

Guangdong Winter Camp 2007:

The Guangdong Winter Camp 2007 was such a great experience. I have seen and done so many things that I would of never done if I had come on my own to China. From the time I was in Auckland Airport meeting all the Aucklander's, then meeting everyone else in Sydney which was a nice time to get to know everyone. The flight over to Hong Kong was fine just the five-hour wait at Hong Kong Airport was abit tiring and long, I was absolutely exhausted. I found the domestic flight nice and short though. Once in Guangzhou it was nice to have time to relax and clean ourselves up.

In Foshan we had the opportunity of learning Kungfu at the Huang Feihong academy. Kungfu lessons were fun but sore, I really enjoyed it the teacher and students were really nice and helpful. This was a great experience and one thing I would of never done or had the opportunity if I had not come on this trip. In the evening we attended mandarin lessons, which were held in the teachers hotel room. The mandarin lessons were quite helpful, I found it was abit better to learn when we split into two separate groups. Cindy the teacher was really nice and very helpful. The shopping phrases were the most helpful, it helped me in battering.

The Karaoke on the last night was heaps of fun! I really enjoyed it, it was a huge room I've never seen that in New Zealand before, and it was a nice place. I learnt how to play this Chinese dice game, which was heaps of fun. However the boys got abit out of control, I think a limit on the alcohol should have been enforced.

Leaving Foshan it was disappointing to hear that the wrong bus had come as we had to wait a long time in the hotel lobby and that time was wasted for the day, which was a shame. Once the bus had arrived we departed Foshan to make our way to the ancestral village part of the trip. The Ancestral Villages were heaps of fun, I learnt heaps about the way people live, the stories behind each village and how each village qualified for an ancestral temple, how it was a point of contact point where the community gathered for weddings etc. It was really interesting to see Janet asking the local people in the villages if they knew such and such a person and to see all the pieces all fit in. It was awesome to see how some people found relatives they had never known about. On the Sunday, because the officials don't work on Sundays we were taken to a cultural park. I really enjoyed going to Magnificent China and Minority Village Cultural Park. I learnt heaps about all the different minority villages, I saw all the different types of houses and costumes etc. I really liked the miniature China it was really neat, and interesting to see. We watched several shows, I loved the costumes, however the sound was abit loud at times though. I thought they were all really well done, from sound, lighting, stage set up everything was really well done and well worth watching.

On our first day in Guangzhou we were taken to the local memorial park to learn about the history of Guangzhou. I thought the memorial Park was nice although a little bit boring, however it was good to learn about the history of Guangzhou, the five Ram statue was interesting. The Chen Ancestral Temple was really big and really well maintained. I really enjoyed having a look at the model house, I saw the old-fashioned living room, art room etc it was all really interesting. On our last day we spent the day at the local

Technical University where our Mandarin teacher, Cindy teaches. The Technical University was really cool, I really enjoyed the calligraphy class even though I'm not good at art. But was heaps of fun! I also enjoyed the game of basketball between us and the university team, the boys did the haka before the game and had bought the same uniform the night before, but sadly they lost. However the girls won their game!! I loved meeting the students they were all so nice and they spoke quite good english. We also had the opportunity to meet groups from Australia and Guatemala which was also nice.

We then said our goodbyes to our much loved tour guides of the past two weeks and headed to the northern part of China where the weather was colder, ranging from 5-12 degrees. We arrived in Hangzhou where we experienced the Westlake cruise and were able to rent some bikes and bike around the lake for a couple of hours, we also visited several temples, a tea village and silk factory. I found this city to be really beautiful with all the trees and flowers, we also heard all the love stories surrounding the lake which all ended in tragedy.

We then travelled further north visiting the Wuzhen Watertown where we went on small riverboats down the canal, which was fun. From there we continued towards Shanghai where we visited a history museum, more temples, went on a night cruise and watched an amazing acrobatic show.

There was a lot planned in Beijing we visited the temple of heaven, Tiananmen square, Mao's moseleum, forbidden city, went on the Hutong tour where we went on rickshaws which was fun, summer palace, Ming tombs, sacred way which was really neat to see and the much awaited great wall of china, this was amazing to see how they built it and how steep it was, it was definitely a good climb. This is where we learnt heaps about china's history and visited places that I never even knew about. This part of the trip was awesome as we learnt so much about Chinas history although it was dampened slightly by the freezing cold temperatures.

Overall this trip has been an eye opening experience and I am so thankful to have this opportunity to go on it. I have learnt a lot about my own culture and the people of china, it has all been so wonderful and I would recommend it to anyone who is considering going in the future. It was really great to have Janet there with us her vast knowledge of everything from history to the best place to go buy whatever you needed. We were all very well looked after and are grateful that we had someone that posses so much knowledge guiding us on this tour. After this trip I have learnt to appreciate my culture more, as I have seen so much and learnt a lot about the history and culture of China.