

My China experience,

Being back now for a while the trip has sunk in and everything's back to how it was. The memories and friends I know will last for a life time. Thinking back now I still wish I was there! When we got back all the china people in Auckland hung out a great deal and we've had some great get togethers with the people coming up from Wellington. The awesome times continue!

Some of my favourite memories include:

Tai Shan when we visited some ancestral villagers. It was pretty dirty in this particular one but overall it was pretty sweet. I got to play with the villagers kids running around a volleyball court and then bought them some sweets. This was really special and I thought the kids there were really neat and interesting. I don't know if that would happen in New Zealand!

Our Kung Fu performance, we trained for over a week on the same routine! While I had difficulty at the beginning after sweating under a hazy and muggy days we had it pretty much beaten into us. The big day where we had to perform in front of a crowd came quickly coupled with the immense pressure. We first sung the national anthem and then the guys did the haka with our shirts off which went well down with the locals. Our masters were great and I'll never forget how awesome their skills were, leaping, kicking, jumping they did it all.

Our Karaoke nights were also highlights. In New Zealand I had never been to one, but we hit a couple in China. Singing together with a great bunch of people in a room until 4-5 in the morning I'll never forget. I definitely won't forget the hoarseness of our voices the next morning or the tiredness! Now I can't get away from songs on the radio that make me feel nostalgic.

The Great Wall of China was also really fantastic. I know why it's one of the great wonders of the world. You can't explain it in words or see it from pictures you really have to be there. Standing on a high point on the wall you felt on top of the world. I was lost in the serenity of the moment. It was really peaceful. It was fun racing up the steps (even though you weren't supposed to) and then getting really hot and sweaty. Unfortunately this didn't pay off when I rolled my ankle and we were an hour late for the bus!

Bartering in markets was also fun. It was such a fun but at the same time serious. I remember one time when we were buying fake jackets that they had: hidden behind walls, in the ceiling or went to get from some unknown place, when the lady grabbed me and wouldn't let me go! But all in all it was a great experience and one I'll never forget. Although the sounds of sellers yelling "DVD, PCP, USB" still ring in my head from time to time.

Going to both my ancestral villages made me realise how lucky I am! It was such an eye opener seeing people related to me was real insane! I feel real privileged and realise how lucky we are in New Zealand. Dad's village was real dirty, they had dumped all their rubbish in the river, I don't think they had any concept of waste management. My cousin's house was really westernised and Janet (our tour guide)

thought they didn't have the ancestral shrine because the family hadn't donated any money to the village in the past. The actual site of the ancestral house was washed away from the 1951 floods which was a shame. It was pretty awkward with the cousins because of the language barrier which was frustrating. Janet was great finding the links and what not as I didn't think we'd go to Goong Goong's village because I thought you had lost contact but it was a last minute, village I think. It was a bumpy ride there, but it was well worth it. I met my Goong Goong's cousins son, sorry to say but his cousin passed away recently. Although his 93 year old wife is still alive which was really cool.

I could go on forever about the great times I had but then I would be writing screeds and screeds of stuff. What I can say is that I'll never forget this wonderful time I had and it will always hold a special memory in my heart.

Brendan