

Our Trip to China

Our theme for sorority this year, “Building our Future on Traditions” was very prevalent as we toured China. Chinese civilization has enjoyed more than 5,000 years of cultural continuity. But today, the Chinese cultural tradition has a task or challenge in China in the 20th century of not Westernization but modernization.

Traditionally, the family has been the most important unit of society, and this is still true. The family is an important economic unit. In rural areas, where about 74% of the China’s people live, the traditional family consisted of the head of the household, his sons and their wives & children, often living under one roof. But, in the big cities where construction is huge and there is non-stop building for the future, it was evident that the women are a very strong and often feared member of the modern family. There is good reason why Chinese kids excel in music, math and all academia. They are raised by “Tiger Mothers” who push and ridicule them into success. The women are often referred to as “Tiger Mom” and “Dragon Lady” by their husbands and children.

- *Our group is comprised of 33 people guided by an informed and amusing guide named “Michael”, his English name.*
- *View of Shanghai by night*
- *Visited the **Jade Buddha Temple** in the NW part of Shanghai. It was built in 1918 to display 2 of a set of 5 Buddhas brought to China by a Chinese monk from Burma. People write good wishes on red cards and hang them on a tree.*
- *Went to the top of an 88 story landmark skyscraper **Jin Mao Tower** (Post Office). The centre of the building is open to the ground floor providing a view right down the centre of the building.*
- *Here we are walking **The Bund** on the ancient British side in the rain (which as it turned out was the only rainy period we experienced on our trip).*
- *Across the river in the new Shanghai which was rice patties only 10 years ago.*

- *In Shanghai, we walked on **Nanjing Road**, 5 mile road which included a 1 km pedestrian shopping strip (much more high-end shopping).*
- *In contrast, we shopped at a bustling & overwhelming market area crammed with vendors down many streets. It would be very easy to get lost here.*
- *Lunched @ **Mongolian BBQ** style restaurant.*
- *Then, walked to the **Master of Nets Garden** (an enchanting World Cultural Heritage site).*
- *In Suzhou, we boated down the **Grand Canal** (1,742 km long from Shanghai to Beijing) This was the original means of transporting goods. It took several dynasties to build and was started in 506 BC. An extreme contrast of beauty & poverty with housing on either side of a narrow canal. We witnessed the lives of the Chinese poor (fishing; preparing meals and doing laundry in very dirty, garbage filled water).*
- *We went shopping on **Hefang Street**, an ancient street approximately 800 metres long. There were many shops selling a variety of merchandise; especially green tea, chop sticks, silk scarves and famous “Princess” umbrellas.*
- *Onto **West Lake** for a 30 minute boat cruise. It is a Beautiful lake with huge pagodas and surrounded by mountains. The lake is 2.8 km long and not very deep.*
- *A 20 minute bus ride through the mountains brought us to the **Lonjing Plantation**; a rich area to grow green tea. We were given a 30 minute presentation on how to prepare and drink tea. There are 3 qualities of tea; Emperor Grade A and 2 regular teas rated by the time of harvest (ie a container of “Emperor Tea” sold for 300 yuan (\$50 CAN).*
- *We then visited the **Six Harmony Pagoda**, a 60 metre high octagonal pagoda once serving as a lighthouse, overlooking the Qiantang River towards the SW of the city.*
- *We took a plane trip to **Xian** where we stayed at the Grand New World Hotel.*
- ***Xian is a walled city**; old world China inside the walls and modern China outside (a lot of building sites for the future are evident everywhere as they are in Hangzhou).*

- Visited the mighty **Terra Cotta Soldiers and Horses** guarding the tomb of **Emperor Qin Shi Huang**. The expanse of the warrior site was overwhelming & quite unexpected. A very magnificent site.
 - Discuss the history of the 2200 year old site and discovery in 1976 by a local farmer digging a well.
 - We purchased a signed coffee table book from the Farmer that originally discovered the Terra Cotta Warrior site. Book is on the table.
 - We purchased 3 warrior replicas made with the same clay from the mountains as the original warriors; General and 2 Archers. When viewing the Archer from the side you will observe that it is the same shape as the map of China.
- We then went to a lovely dinner theatre, "**Shaanxi Grand Opera House, Xi An China** where we had a dumpling dinner and saw the **Tang Dynasty Singing & Dancing Show**.
- Visited the **Tang Bo Museum**, which acts as a teaching museum. We were taught some Chinese calligraphy. We purchased a rice paper painting done by a student with a Chinese Grandfather & Grandson.
- Visited the **Big Wild Goose Pagoda**. We were able to walk to the top but.....8 stories high!! Looked good from the bottom.
 - Inside our zodiac signs were discussed.
- The **Xian Great Mosque**.
- A wonderful **old world market** in narrow streets awaited our exploration. We bartered for 3 pairs of silk pyjamas.
- Off to the **train station** – very large & busy where we travelled from Xian to Beijing. We shared a room with 4 berths with friends. It quickly became a big party with everyone in our tour group sharing drinks & laughter. Sleeping on the hard, narrow bunks proved to be o.k.
- No shower time – off to the **Temple of Heaven**. Here we experienced the power of the military as the crowd was quickly divided and cordoned off on each side to make way for dignitaries from Spain.
- We were then bussed to the **Summer Palace** on the imitation West Lake built by the emperor of the Qing Dynasty for his mother – very beautiful and peaceful. On the way out, we purchased a Mao-Tse-Tung fur hat for Jonathan.

- *Our guide gave us some interesting facts as we passed:*
 - ***Olympic Birds Nest Stadium*** costing \$500 million USD
 - *Site is 200 acres*
 - *Previously housing area and the government paid the residents to leave and relocate*
 - *30,000 families were relocated*
- ***China Beijing National Stone*** where we purchased jade pendants and a beautiful jade ring.
- ***The Great Wall:***
 - *1 million people built the wall and many died toiling during the freezing winters & scorching summers.*
 - *6000 km long*
 - *It proved to be very efficient to keep the enemy, the Mongolians or "The Hun" from invading but it was breached many times in the future by Genghis Khan in 1215 and Manchu troops in 1644.*
 - *Pagodas serve as observation towers.*
 - *Mountains separate China from the Mongolians.*
 - *Thousands of soldiers manned the Wall*
- *Visited the **Cloisonné Factory** where pottery & jewellery are made of copper and then hand painted.*
- *Then, bussed to **The Panda Garden:** there are only 1000 pandas in existence and the panda is China's national animal.*
- *Attended **the Legend of Kung Fu** at the **Red Theatre** an excellent show of skill and artistry.*
- ***Tiananmen Square:***
 - *Chairman Mao's rule started on October 1, 1949*
 - *The entrance was named **Heavenly Peace Gate***
 - *1966 – 1976 was the **Cultural Revolution***
 - *Red Sun Mao started the Communists Revolution*
 - *Comrades were arrested and killed by his wife, Madame Chou Ching*
 - *Mao's rule was unchallenged*
 - *If residence were having a family photo taken, everyone must wear a Mao pin.*
 - *Mao's red book must always be visible in residences' pocket.*
 - *Mao passed away in 1976 and his body is in the square.*

- *The new Chairman is considered too modern and is responsible for the large gap between rich and poor. Not a good balance between the ying and the yang.*
- *Square is only open during the day as there have been incidence of self-sacrifice (burning) and vandalism.*
- *The national and local police both guard the Square.*
- ***Tiananmen Square** is the National Symbol*
- *The square was built 600 years ago by the Ming Dynasty but now after renovations in 1959 it is much larger and holds 1 million people making it larger than the Red Square (south- north: 880 meters and East – West: 500 meters).*
- *Visited **The Forbidden City** which was built for the Emperor and his family to live within the 180 acre property. It is where the film “The Last Emperor” was filmed and where he lived as a child. Hu Tong is where other families lived.*
- *Experienced a wonderful **Peking duck** dinner at **Beijing Fangzhuang Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant**. The restaurant was privately owned and was taken over by the Chinese government and is presently run by them. No questions asked!*
- *Bussed to **Hu Tong** (meaning water well or narrow break alleyway) area where we experienced a ride in a Rickshaw. This is one of 15 areas that the government will not demolish.*
 - *Our driver showed us the lake side which is now very commercial with bars and restaurants*
 - *We visited a typical Hu Tong House and were graciously welcomed by the owner who answered our questions translated through our guide. They are a local family and their home consisted of a courtyard surrounded by buildings containing a sitting room, kitchen, bedrooms and art studio.*
 - *We purchased a calligraphy scroll created by the owner which is a Confucius saying meaning in English, “Benevolence Brings Longevity”.*

Chinese Zodiac Animals / Chinese Zodiac Signs

These 12 animals represent the rotating 12-year cycle that is the basis of the Chinese Zodiac. You've likely heard reference to a particular year being the "Year of the Rabbit" or "Year of the Pig." Displayed below are the characteristics of those born in the year of the listed animals.

Rat

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Rat are quick-witted, clever, charming, sharp and funny. They have excellent taste, are a good friend and are generous and loyal to others considered part of its pack. Motivated by money, can be greedy, is ever curious, seeks knowledge and welcomes challenges. Compatible with Dragon or Monkey.

Ox

Another of the powerful Chinese Zodiac signs, the Ox is steadfast, solid, a goal-oriented leader, detail-oriented, hard-working, stubborn, serious and introverted but can feel lonely and insecure. Takes comfort in friends and family and is a reliable, protective and strong companion. Compatible with Snake or Rooster.

Tiger

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Tiger are authoritative, self-possessed, have strong leadership qualities, are charming, ambitious, courageous, warm-hearted, highly seductive, moody, intense, and they're ready to pounce at any time. Compatible with Horse or Dog.

Rabbit

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Rabbit enjoy being surrounded by family and friends. They're popular, compassionate, sincere, and they like to avoid conflict and are sometimes seen as pushovers. Rabbits enjoy home and entertaining at home. Compatible with Goat or Pig.

Dragon

A powerful sign, those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Dragon are energetic and warm-hearted, charismatic, lucky at love and egotistic. They're natural born leaders, good at giving orders and doing what's necessary to remain on top. Compatible with Monkey and Rat.

Snake

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Snake are seductive, gregarious, introverted, generous, charming, good with money, analytical, insecure, jealous, slightly dangerous, smart, they rely on gut feelings, are hard-working and intelligent. Compatible with Rooster or Ox.

Horse

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Horse love to roam free. They're energetic, self-reliant, money-wise, and they enjoy traveling, love and intimacy. They're great at seducing, sharp-witted, impatient and sometimes seen as a drifter. Compatible with Dog or Tiger.

Goat

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Goat enjoy being alone in their thoughts. They're creative, thinkers, wanderers, unorganized, high-strung and insecure, and can be anxiety-ridden. They need lots of love, support and reassurance. Appearance is important too. Compatible with Pig or Rabbit.

Monkey

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Monkey thrive on having fun. They're energetic, upbeat, and good at listening but lack self-control. They like being active and stimulated and enjoy pleasing self before pleasing others. They're heart-breakers, not good at long-term relationships, morals are weak. Compatible with Rat or Dragon.

Rooster

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Rooster are practical, resourceful, observant, analytical, straightforward, trusting, honest, perfectionists, neat and conservative. Compatible with Ox or Snake.

Dog

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Dog are loyal, faithful, honest, distrustful, often guilty of telling white lies, temperamental, prone to mood swings, dogmatic, and sensitive. Dogs excel in business but have trouble finding mates. Compatible with Tiger or Horse.

Pig

Those born under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Pig are extremely nice, good-mannered and tasteful. They're perfectionists who enjoy finer things but are not perceived as snobs. They enjoy helping others and are good companions until someone close crosses them, then look out! They're intelligent, always seeking more knowledge, and exclusive. Compatible with Rabbit or Goat.