

Trading off half of my NZ summer for the chilling winter of China was one of the best decisions I have made yet. Accompanied by 25 other gorgeous looking New Zealanders we set off for the wonderous land of China.

We began our magical trip in the city of Foshan at the Wong Fei Hung Academy where we practiced the ancient art of kung fu for five full on days. It was definitely a great way to get to know everyone bringing out the fun in all of us and performing what we have learnt for the locals was also very enjoyable. As a plus we also got onto local TV and the newspaper which was also exciting. We had classes in mandarin which were helpful especially in the marketplace, Chinese calligraphy and playing basketball against students from the technical college.

Having this opportunity to learn some of the many aspects of our Chinese culture was really special, however what made it more interesting was how we were able to add our kiwi panache to everything we did, introducing and sharing our culture with the locals as they shared theirs with us.

What was really heart warming was visiting our ancestral villages. We were welcomed into people's home as if they had known us for all their lives. And as we continued to visit more villages the more people shared their different views of how wonderful it was to see their own villages, to learn where their roots were from and how our ancestors used to live. Seeing the villages in Guangzhou and the houses where my grandparents were born and raised myself made me feel truly blessed to be in New Zealand and thankful for my ancestor's hard work to give us a better life and the opportunities I have today.

Once we started the touring part of the trip in northern China we visited places such as the Great Wall which was a wonderful sight, conquering it was another story. The treacherous climb was worth it once we saw the marvelous view of the forever stretching wall across the beautiful landscape and the countryside of Beijing. In the evenings we marveled at the artistic and unique Chinese performances where the performers seemed to do the impossible and with such ease.

We bartered hard at markets just to save a few kiwi dollars on the already low priced goods, shopping until exhaustion throughout markets and malls pack full of people and items ranging from formal attire to sporting equipment. And as night fell and everyone all rested up, we began to explore the nightlife of China and how different it was to back home, meeting many friendly people in clubs and dancing the night away.

Going through photos of the many weeks we spent together, I never realised how many activities and sightseeing we really did on this magical trip, meeting and visiting many places, doing so much in such a short period of time. It makes you wonder to yourself if you really spent the time to appreciate it all at the time.

Now looking back I guess the worst part of the trip was the sad goodbyes at the end after spending 5 great weeks with many new friends, But we shall make sure to keep in touch with each other, and definitely catching up with one another at our 1st reunion at this years easter sports tournament. I would also like to thank you Janet for organising such a wonderful trip and without you I'm sure I'd be lost somewhere round Yau Ma Tei station.

Goodbye China, 'til we meet again, you stay beautiful...