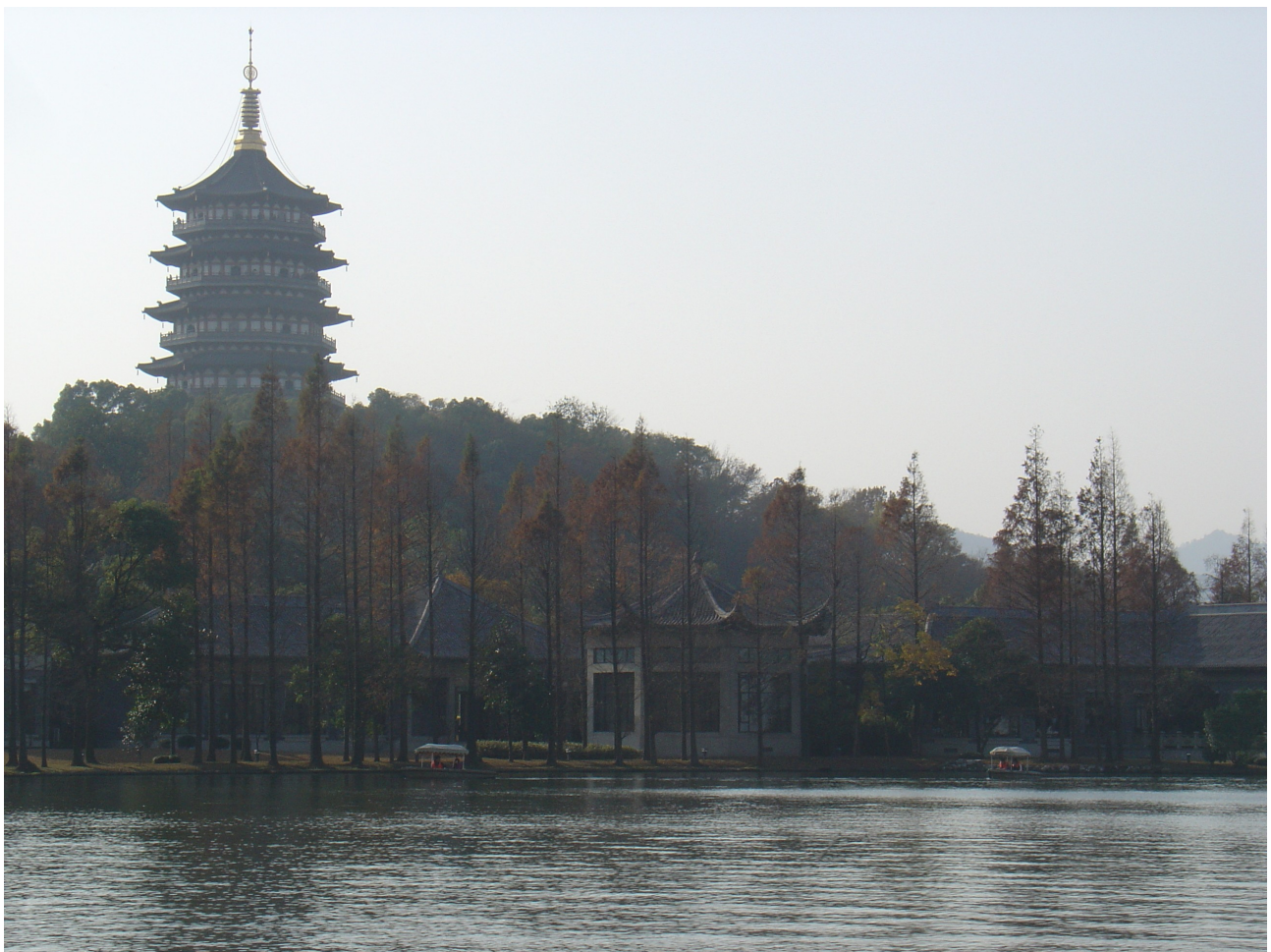
Along the way, we had many other memorable experiences. We were privileged to have lunch with a group of real life kung fu masters at a restaurant serving such delicacies as baby abalone in bitter melon soup, spicy snails still in their shells, and delicious scallops with more than a little raw garlic. The abalone would certainly be undersized in New Zealand. The kung fu masters were all keen to give speeches and *gan bei* (toast) with us, and it would have been rude not to.

After a dinner with some of the local officials who organised our village tours, we thanked them with the best haka that ten small Chinese boys could do. A massive crowd gathered and cheered for us in the dark carpark, and after it was over, the very drunk restaurant owner reciprocated with his very stiff, wobbly, middle aged kung fu demonstration. He told us we were welcome back any time.

## Hangzhou

We left Guangzhou after two weeks and travelled north to Hangzhou via airplane. Hangzhou is beautiful. We visited the Dragonwell tea villages, where terraces of deep green Longjing tea bushes grew under the clear blue sky on the steep hills surrounding the valley, where red and white Qing style buildings sat nestled between delicate trees, changing green to gold and red from Autumn.

Another day we rented some rickety old bicycles and rode around the 6 km<sup>2</sup> West lake and its Causeways. It was a truly enjoyable experience riding with no helmet, pushing through the crisp, still air, around the picturesque lake in the setting sun as afternoon turned to evening.



I will also remember Hangzhou for a particular meal. The temperature drops rapidly when the sun goes down, but luckily, on a night out, we soon warmed up when we stumbled upon a street cart selling perhaps the most delicious noodles I have ever tasted. A piece of fatty, juicy, pork belly was chopped into slices in front of us and added to oil in a smoking hot wok, along with various spices



and a generous lump of chilli. In went a massive handful of thick, fresh egg noodles and fresh green herbs such as coriander. It was finished off with boiled quail eggs and chicken nibbles on skewers plucked from huge pot of curry sauce. It was so delicious that I went back to the same place three nights in a row – a supper after an large dinner!

## Shanghai

We made our way to Shanghai by bus, stopping in Xitang water town along the way. This town was built along a series of canals. It was very peaceful to ride through the canals on a single oar *sampan* (flat bottom boat) powered by a leathery old man singing an old tune to himself.

The past and the future, East and West, all meet in Shanghai. Getting around was very easy and efficient due to the excellent subway system. Nanjing Road impressed with massive malls housing every luxury European brand, as well as countless other options. The French Concession had beautiful architecture. The Pudong financial district was amazing, with many colossal skyscrapers including the Shanghai World Financial Centre and Oriental Pearl Tower competing with each other for prestige and attention. It was a shame we did not see the view from up top as it was raining on the day we had planned. This super modern metropolis seems well on it's way to becoming the centre of the world, just as the newspapers say.



We were lucky enough to see the China Pavilion, still standing from the 2010 World Expo just a few months ago, minus the massive lines. Once again, the sheer scale that China operates on was awe inspiring. The China Pavilion is a massive structure, and inside is just as impressive. A massive animated video screen emulates a long and winding Chinese scroll painting, stretching 130 metres. Elsewhere, in an exhibition showing plans for the future, a massive indoor greenhouse full of



waterlilies and water fountains that somehow write words and characters, represent China's intentions of a green future.

The Peace Hotel Jazz Bar, along the Bund River, oozed old-school elegance with it's 1930's décor full of dark wood and cut glass chandeliers, and waiters in sharp suits carrying expensive cocktails to well dressed customers. We listened to some great music from the Old Jazz Band made up of six members whose average age is over 70.

## Beijing

While we were in Beijing, we experienced the coldest day for 30 years. We piled on the layers as we walked around the famous sights of the capital. We saw Tiananmen square, watched over by Mao's massive image. We walked over a frozen moat and through the enormous Forbidden City. It is amazing to think this enormous place was built around 600 years ago.

The Temple of Heaven was another impressive sight. The temples were beautifully, and precisely constructed without the use of nails, with immense detail. Outside, elderly locals practiced calligraphy by brushing water onto the smooth stone tiles. The water froze almost instantly, preserving the Chinese characters. Elsewhere, other elderly locals practiced morning exercises to keep warm. A group of ballroom dancers waltzed to classical music in the massive courtyard, while another group line danced in their thick jackets to techno beneath widely spaced trees.



The Great Wall was just as impressive as I thought it would be. It was indeed a challenge to climb. The uneven steps used to slow down enemies also managed to slow me down. It was very hard to get a rhythm going, and it was incredibly steep in some parts. But the view from the top was well worth the climb, and we could see extremely far through the thin, dry Beijing air.



## **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is such a busy place. I think our tour guide summed it up well when she said “If you don't work, you die”. I met some of my friends who are currently working in Hong Kong, and they echoed the same thoughts. Everyone is busy in Hong Kong, and everywhere is crowded, and space is at a premium.



Our time in Hong Kong was free time, and so the majority of our time was spent shopping. Some areas in Kowloon were so busy, it was an effort just to walk down the street. Coming out of the subway was an experience. There were however, massive sales as we had just arrived mid December, and my friend showed me some of the cool, hidden local places.

On our last day in Hong Kong, we caught the Turbojet over to Macau. The view from the ferry of the bright lights of the casinos was dazzling, and it became even more exciting once we landed. We saw the excellent Cirque du Soleil at the Venetian, and had an amazing night. I was very lucky at the tables too.

## **Thanks**

I would sincerely like to thank the New Zealand Chinese Association and Janet Joe for providing the opportunity of this amazing experience. I feel extremely fortunate to have visited my ancestral village as well as the opportunity to see greater China. I have also made new friends who I will no doubt keep in touch with for many years to come. I encourage and recommend this trip to any other young New Zealand Chinese. It is a great way to see China, find your roots, and make a whole lot of new friends.