

NZCA China Winter Camp Report

By Stephanie Young

Before coming on the China trip, I have been on the process of discovering myself with who I am, and the kind of person that I have come to be. From being on a journey as part of the NZCA Chinese leadership camp and other small community jobs, it has taught me quite a few things about myself, and where I stand within this society and culture.

Yet again I took another big step, more directly within my culture, the China Winter Camp tour. It has been an amazing eye opener and has taught me even more about the culture while being over there. Just being there shows us how appreciated we are living in New Zealand, though it has been an inspiration to learn about the culture and all the history that has been involved within it.

Learning from this experience, we learnt the Art of Kung Fu fighting. Practicing in less than three days, we ended up performing our routine to passing locals through the temple and different people that are touring at the time. It's definitely been a great way in achieving a goal, working hard in that short amount of time is something that will always be worthwhile and satisfying in the end.

Another experience was visiting all the villages around the Guangzhou area. Having a look at everyone else's villages is quite amazing, each place is different but is quite similar in many ways. Some villages are abandoned and some are still being looked after, they have been well protected over the years. Going back to these villages is like discovering our own roots. This is where my grandparents came from, and all that history goes way back to my ancestors. Taking us back there shows us the environment and the way that they used to live there. To me it reminds me of living on a farm, the people living there are always busy, attending to their crops and chores they do around the villages. Another interesting experience is the interaction and communication with the Chinese students at their school called Guangzhou Technical College. Spending a day with them and talking to them with little English was really interesting to learn and get to know. Their lifestyle in China is a lot different, they work really hard with the subjects they do and they are passionate with achieving what they want. The students there are nice and friendly and fun to be around with, and it was nice to learn about their experiences of life and school.

Since being in China, I have noticed a huge change from our country in New Zealand. China is a lot dirtier and the air is always murky. There's rubbish everywhere, traffic is overpopulated and polluted. Also people move along so quickly, where the roads become a nightmare to cross, it's completely crazy and uncontrollable. Just watching the people has been an eye opener. From the disturbing habits they have, to how they find ways to earn money, especially with beggars. But besides all that, this is what it would be like to live in China, a whole other country with a different culture and a whole lot of different rules.

In spite of the way China looks, my favourite places would have to be Hangzhou and Beijing.

Hangzhou is the city of Love, being a place of romance and love stories that are told from certain areas of the city and from carvings on rooftops. It's a very nice and peaceful place, which is surrounded by a beautiful lake and attractive scenery, the greatest part was bike riding around the lake, it's very peaceful and relaxing, and it's lovely looking at the scenery.

Beijing was interesting as most of China's history was there, like the Tiananmen Square, The Forbidden city, Summer Palace, Ming Tombs and the Sacred Way, but the highlight of the trip would have to be the Great Wall, which was just so stunning to see, and the weather was perfect when we were up there. The part that we climbed was very peaceful and just seemed so relaxing when we reached the top, just made it so worthwhile being up there, and admiring the view was very pleasant.

The concerts we went to watch were absolutely stunning, was amazed how gorgeous and beautiful everything looked, and how much all the performers put so much work into it to make it look so perfect. I liked the performances at the Magnificent China and Minority village Cultural Park, and the one in Beijing the Legend of Kung Fu show. I liked how most of the performances were really graceful and had an amazing feel to the piece, and had a very nice story to follow, it gave it that much of an impact and an understanding of what the piece is about.

Hong Kong was also great, being there for the first time made it quite an interesting experience, though I thought it would be different to China, to me it felt the same, just with a few more people crammed in one part of the city. Was great to explore the different islands around Hong Kong like Lamma Island, Lantau Island, and Hong Kong Island, exploring and experiencing what each place was like, at least knowing what places were more peaceful and which ones were busy.

I think that this has been one of the most inspiring and engaging trips that I've been on, it has opened up my eyes through a new world that has explored a culture that I never really knew much of before. To be able to see yourself as the person you really are shows us how much you respect and understand the lifestyle of two different places.

This is definitely something worthwhile and meaningful, that you will always remember forever, and it's something great to be a part of and to learn from.