

Winter Camp 2009

I really enjoyed the month I spent in China. I made some really good friends, and saw some really cool things. It started off with a trip to Splendid China on the first day when we were in Shenzhen. I've already been before with my family but I think we missed half of it last time so it was good being able to see some new stuff. We also saw a couple of shows that night - the first one was pretty average but I really liked the second one.

After Shenzhen we went on to Guangzhou where we stayed at a vocational school. The living quarters weren't too flash but the food was really good and it was a neat experience. We also had a few Kung Fu lessons. I think I would've enjoyed these more had I been better at it, but as soon as I almost got the hang of some of the stances the master would move onto some different ones. However I did enjoy the Kung Fu more than the language classes. The first bit was ok because we got to see what everyone's Chinese names were, but then she moved onto stuff that was too advanced for most of us and it just got boring because I didn't know what she was talking about. One night we got to go on a nighttime boat cruise on the Pearl river which I really enjoyed. While we were in the area we also visited everyone's ancestral villages, it was pretty cool seeing where everyone's ancestors used to live. I still have family living in China so I went to stay with them for a night, it was good to be able to catch up with my family as I hadn't seen most of them in about 4 years. They also took me shopping and I bought a lot of stuff.

After we left the school we went to Taishan for a couple of nights. The hotel we stayed in was definitely the best by far - the shower was massive!! During the day we went to visit some more ancestral villages, and at night we had a few drinks in our hotel room and went to Freedom City - the bar behind the hotel which had a bouncy dancefloor and test tube shots. Also there was a McDonald's just behind the bar so it was the perfect setup. The second night we went out we saw some transvestites dancing on the stage and that was when I realised it was probably a gay bar. It would have been cool if we could have stayed there a few more nights but I guess there wasn't much for us to do in Taishan. When we got back to Guangzhou we had a free day. Most of us ended up going to see the 5 goat statue then went shopping on Beijing Rd. The next day we went back to the school for the 30 year anniversary celebration. The whole thing was really boring because they only spoke in Mandarin and I couldn't understand any of it. However the Kung Fu students did a show which was really cool.

After Guangzhou we went to Hangzhou where we went for a boat ride on West Lake, which was quite nice, and a bike ride around the lake, which was ok except for going over the bridges when you would have to get a mean runup because the bikes didn't have gears. We also saw another show - I thought this show was definitely the best out of all the shows we saw. The hotel that we stayed at here was cool - we got to wear these cool kimono things, and the instant noodles from room service only cost 5RMB. From Hangzhou we went to Xitang which has a canal going through the town. All I can remember from this place is that the restaurant where we had lunch was AMAZING. When we were in Shanghai the weather was quite bad so we didn't get to go up to the Pearl Tower which I was quite disappointed about. The tailors market was good, but I don't think we got enough time there. We probably could've stayed there for a few more hours instead of going to Nanjing Pedestrian St because it just had the same shops Beijing Rd in Guangzhou had, and we had already shopped enough there. We also went on a nighttime boat cruise here as well and it was very pretty, but the boat had a very loud horn which was not cool. We saw an acrobatic show which I fell asleep in but what I saw looked really cool.

Beijing was really cold. It was annoying having to take all your layers off every time you

went into a hotel or restaurant, and then having to put them all back on again when you left. I'd already seen most of the sights in Beijing, so it wasn't anything new for me really, except for the part of the Great Wall that we went to. It was a really steep climb but once you got to the top it was a much nicer view than the part that I went to a couple of years ago.

The last 3 nights in Hong Kong were fun. I didn't realise everything in Hong Kong was so much more expensive than China though. We spent one of the days at Ocean Park which had some pretty cool rides. That day we had to get on the Subway during rush hour and it was crazy the amount of people that were there, so I would recommend avoiding it if possible. It would have been nice if we had been able to get together for one last meal, since Hong Kong was all free time it was hard to get everyone together since everyone wanted to do different things.

So that was my WinterCamp experience. I almost decided not to go, but I'm so glad I changed my mind. It was a incredible experience with awesome new people with whom I'm sure I will be friends with for the rest of my life.

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