

Beijing & Beyond

Alton College Photography Spring 2013

Staff & Students reach for the dizzy heights of the Great Wall of China



The Great Wall of China Photo by Megan Jones

A NEW EXPERIENCE

For 6 days from 14th February, 26 staff and students made the journey from Alton to Beijing in China. Packed and ready to go, with bulging suitcases, heavy camera bags and plenty of warm clothes, we made our way to terminal 5 at Heathrow. Everything was planned down to the finest detail. We left the UK via British Airways. 10 hours of relaxing before a busy schedule. There was a hap-



Local Dress Photo by Rebecca Cushing

py atmosphere with many excited students!

WARM GREETINGS FROM LOTUS & RICHARD

Upon our arrival, we were warmly greeted by our local guides Lotus & Richard. We were quickly whisked off to Tiananmen Square, it was cold, we were tired yet there was so much to see. Not overly crowded, yet still busy due to Chinese New Year holidays. The locals were fascinated by us and many of us were asked to pose for photographs. Ironic really as that was our main purpose for going, to take photos of a different culture!

THE FORBIDDEN CITY



The Forbidden City Photo by Joe O'Dell

We moved onto the Forbidden City. This was immense with many beautiful buildings and a long history, told proudly by Lotus. The students were respectful and enjoyed the photographic opportunities for architecture and people. Day two was one of the highlights of the tour climbing the Great Wall of China. The challenge was on to reach the great heights to obtain the best view from the wall. The views were guarded by the smog, but af-



The Forbidden City Garden Photo by Luke Marr

ter sometime this lifted slightly to reveal the amazing landscape. Most of us struggled with the extreme angle of the steps, holding onto the handrails for safety and comfort. One would stop to catch breath whilst taking in the view and satisfaction of being on one of the wonders of the world. Only the fittest made it to the top taking some of the best photos of the



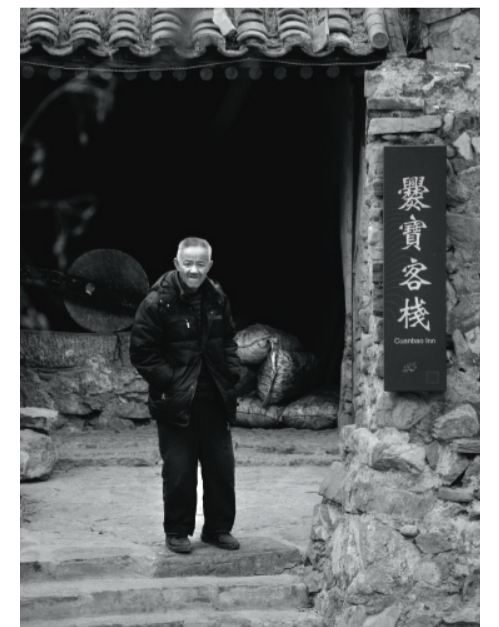
High up on The Great Wall of China Photo by Emile Caplin

day. For lunch we drove to a nearby Cloisonné factory with restaurant above. Before lunch we were fortunate enough to be guided around how Cloisonné is produced, we witnessed amazing skill from the workers whilst we avidly took photos as evidence of the delicate work involved in the making of the many

colourful vases and trinkets. We were then ushered upstairs to the huge bustling restaurant. Delicious freshly prepared food was served along with a chance to sample 'Fire Water' and for those of you who know, this is not for the faint hearted! Time also permitted us to visit Chang Ling that afternoon, a temple encompassing many years of Chinese history and impressive architecture. This was peaceful and offered time for reflection.

WORLD HERITAGE SITE CHAUNDIXIA VILLAGE

The following day we travelled to the World Heritage Site of Chaundixia Village. A solitary village in the mountains, dating back to the Ming period. Its inhabitants are all descendants of the same 'Hun' family. Parts of the village were run down, but full of character and great for photos. The village, surrounded by mountains, stands on the northern gentle slope of the hills and is built in harmony with the terrain of the mountains. Steeped in history, our guide explained there were many quadrangle dwellings and a few courtyards with houses on three sides. The houses, most of which were in good order, had delicate gate piers as well as distinctive screen walls and along with the stone, wood and



Old man in Chaundixia Village Photo by Megan Reid

brick carvings, reflected the ancient Chinese culture. An early lunch was had in one of these dwellings. We crammed into 3 small rooms to be served local delicacies. Tofu was high on the menu and was an acquired taste, not enjoyed



Making fresh dumplings

by all – best of all was trying the ‘battered leaves’ taken from a local tree! Much time was spent here exploring the vast array of alleyways before heading up high to catch a glimpse of the entire village, from what appeared to be a bird’s eye view.

On the return to Beijing that day, we had a surprise visit to a silk factory. Here we all learnt about the silk worm and the production of silk whilst having the opportunity to make traditional purchases before heading off to an evening meal of ‘dumplings’. We were taken to a restaurant famed for its handmade dumplings. Behind a glass screen, were an army of staff busily making the dough and filling with exquisite delights. They were bemused to see a sea of 26 faces and cameras, all scrabbling to take photos of them at work!

MORNING EXERCISE AT THE PARK

A few brave souls on the morning of the final full day, made their way to the local park to witness Tai chi. It was 8am and the park was full to the brim! Ballroom dancing, gymnastics, Tai chi, speed skating were all taking place; the atmosphere was electric and energetic. Bitterly cold, the activities kept people warm and even



Tai Chi in the park

some of us joined in with one group who were dancing to Gangnam Style!

HUNGRY STUDENTS HAVE BEST MEAL OF THE TRIP!

One of the long awaited highlights of the trip was the planned rickshaw rides around the Hutongs. Two abreast, we embarked on a pleasurable way to see the hutongs, our drivers in competition with one another, showing off their strength in being able to transport us plus camera bags at great speed! Our guides gave us time to walk around and explore the many streets. It was a close



Home cooked delights in the Hutongs

nit community with charming shops, food being cooked on the streets, locals fascinated by us as much by us of them. The river frozen, we were able to watch skaters and a game of ice hockey. The hustle and bustle changed as we eventually regrouped and were guided around the back streets to what I think all 26 of us would say was the best meal of the trip. A local family opened up their



Our chef in the Hutongs Photo by Amanda Bollini

small yet welcoming house to us. The wife cooking on a two ring gas burner in a kitchen so small that with 3 people standing in there was tight. We were served the freshest and most tasteful food we had eaten to date. The proof was in the empty plates, happy faces and gentle conversation. Full bellies, we left the Hutongs, eventually making our way to the Olympic Park, but first of all making a quick stop to a shopping mall of fake goods – this was enlightening, scary and

challenged our bargaining skills to the max. Many students negotiated bargain purchases and how they managed to squeeze the goods into their suitcases on our return is a mystery!

OLYMPIC FEVER

The atmosphere changed, when we finally made it to the Olympic Park. It was busy with street traders pushing us to buy their goods, food stalls cooking fresh food, although the smell of tofu had most of us running. The light had changed and on this part of the trip it was a challenge to get good photos, but looking at the architecture alone was satisfying. Cold and hungry we looked forward to the evening meal yet another surprise trip was organised by our guides to a traditional tea house. Here we were taken through the correct way to make and serve tea, tasting some of the most delicious tea in China. Eventually that evening we arrived at a restaurant to experience a Peking duck banquet. We were served with an array of delicious Chinese cuisine, before having the duck



The Birds Nest Photo by Richard Green

carved in front of us!

798 ART ZONE

During our trip we requested a visit to the famed ‘798 Art Zone’. A disused and converted electronics factory built by the East Germans in the 1950’s, 798 Art District is Beijing’s leading concentration of contemporary art galleries. This was an ideal opportunity to take in and respect unconventional and fashionable art. The atmosphere was fresh, alternative and did not feel like we were in China. This bustling area full of vibrant colours,



Interactive Art



Graffiti Art Photo by Luke Marr

sculptures on a large scale, contemporary Chinese art and industrial factory buildings all provoked an eclectic mix of 20th and 21st Century culture.

THE RAINBOW HOTEL

Our accommodation at the Rainbow Hotel, Beijing, was excellent, warm and welcoming. Breakfast was great and amused us for the variety of dishes on offer. Chow Mein was top of the list most days. Lunch and dinner were taken at local restaurants or with families. We were accepted and welcomed by the Chinese. Language was a problem, but facial expressions and polite mannerisms made up for the lack of verbal communication. Ni Hao ‘hello’ was about all we could remember, but was the best we could ever have learnt and appreciated by many!

Amanda Bollini - Curriculum Manager

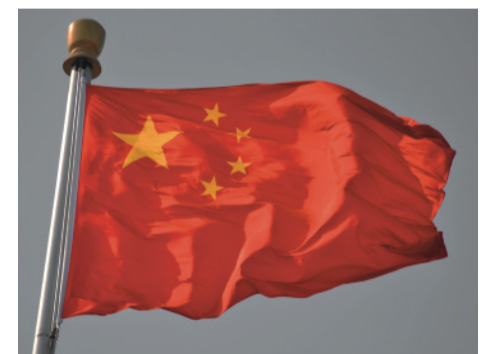


Photo by Louis Sanderson



Photo by Paul Williams

for Creative Visual Arts @ Alton College

"Experience of a life time! Really well or-



Photo by Aarjan Bista

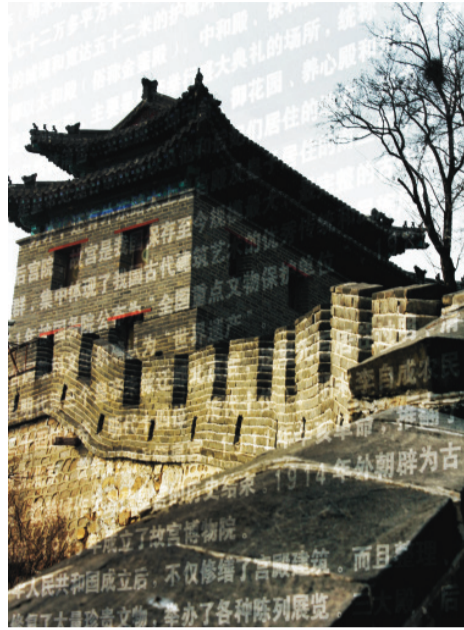


Photo by Jasper McIver



Photo by Joe Thompson-Murdoch



Photo by Alice Brown



Photo by Alice Brown



Photo by Fleur Tavare



Photo by Richard Davis



Photo by Joe Thompson-Murdoch



Photo by Annie Whillians



Photo by Hannah Waterhouse



Photo by Sam MacAlpine



Photo by Louis Sanderson



Photo by Lily Andrews



Photo by Jo Short



Photo by Megan Reid



Photo by Aarjan Bista

"I just said thank you for organising the trip, it really went well by the photos. My son Joe said he had a fantastic time and was fairly disappointed to be back home!" Andrea O'Dell - Parent

"A fabulous trip with a super group of students. Key highlights were the wonderful meal in the family home in the Hutongs and the early morning trip to the Park! The weather was kind to us, the students were a delight to be with and the trip was extremely well organised. Our guides were 1st class and our coach driver deserves equal credit. The Chinese people were welcoming, our hotel was clean and of a good standard. I will treasure many, many fond memories" Debbie Lea - Staff



Photo by Charlotte Dobson



Photo by Olivia Longson

"Sam had an amazing time in Beijing. Thank you for organising such a wonderful and memorable trip and for bringing him home in one piece! Pam MacAlpine - Parent

"Definitely worth sitting on a plane for 9 hours!" Rebecca Cushing - Student

www.twitter.com/AltonColPhoto



Photo by Richard Davis



Photo by Fleur Tavare



Staff & Students

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Photo by Lucy Walker

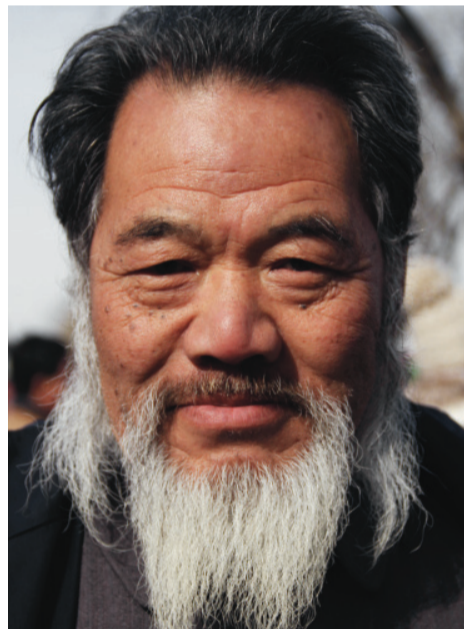


Photo by Debbie Lea



Photo by Hannah Waterhouse

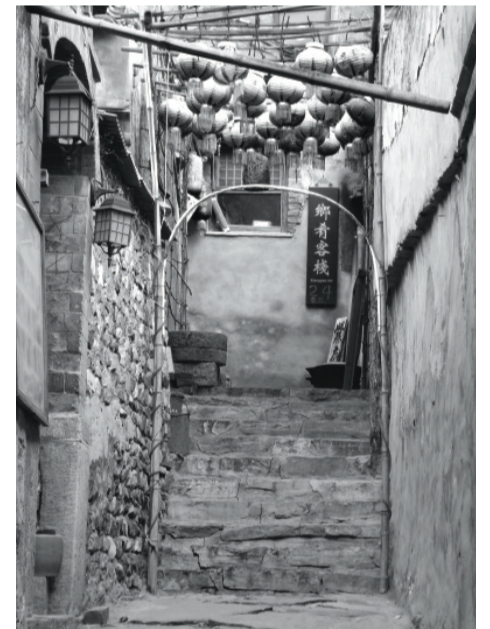


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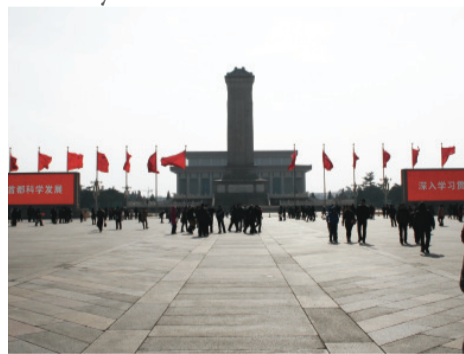


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