

To be honest I was pretty reluctant to write this report. Not because it was a hassle to write during the hot summer days in January and February but because I did not want to show that I had forgotten a lot of the trip. I regretfully did not keep a diary, as at the time I could not be bothered. I highly recommend that you keep a diary. Reflecting back on the month-odd trip, to me seems like a blur that would be better expressed by me in terms of the good times and significant memories I thought made the trip what it is, not to sound cliché, but it really was a trip of a lifetime. Born and raised in Auckland, I have been involved in a lot of the Auckland Chinese community events, and have been attending Easter tournaments from a very young age. I have a close group of friends who I have grown up with in the Chinese community, and the plan was that we all do this winter camp trip together. However money became a major issue, and subsequently, they piked. I decided to stay on board this journey, because the reality was that I did not live much of the Chinese culture, except that I eat rice at dinner, and at the time, was still an amateur user of chopsticks at the age of 23! Even though I had very little knowledge of my culture, I still realised that I was Chinese, and so the main reason I wanted to go was to experience Chinese culture in its purest form, a decision that was very easy really.

One thing I really liked about the trip was the village visits to my father's side and to my mother. Of course it was completely different to anything I had imagined. Something more along the lines of what I had seen in my por por's Chinese kung fu movies. I was able to even go into the houses where my descendants once lived. At my father's side, Lin Lee had to translate what they were saying, and it sort of dawned on me that there was a large part of Chinese culture missing from my identity. Village life was extremely simple. Villagers come together and help each other out, giving off a communal vibe. Because we had to visit everyone's villages, there was a lot of time to think. I remember thinking that if my great grand-parents hadn't come to New Zealand to live, that could well be my life. That simple life. I don't mean to sound so depressing but that's the reality of it and it does make you think 'what-if'.

Another fond experience definitely had to be the stay at the international school and the kung fu lessons. I was put into a room with Kurt. We stayed there a week, and everyday there was an early wake up. I skipped breakfast and opted for sleep on every one of those days. This re-confirmed to me that I was not a morning person. The kung fu lessons were pretty good too. I liked having the chance to exercise. On top of that we actually learnt a pretty impressive sequence, which of course I was a pro at. There were also mandarin classes which I found to be rushed, but also a good effort from our teacher given the two classes we had. Chinese calligraphy class was great. I still have the rice paper which I wrote on, and it is hanging on my bedroom door. The school also hosted a basketball game that I participated in. I dropped at least 25 points, grabbed 8 boards, and 7 assists. That's some Joe Johnson numbers right there! Andrea and Kirsten were also really good. And I think that game got Kurt back into basketball, as he's coming to the Easter tournament in Wellington. Finally the school is where we performed the HAKA on stage. We were given about a week to prepare for it, but then a couple days later Janet got an unexpected call and we were to perform it that night on stage in front of the high school. Given the amount of time we had to prepare I thought we were pretty successful. The only thing I can really remember is being ready behind stage and then all of us taking our t shirts off to perform it in skins then Jessie comes and tells us off and makes us put our t shirts back on. Awesome.

In terms of amazing sites, I think I can see why Hangzhou was included in the itinerary. It's one of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen. Its picturesque views make for a romantic walk through the pathways that link around, between and through the lake. There was a bike ride included in this stop on our trip. The route circled the whole lake. The group started off together, but then some became too cool and wanted to rush things, not wanting to take in the scenery. Along the way Stacy dropped her either her camera or her memory stick and so David and I turned back and help her find it. By then we had fallen too far behind and actually missed a turn, subsequently this lead us to ride around the WHOLE lake. I felt the burn so hard.

The nightlife in China is quite different to here, yet there were still similarities to 6th sense and Margy's back in Auckland. I can remember one pretty funny night when me, Linlee, Dan and Logan hit the streets of Shanghai if I'm not mistaken. We were trying relentlessly to find a bar. We asked a couple randoms on the street, because we had our translator Linlee (soundwave) who was fluent in Cantonese. Getting directions, lead us to a restaurant which is where a handful of backpackers were knocking a few beers back. After becoming acquainted with them, they pointed us in the right direction where we stumbled upon a bar which we all entered into. There was the four of us, 5 waitresses and then 4 Australians, one later admitting he was from New Zealand. While downing a Heineken which was almost the closest thing to being back home in Auckland next to McDonalds and KFC, the others wrote their names on the wall with chalk. I was the only person who wrote their real name. After we left I was given the nick name da bao rookie. The whole wintercamp group call me by that name now. There was some crucial details left out of this story, but this is a memory that will stick with me and is one of the defining moments of my trip. In Beijing the nightlife was similar to that of Shanghai. Really fancy 3 level clubs, with

amazing bathrooms, workers to hand you paper towels, sweep up cigarettes and serve you drinks to your table, not to mention the crystal clear audio that's pumping at high volume. Beijing as you will find out, is very cold, and it only gets colder at night, but it's very hot in the night club. This is also where some of the boys got to test their mandarin pick up lines from Dan's book. Someone got lucky with three girls in the same club, same night. Amazing.

Our last stop was Hong Kong. This is what I had saved my money for, and based on what people who have been to the place have told me, it was a smart choice to save the majority of my money. The first couple days I split from the group and went shopping by myself. This gave me a chance to see whether I could get around on my own. I surprised myself by doing this because I actually covered quite a bit of the city on my own using the metro and the free shuttle service that our Hotel offered. I bought a pair of Jordan retro 1's and a pair of Marc Jacobs formal shoes to go with a tailored suit I bought back in New Zealand. Those pairs of shoes were pretty much most of my money gone, and the rest I used on food and other random expenses. We went to Ocean Park, and although it was cool to experience something other than Rainbows End, it was still pretty average, food was expensive, rides weren't fun, and there was an insane amount of walking, although I did like the dolphin show. The time would be better spent shopping, or visiting the sites. But then again each to his own, you might like Ocean Park. The nightlife was pretty good too, it was good to talk to people outside the Winter Camp group who could speak back to you in English. In retrospect I don't feel like I experienced Hong Kong the way I should have, and so that is a destination I definitely want to stop off at and explore some more. On the final day in Hong Kong me and David decided to visit the 'Peak'. After a half hour bus ride, we finally got to the peak. To be honest I can imagine it being an absolutely amazing place at new years because you get a really nice view of the city. They charged to get to the sky deck, so we opted to flag and catch the tram back down to the bottom, and catch the bus, then caught the metro to causeway bay where we met the others. If there's one dish that I could pick out, it would be the Green Curry Chicken on rice at this Thai restaurant.

My report isn't like most, in that it doesn't provide a detailed diary of the whole winter camp trip. Instead I opted to pick out the experiences that to me made it what it is. Of course there are some special memories that I left out, because there were a lot to pick from and so some couldn't make the cut to be included in this report, however I am truly grateful I went on this trip. There are other things that were left out, yet were also what made the trip such as the food, and the sites that make up the itinerary, and these experiences will not be forgotten. In closing, I'd like to thank Virginia and Janet for all the hard work that goes into organising this trip and also putting in the work to find all of our ancestral villages. I would also like to thank you for taking your time to read this report.