

NZCA Winter Camp Report

Before embarking I had massive expectations building, the anticipation and excitement for this epic journey in China. We arrived in Hong Kong and travelled to Shenzhen where we went to Splendid China. The miniatures built our excitement to see the real thing and we had our first taste of the style of performances we were going to see.



Epic

Visiting my ancestors' hometowns Sungai and Gualing was really eye-opening. The villagers were all very friendly to us. We all had a good time at everyone's villages enjoying the simple life. It was hard to believe that my great-granddads' once lived there and that I was now at the same place several generations on. Also more astonishing was that I found out that my great-granddad was neighbours to some of the others' great-granddads!



Sungai - Dad's Granddads place



Gualing - Mum's Granddad's place

The Guanzhou Overseas Vocational School was fun. I enjoyed the Shaolin Kung-Fu lead by Master Zhang. It was a good introduction to the culture of Kung-Fu plus a healthy workout to start the day. I was amazed the Master Zhang could teach us so much in only three days.



Shaolin Kung Fu

The Chinese lessons were very difficult for us because the speed was so quick. None of us could read Chinese characters either, so we needed to focus on the Pinyin. I think that Li Laoshi did the best she could with the two days we had with her. If we were going to learn Mandarin seriously, we would need much more time.



Chinese Lessons

I really enjoyed performing the Haka for the school, definitely one of the highlights of the trip. Especially since everyone was going hard. Too bad we didn't get a video of it.

Hangzhou, the “Paris” of China, was spectacular. It was our first adjustment to the colder climate and change in pace to the time spend in the Guangdong province. We spend our time cruising on the lake, biking around the lake, and getting sucked in by a crafty tea seller to spend loads of cash on their Long Jing (Green) Tea. To be fair, it did taste amazing.



Westlake, Hangzhou

After Hangzhou we went to Xitang “The Venice of China”, one of the many villages located on the Great Canal. The food here was amazing and the city architecture had a nice feel to it.



Xitang

Shanghai was one of my favourite cities. The buildings were amazing (something I would like to work on after I finish my degree) contrasting from the Yu Gardens traditional style and the modern CBD skyscrapers. Also going on the Maglev was a good experience travelling at 431 kmph the 30.5 km trip takes only 8 minutes. Shopping in Shanghai was really good too, most of us bought tailored suits. It was also fun bartering at the markets and using the metro system.



MagLev Train

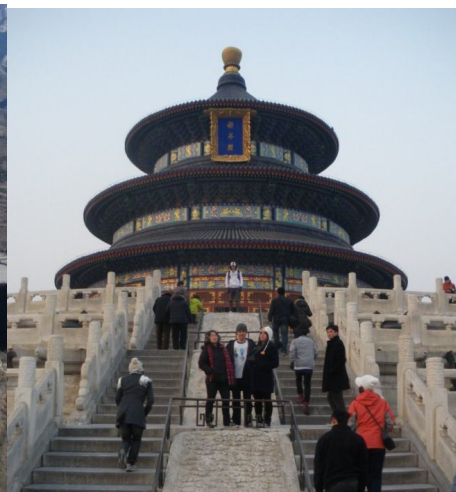


Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower

The first thing that you notice when arriving in Beijing in winter is the temperature. Never having experience a negative temperature before it is hard to prepare. At only negative six degrees your feet freeze if you happen to be wearing cotton socks in Chucks, also lined leather gloves may save you in Shanghai or Hangzhou, but do nothing in Beijing. I would advised future travellers to Beijing to bring thermal undies, and woollen socks, they work wonders.



The Great Wall



Temple of Heaven

Beijing was really a cultural haven. We visited the Temple of Heaven, Tiananmen Square, The Forbidden Palace, The Great Wall, The Ming Tombs and the Summer Palace. The scale of the construction is immense by today's standards. I wondered how much more impressive the structures would have been in the years it was being built. The Great wall was much steeper than I had anticipated it was basically climbing a mountain so you ought to be fit before going, especially hard with ice on the wall and the cold air.

Hong Kong was another favourite city. Despite being stuck at a metro during peak hour traffic which, I might add, is complete chaos. Sight seeing was really good. We went to the Buddha on the hill via gondola. Note to those who may want to go there also via gondola, go crystal cabin! Not because of the glass floor but because you won't have to wait in a queue for over an hour!



Ocean Park was fun, minus the ice slide, which was the biggest waste of 5 minutes ever. The actual rides were really fun though Mine Train, Log Flume, the Abyss and The Dragon. The dolphin show was really good too, I really wanted to ride a dolphin after watching that show.



Hong Kong - Avenue of Stars by night

It was unfortunate that we didn't make it to Macau but I guess that leaves me something to do when I return to China.

The month I spent travelling with new friends was one of the best things I've done in my short life. It was a real down buzz leaving China and I miss it a lot. I definitely want to go back again to learn the language and see more of China.

I would like to thank the NZCA for providing me with the opportunity to immerse myself our amazing Chinese culture.

David Ting
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