

NZCA China Winter Camp 2008

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Deciding to go on the NZCA Winter Camp was the best thing I ever did. The greatest four weeks of my life were filled with numerous games of scum, large bags of crackers, noodle parties, flashing lights, squatties, making lifelong friends and going to the arcades. This report is summary of my favourite moments in China. Moments I want to remember forever.

Kung Fu.

Kung Fu was the best thing about Foshan. It is such a controlled, precise art which requires mental and physical determination. It uses a lot of muscles I don't usually access, so standing in new positions for long periods of times was very difficult. At the time I was quite reluctant to enjoying the three days we spent doing Kung Fu, but by the end of it I was sad to do the final performance and farewell the masters. They were so patient and we were so ill disciplined.

Dad's Dad's (Gong Gong) Village.

The village visit was amazing. Mine was the first village we visited, and I can't believe how much it affected me. I stepped off the bus and found the Yee archway from the photo Mum had given me before I left for China. It was a maze trying to find the exact house, but when we did, it looked exactly like the photos I had seen of it. The door had been broken down, and inside the house was just so overwhelming. Nothing really prepares you for sights you think you have all figured out. I thought I would just be seeing what I had seen already through Krystle's, Catherine's and Mum and Dad's photos of the house, but actually physically being there is so different. To think that Gong Gong was born in that very room seventy odd years ago was an awing thought in itself. It was quite emotional for me, seeing the house that my Gong Gong and his family had spent their early days. The shrines were still there, there were baskets and umbrellas hanging on the walls and there was still carpet draped on the over hangings near the ceiling. I kept trying to imagine the life they must have led by looking through the fallen objects and dusty furniture which was still in tact.

Seeing this abandoned house, which has not been lived in for a good sixty years, has made this trip worthwhile. I am so glad I saw Gong Gong's village because not only did it help me gain some historical family knowledge, it opened my eyes to a world I now want to know more about.

Mum's Dad's (Gong Gong) Village.

The visit to Mum's Dad's village was a completely different experience compared to visiting Dad's Dad's village. Charlotte and I didn't really know what to expect, but when we arrived, we knew whatever was to come would be good. And it really was a fun experience. We were greeted at the village gates by our third cousin, Wei, and he showed us the remains of our ancestor's house as well as the new apartments our family own and the village temple and lake. It was awesome being able to talk to relatives actually living in the village, unlike my last village visit.

It was amazing to see the village temple, which is where Mum's parents got married, and it was really cool to hear some of the stories Wei and his family shared with us about our ancestors, such as the story about our great great

grandfather who was a very high up official in the Chinese Army and was eventually assassinated by robbers.

Magnificent China and Minority Village Cultural Park.

This place was in Shenzhen. Shenzhen is a special economic zone, and it was a requirement to show your passport at the border of the city on entry. The best thing about this park was the shows we saw and the activities we did. We saw a fashion/dancing show, a dancing/fireworks show, a horse fighting show, and we also played archery and rode on the flying fox. I really wish we could have spent more time in Shenzhen.

Visiting the Chinese School.

We spent an entire day at a Chinese School in Guangzhou, and it was a blast! We did Calligraphy, Chinese Painting, played sports with the students and had a concert put on for us. I really enjoyed our time at the school.

Hangzhou.

The best thing about Hangzhou? Bike riding around the beautiful lake. Minus the sore butt afterwards. I didn't exactly have the smoothest experience, being unlucky enough to choose the one bike which crapped out halfway through the course and ending up with Greg having to give me his bike while he suffered with my broken bike, but it was still a lot of fun anyway!

Shanghai.

Shanghai Dumplings. Don't go to Shanghai and not try the shanghai dumplings, because they are unquestionably what I associate Shanghai with now. The insides are filled with liquid and meat, and there is a special technique to eating them. Definitely a must do while in Shanghai.

Beijing.

Beijing was so cold! But the experiences we had outweighed the chilly weather. Wow, where do I begin? Beijing was the most impressive, and the place we did most of our sightseeing. We visited the Temple of Heaven (where we all fought to stand on the centre stone), Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, a Jade Factory, Ming Tombs, Sacred Way (where I got stuck on a stone elephant), the Olympic Village (which was the biggest highlight for me), the Great Wall (which was so cold there was ice on the steps), rode on rickshaws, and visited three markets where we had so much fun bartering in the end I only bought stuff so I could barter with the shopkeepers!

Hong Kong.

I could definitely see myself spending more time in Hong Kong! Highlight was definitely Disneyland. We were there from opening until closing, and boy was it worth it! Every kid's dream is to go to Disneyland, and now I was fulfilling that wish. Really is the happiest place on Earth, no doubt about it.

Didn't do as much shopping in Hong Kong as I thought I would. Travelling by MTR and the star ferry was new. The octopus cards are such a genius invention! I have some family in Hong Kong, and spending time with them was great. Having my cousin act as a personal tour guide was both amusing and fun.

The Final Word.

To future China Trippers I would highly recommend learning some chinese before going to China. I feel I was at quite a disadvantage when spoken to by the locals and the relatives at my village, and not being able to respond in their tongue.

I am so glad I went on the NZCA China Winter Camp 2008. I will cherish all the new bonds made during the trip; friendships which made the four weeks I spent in China the most memorable experience ever. Thanks heaps to Janet Joe. She was so patient, so knowledgeable and we would not have enjoyed the trip nearly as much without her as our camp leader.