

NZCA China Winter Camp Report 2009

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I was never that keen on going on the China Trip but it ended up being the best decision I have ever made. I had the best month of my life filled with nothing but excitement every day.

Shenzhen

Shenzhen was the first stop on our tour and it was a complete culture shock. It had been a few years since my last trip to China and I had completely forgotten about the crazy driving and packed streets. Our first day was spent at the miniature world which was a good place for all of us to relax after a long day of travelling the day before. The miniature world was interesting because it gave us a chance to see all the major attractions of China in one place as we were unable to see all of them on our trip.

Guangzhou

Guangzhou was the village visiting part of the trip which was really enjoyable and interesting. I went to my dad's dad (yeh-yeh), dad's mum (ma-ma) and mums dads (gong-gong). I was amazed at how unique each village was. I had been to my yeh-yeh's village before but it was great to be able to go back and see it again with more interest and understanding of my heritage than last-time when I was younger. It was a strange to see so many people in the villages cutting loose threads off jeans as jobs. My mama's village was so different from my yeh-yehs village; for starters there were way less people around. The house was two storeys and all the delicate artwork on the walls was amazing. The house was full of people sewing Abercrombie & Fitch jumpers which was a real culture shock because it had never occurred to me that a product like that could be made in a place such as my ma-ma's old home. My gong-gongs village was again so different. There was a market with people selling everything from books to fruit and veggies. I didn't go inside the house but I was astonished to see the changes that had occurred in a year since I had been there. There are now a lot of new buildings which weren't there a short time ago.

The school that we stayed at for 5 nights was a totally different, once in a lifetime experience for all 23 of us. At first the school wasn't exactly our first choice of accommodation but like many of the others I ended up loving it there. The beds weren't exactly something that we enjoyed sleeping on especially after doing kung fu lessons, mornings were always tough because of our sore strained bodies. The lessons of kung fu, mandarin and calligraphy were interesting and fun. I liked how we had the freedom to hang out at the school to do things such as play soccer and basketball and we were also close enough to check out the local shopping area. It was awesome because it gave us a chance to get to know each other better and it was the only time we would get to relax outside in the heat before venturing to colder cities.

Taishan

Taishan is famous to all the china trippers because of its awesome bouncing dance floor night club. It was great that our hotel was right by the club which saved us travel time and it was easy to get back if you started to get tired. Not to mention that the rooms were huge which made it easy for us to have our group gatherings every night.

Hangzhou

Hangzhou is beautiful and it was our first taste of cold weather. Everywhere we went the scenery was amazing and our hotel was situated in a good place because we were a short walk away from the Westlake which is Hangzhou's most famous attraction. I particularly enjoyed the bike ride around the Westlake as it gave us a chance to have some fun and take in all the scenery. We visited many other attractions in Hangzhou which were a boat cruise along the Westlake, General Yue Fei's memorial, the Ling Yin Temple and watched a show about the Song Dynasty. We also went to try the famous Hangzhou green tea where we learnt to "eat" the tea.

Xitang

Xitang was a water town that we stopped off in on our way to Shanghai. First we went on a boat ride through the little town and it was fun to be on the boat ride and very strange because we noticed that a lot of the buildings are empty. We visited a button museum and it was fascinating watching two men make buttons using shells. Lunch was a new experience, it didn't look too appetising but it definitely tasted good.

Shanghai

Shanghai was a whole new encounter again, much busier and there was an even colder temperature. We visited a silk museum where they showed us the process of collecting silk from the silkworm which was then transformed into many different products. We went to the Shanghai historical museum situated in the T.V Tower which showed Shanghai streets through the ages. I really enjoyed standing along the bund hearing stories about Shanghai's past and seeing the old historical buildings that had been set up by people from other countries. Unfortunately we were unable to look at them close up because of all the renovations that were taking place to get ready for expo '10 which is being held in Shanghai. A trip to the tailors market was very new and exciting. I can't believe that you can get anything you want made up and it only takes a few days to make. We couldn't wait to get back and have a fashion show in the corridor of our hotel. We also went to the Yu Gardens in the Old Shanghai Bazaar and watched an acrobatic show. On our free day in Shanghai we took a ride on the maglev train to the Shanghai airport which goes as fast as 430kmph. All of us girls had a thing for shopping so of course we had to do that on our free day. We went to the underground markets at the science and technology building. The market was huge and we all bought heaps of shoes, clothes and accessories. It was amazing seeing this whole market world underground that stretched so far we didn't make it to the end.

Beijing

Beijing was by far my favourite place to go to. I loved listening to the stories about the emperors and empresses. On our first day we went to the temple of heaven and then went for dinner at this funny restaurant which had performances going while we ate. The next day we went to Tiananmen Square and my favourite which is the Forbidden City. Beijing is so cold it was tough walking around in the cold and wind but the sights made it well worth it. The Great Wall was amazing. It was a hard but awesome climb, stopping along the way to take photos of the view. Other places that we visited were the summer palace, the Olympic village, tea tasting, the Ming tombs and a jade factory. The summer palace was beautiful; I enjoyed the walk along the path by the water underneath the amazing architecture. On our free day a group of us went back to the Forbidden City because a lot of it had been blocked

off on the other day that we went. I'm so glad that we went back because it gave us time to look at everything at our own pace. We also got to see old relics that are housed in museums along the sides of the city which we didn't get to see the first time. Our hotel was perfectly situated 5 minutes walk away from the silk markets where we spent many nights shopping. I enjoyed the bargaining to try and get the best deals we could.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong was awesome although I have been with family before I had a totally different experience with a bunch of friends my own age. It was much more relaxed because we had no set itinerary which was good. On the first day we went to Lantau Island via cable car to see Tian Tian Buddha. The cable car rides were so much fun. On the second day we went to Ocean Park which was awesome. It was also the last time that we would all be together as a group before going home. The best parts of Ocean Park were the log ride, the pandas and the aquarium. Our hotel was a short walk away from the three main markets which was great so that we could get the last of our shopping buzz out of us before going home. Since we had gotten the knack of catching the subway we could easily get around such as going to Causeway Bay and getting out to Lantau Island. Sadly this was the last stop on our amazing month long trip and it ended way too soon. I wish we could have had a few more days in Hong Kong since there is so much to explore there.

Overall, I had the best time of my life and would like to thank everyone that was involved in the planning, preparation and overall running of the entire tour. I have so many unforgettable memories and made 22 great new friends. The trip was absolutely amazing!!