

2012 China Winter Camp Report

Guangzhou

Exploring the city in general was a huge highlight as I got to experience first-hand what it is like to live in China today without all of the glamour and cover of the movies. The Pearl River night cruise was a particular highlight as I got to see all of the amazing buildings in Guangzhou and the difference in architecture between New Zealand and here. I took a boat load of pictures which I will show to my family at home and I'm also sure to treasure them for many years to come. That cruise is a definite must for all who are bound to come to Guangzhou.

Another highlight was meeting the local students both during the handicraft and also during the English speaking class. Although being tired from Kung fu I found that something to look forward to while I was staying at the school. I particularly enjoyed meeting the local students and getting involved in the activities which were set out. While making the flowers I learnt a lot about the students and how alike we are although we may, at times, seem worlds apart. For future campers it may be beneficial to include more than a couple of night classes with the local students because I found that a lot of both the students and campers enjoyed it. And during those few hours a lot of friends were made.

The mandarin classes were also quite good and just long enough to pick up a few things for the trip. I felt more time could have been spent doing calligraphy and painting. Both of which were interesting and I wish to learn more about. The lessons given, however, do provide a good starting point for me to go after the trip and expand my knowledge of the China culture learn more about Chinese calligraphy and painting. During that day the campers played basketball with a school team. Disappointment had struck when we had lost despite leading all through the rest of the game until there was about 5 minutes left on the clock. The campers had played hard but it was a good game overall and I'm really glad we got the opportunity to play with the school team.

A huge part of the Guangzhou trip revolved around the ancestral villages which by far were a stand out event for me as I learnt about my culture and heritage which gave me an insight into myself. Of course the 2 villages which had a huge impact on me were my own villages from my Yaya and Gungung.

In my Yaya's village I was fortunate enough to have my own Yaya flight out especially from New Zealand to show my sister and I around the village. The ancestral hall was amazing for me. My sister and I got a video and tried to capture it all in the pen of picture although it is insufficient to the real thing and I really liked having my Yaya there to show my sister and I where he grew up and his village. There was also a joy and pride in my Yaya's face as he told the other campers about his village and his own expansive knowledge about the village and also about all the other villages around the area. There was also a sense of pride in myself when we saw the village and while I toured the village with my sister and my Yaya.

My Gungung's village came as a surprise to my sister and I as we were not expecting to go to my Gungung's village at all because we only know the name and not its location. My Gungung's village

was completely different. But when we were told I was over joyed to have the opportunity to go. While we were there we met my granddads cousin. For me it was an emotional experience as I had missed my Granddad's funeral and so I was able I learn more about my Gunggung while I was there. I was over joyed to see a relative and also felt extremely fortunate to have an opportunity like this. My sister and I again tried to capture it all on film to be able to take back to our parents and show them everything we had done, although the emotion and joy could not be capture on film.

It was a breath taking experience and I hope to go back to the villages again one day with my family and have another look around. Thanks to both Jessie and Janet who I always see so busy and continuously on the phone trying to sort everything out. They made it a smooth yet enriching experience for me and also the rest of the campers. Their efforts did not go unnoticed.

At the end of all of the villages we got to go to Shenzhen Splendid China & Folk Village which was very interesting as we got to see miniatures of the famous places in China which we would not be able to see and although they were miniatures of temples, places and scenery, the park itself was quite big. In the cultural China there were more interactive activities. Throughout the day there were shows to see and at night we got to see a show at the park which was entertaining and included well-choreographed acts with a Chinese flair. We also got to go to a building full of market place type shops in which we could bargain and haggle all day long. It was interesting to see who obtained the best merchandise and at what price they got it at.

The Beijing Pedestrian Street was where the best shopping in Guangzhou was. It allowed the campers to get geared up with the clothes which they require for Beijing and Shanghai. There could have definitely been a lot more time allowed in the street which could have easily been spent going through more shops. My sister and I, like many other campers, only had time to go to one shop and had limited time to try things on and decide what to purchase.

We also went to Yuexiu Park where we got to see the Five Ram statue and also learn the history behind it. Being one of Guangzhou's most famous sites was something to marvel at.



Shanghai

For me personally Shanghai was the most exciting portion of the trip as it was much busier than Guangzhou and there were unlimited opportunities to sightsee and also to shop. It was also made more convenient by having most of the sights of Shanghai near shops. And by spending 5 nights in Shanghai we were allowed to see all the things desired.

By the time that Shanghai came around everyone was tired and sleeping on the bus was becoming essential. The first day on the tour was very exciting though and by having a day on the tour bus allowed me to be able to see more sights in a smaller amount of time. First was the Zhujiajiao water town where we stayed until after lunch. The town looked fairly old and was filled with side shops. There were also opportunities to look at temples throughout the town at an extra cost of about 10 Yuan. We also got to ride in the river boats which took us down stream. This was definitely a great photo opportunity as the landscape and difference in the architecture set it apart from anywhere which we had been.

Next was the silk factory where we were able to purchase many silk products at a good price. The products ranged from quilts to scarves, pillow cases to shirts. For this I would recommend bring a bit of cash on you unless you don't mind paying with a card if you were like me and wanted to spend a bit bring things back as the cost can accumulate quite quickly here. This was also a good place to get some presents back for the family as it cost 220 Yuan for a silk scarf.

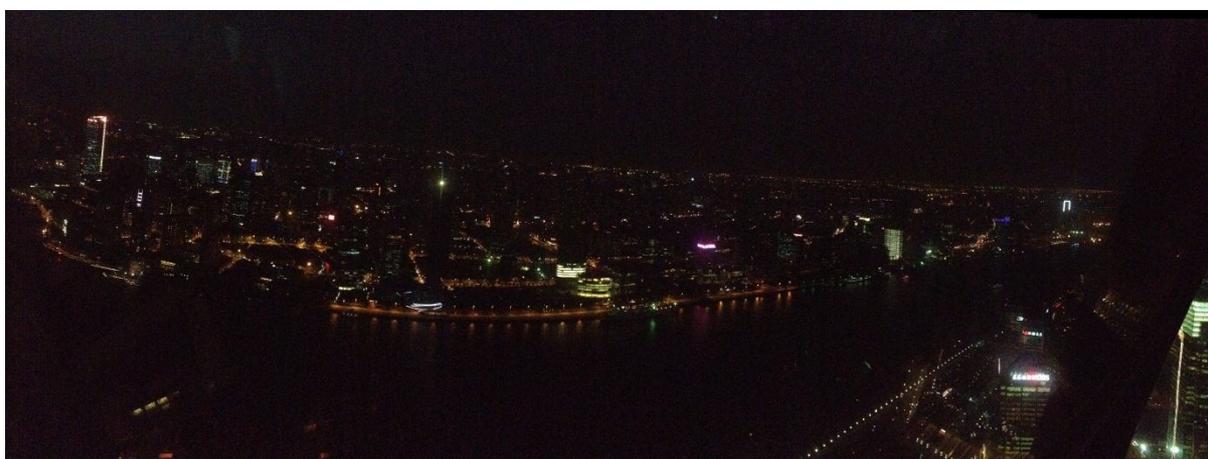
Our group was lucky enough to come on a day which had good visibility so we got to go up the tv tower in Shanghai. The view from the top was amazing particularly as night when all of Shanghai was lit up. But it can get quiet windy up there so I would recommend bringing a jacket which will keep you warm even if the day isn't very hot for you. Being up on the tv tower allowed us to see a panoramic view of Shanghai which we got to see just before sun set to when all the lights of Shanghai had come on. Down stairs we went in to see a wax museum which conveyed what China was like and how it has grown over the years. I found this part less interesting and so I went through it quickly.

The final portion of the night concluded in the Huangpu night river cruise much like the one in Guangzhou which displayed Shanghai at night when it was all lit up and like the tv tower it gave an amazing panoramic view. By this time of night it is quite cold although you can go to the lower decks of the boat to be inside or you can go to the upper decks of the boat to have a look outside.

During our stay in Shanghai we also went to the tailors market which like the name suggests you can get tailor made clothes but at an affordable price. It is very easy to get to the market via the subway and much like other market buildings in china there are several stories to the building each crammed with many different stalls. Also, like a market, once you can choose what you want you may haggle the price down. Many campers got clothes made including suits, coats, capes and dresses but there are also other things which can be made including jeans and shirts. It was very interesting to go in there and have a look even for someone like me who wasn't originally going to get something and then came out with a coat.

There are many different shopping malls to have a look at in Shanghai. Particularly at Nanjing road and at Huaihai Road which features top-end designer brands from all over the world. In these streets a day could easily be spent going in and out of shops and having a look around.

In terms of sightseeing on a free day a group of us got on a hop on hop off bus. Going to the Bund is a must as the light train is there and a great experience which I'm sure that anyone will enjoy. The walk along the bund is also something that I'm sure that many will enjoy. Also the Yùyuán Gardens & Bazaar was worth a visit although it is fully of people.



Beijing

We arrived at Beijing via a high speed train from the Shanghai Hongqiao station. Beijing is an extremely dry city so keeping up fluids is essential also this is when the tour days are very long and a lot of the time will be spend outside in the cold so layering war, clothes is a must also if it is possible buy some heat pads for your feet to keep them warm during the day. These will last all day and usually come in packs of 2.

Beijing is the city with the most history and so there were a lot of tour days where the days are packed with activities and things to do. Due to it being winter there was almost no people at the sites and so that made it easy to get around and take pictures of the places.

The first day we went to Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City and on the Hutong Tour. Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City were interesting and we were able to earn a lot of history from the tour guide as we walked around the City and the Square. Although looking at the difference in the architecture in Hutong was also interesting and seeing how old the area was compared to the high class place of central Beijing. In Hutong we also got to go the drum tower where we saw a performance of the drums also took in the sight of Hutong from a bird's eye view. After we went on a cart ride though Hutong. The cart ride was enjoyable although definitely cold outside. The final activity for the day was going to the Hongqiao market which was packed with a mix of clothes, electronics and also pearl jewellery. We also saw The Legend of Kung Fu show at night the stunts which they performed were amazing to say the least. The incredible skill and talents of the performers were mixed in with the story line although it was sometimes hard to tell where the story was going.

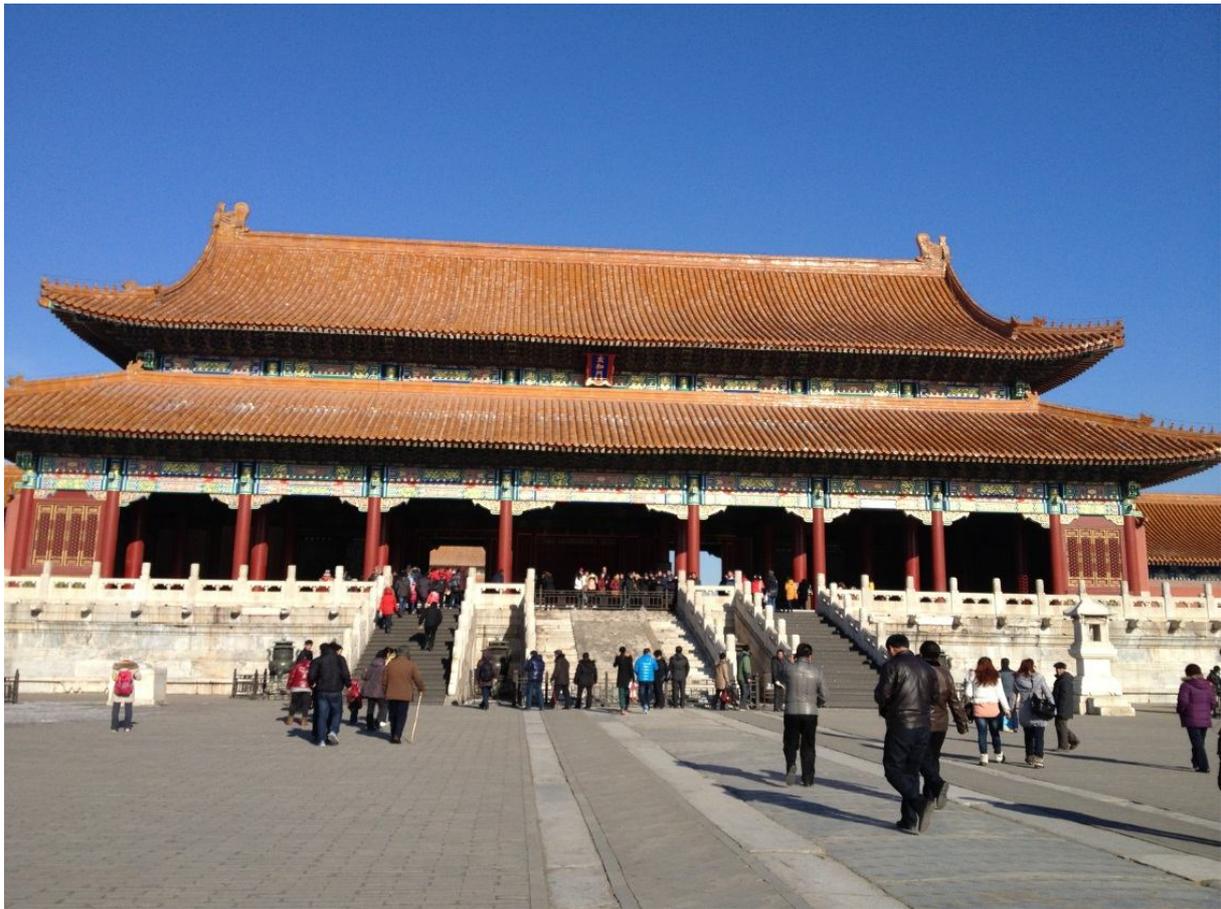
On the second day we went to the jade factory before going on to The Great Wall of China If you are looking to get some jade at the jade factory make sure that you do bring a lot of money because it is expensive to purchase something. On The Great Wall, which we spent about an hour climbing the steep part of the wall, there are stops along the wall which you can rest for a while at. During the winter months it is hard to climb the wall because it is all iced up so be sure of your footing if you don't want to fall over. On the way down some of the group slid on their bum to get down making it a quick and effective mode of transport if you wish to get down the wall fast. On the great wall it is also advised that you wear sunglasses as it is quite bright.

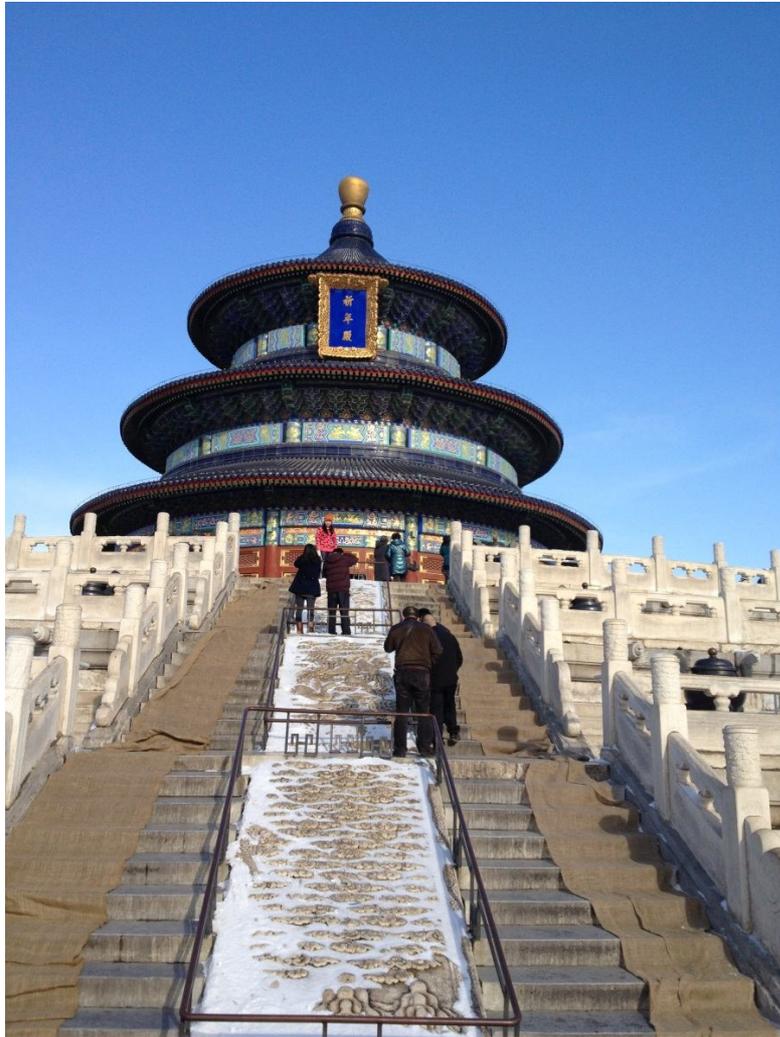
We then went to the Ming Tombs where we learnt more history and had a walk around the Tomb. After we went to the Sacred Way this is a walk were there were statues which lined the sides of the path.

Then the best part came. Peking duck. The difference in the flavour and the texture is so different to the Peking duck at home. The duck skin is more crisp and light while the flavours resulted in us being unable to stop eating it.

The third day consisted of visiting the Summer Palace where we learnt even more history about the emperors and the palace itself. Next was the gourmet China tea tasting and Ya show markets. On the final day of the tour we went to the Olympic village and the Temple of Heaven which was breath-

taking. The Ya show markets were much like the Hongqiao markets was a building jammed full of different stalls selling all sorts of different things although if you are like me, getting bored of all the markets if you go outside there are many branded shops which sell the genuine article.



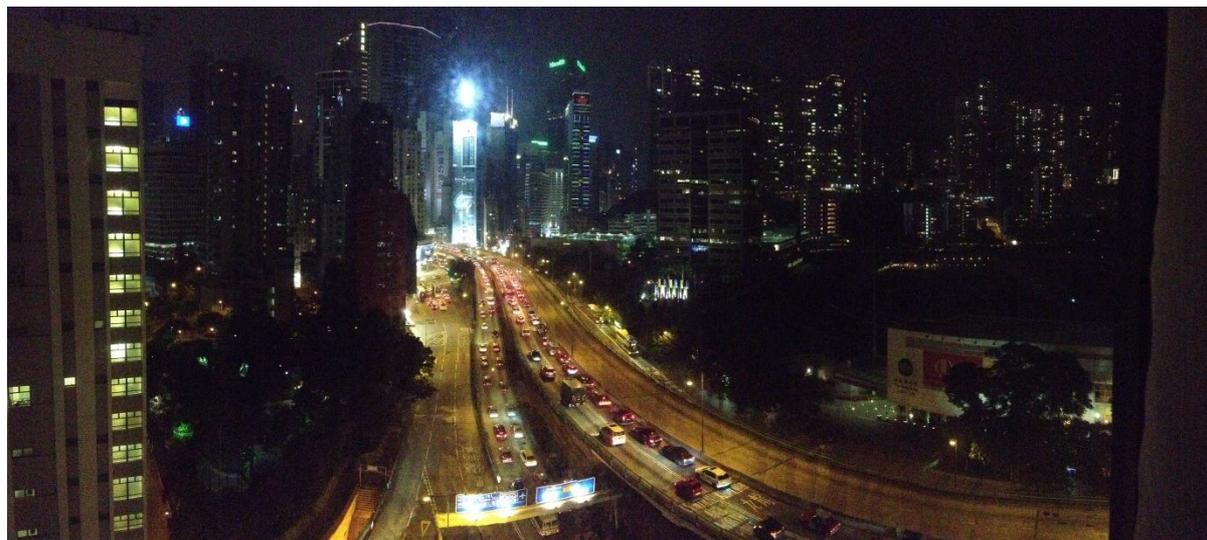


Hong Kong

In Hong Kong my sister and I mostly just shopped around because this is the main place to shop especially since we were only about a 5 minute walk from Times Square and also because we had been there twice before there was nothing we particularly wanted to do but it was nice to be able to have a couple more days after the official camp had ended to spend the time in Hong Kong and to have a little more time with the rest of the group. Going on the MTR was also easy enough using the octopus card and made it very easy to go to different destinations. It is fairly easy to make up your own itinerary for the day and follow it through in a set amount of time while using the MTR as the main mode of transport.

For me it was easy enough to go to Central station and plan a day there which consisted of going to the peak, enjoying a cruise on the star ferry and of course doing a little shopping before I came back to meet my sister for dinner at Hysan Place and completing even more shopping.

As most know Hong Kong is also known for its night street markets. It's easy enough to get to them as long as you know which station they are at after that it is very clear which exit has what sites and the maps at the MTR make it very clear which way to go. I have found that the night markets which are a must in particular are the ladies' market and also the Stanley market. Both can easily be completed in one day and these also contain the most stuff.



Conclusion

During my time on the winter camp I have learnt a lot both about other people and myself both culturally and also in a self-exploring way. It was an incredible and fascinating experience for a student who had just finished high school a few days before the trip.

I have made a lot of friends on the trip and I really hope that I keep in contact with them all. It was definitely a great experience and one that I would recommend to all my friends to take in the future.



