

CPA Australia Plan Your Own Enterprise Competition 2008

Trip to Shanghai – June 2009

Impressions of trip to Shanghai June 2009

Executive summary

The six day trip to Shanghai was an incredible experience highlighted by the size of the city, the number of people in a relatively small area, the noise and bustle of the streets, the stark contrasts of the rich and the poor, the old and the new, the friendliness and hardworking nature of its people, the ability of most younger Shanghailese to speak a little English, the way Chinese communicate using a large range of intonation, expression and seemingly aggression, the amount of street stalls, shops and markets, the haggling and persistence to sell anything, anywhere, anytime, the number of taxis and how cheap taxi fares are, the beautiful and varied food, the extremely hard working nature of the Chinese inhabitants. It seems Chinese people are very compliant, organized, proud and also untrusting of anything new including new people they meet.

The thing that struck me the most was the amount of redevelopment and building that was going on in all areas in the city which is getting ready to host the World Expo for sustainable urban development. 'Better City Better Life'. 45 billion dollars will be spent for this big event hosting 200 country exhibitions.

Highlights

After our long flight from Sydney we were glad to rest in our 5 star hotel. Talk about being spoilt. We met our second guide, Tiffany, on **Monday** morning to visit a high school in Shanghai. Tiffany's mum was the teacher who gave us a tour of the brand spanking new school and allowed us to visit her English class. A class of over 40 students, all selected from around Shanghai provided a great insight into their aspirations, interests, the amount of time they spend on study, the highly competitive nature of the education system, how difficult it is to gain entrance to good universities and the impact of one child families. The students were interested to hear about the amount of leisure time Australians have, the amount of people and the space we have to live in and the number of pets we are able to have. Most students were very accepting of the US influence in terms of the films they watched and the sports they played. Badminton and Table Tennis is out and Basketball and Baseball are in.

The school has over 2000 students complete with a boarding house, a ten floor apartment building catering for over 200 boarders.

Shanghai is a place to shop, both for up market things as well as the copy markets where you can get all types of stuff reproduced from the best European labels such as clothes, watches, sunglasses, ipods, bags etc. The one we went to, virtually found as we were wandering down a street. A guide took us into a copy market with 2500 stalls. Jane asked me how to bargain, and then she was off. Bargaining and haggling is accepted and expected.

Tuesday was a free day for us so Jane decided. We went back to the same copy market to be met by the same guide who stuck with us for most of the day! We ended up paying for the services because without this we would not have found our way around the market.

On Wednesday we met our third guide, Eric, who took us to the People's Square, the centre of Shanghai. Our destination was Shanghai Museum for our taste of culture and history. Fascinating! The highlights for me were the intricately carved emblems and ornaments made from Jade in the 2nd century and the currency used in the various dynasties. Instead of coins they used dagger blades and little spades of varying sizes and weights

Our next stop was the Urban Planning Authority which was primarily to showcase the models and plans of the 2010 World Expo. On the fourth level was the showcase model of the whole city of Shanghai with the World Expo site and all the exhibitions on both sides of the Huangpo River. Mind blowing. The model itself was about 20 meters long.

After a lunch of traditional noodle soup, Frank, Eric and I went the Yunyuang Gardens in the old city. Traditional Chinese houses which have been preserved and restored even since the cultural revolution in China. It was touristy, but quaint and interesting for us. There were lots of stalls selling traditional Chinese items

A river cruise along the Huangpo River at night followed. A great spectacle seeing so many grand and tall buildings all lit up at night. Particularly the Pudong district with the Pearl TV Tower and the World Financial Centre were spectacular. Getting from the wharf to find a taxi was challenging, but after a bit of persistence and constant harassment from street sellers we managed to get a taxi.

On Thursday we got our first taste of the subway and the stupendous amount of people that travel. We went to the Bund which was the main financial district of Shanghai in the 1930s. Unfortunately the whole river walk was closed due to development so we ventured along some nearby streets for an interesting walk. The bustle and activity on the streets makes interesting and exciting viewing. Then we caught a taxi to Pudong to see the World Financial Trade Center. The 100th floor of the Building had a glass floor. What a sight down below and the surrounding skyscrapers, apartments and the whole city of Shanghai which was not fully visible due to the ever present smog. To think that the whole of Pudong was an industrial waste land before 1994 when the Pearl TV Tower was built, itself a very high structure.

On **Friday** Frank and I took Jane to the Yun Yuang Gardens to show her the Old City.

After lunch we took a taxi to Austrade in Shanghai which was part of our sponsored trip visits. Our guide, Victoria Zheng a business development manager, took us to an Australian bar and shop called '1 OZ 3 Pty Ltd, 'Australia to the world'. We had a brief chat to the owner, Freda Feng, and then we spoke to Tim Long, her marketing manager. Tim had just started after finishing his international relations and marketing degree. He could speak two languages and was learning Chinese and loving the lifestyle in Shanghai. He has a successful career in front of him I believe.

The Shanghai office for CPA was in the same building as Austrade so it was easy to get to our next appointment. We met Mr. Laurance Lau, a native Singaporean, who is CFO of Mary Kay operations in China. A very kind, switched on business man, who took time out of his busy schedule for Jane to brief him about her business plan. Laurence asked some very searching questions which Jane answered competently as well as extending on her knowledge base as well. Our discussions continued onto global economics and carbon trading schemes as well as local economic and business issues. Laurence had a lot of confidence in the direction the Chinese government is heading to restructure the economy. He emphasized the value of direct and continued marketing and networking to establish yourself and to gain trust amongst Chinese people and businessmen.

Our last meeting for the day was with Molly from the Australian Consulate outlining the options for accessing agents who send international students to schools around the world.

I started early on Saturday to walk all the way to the Old Town. I had planned my route through some historic and interesting parts of Shanghai. I went into a park where I saw many older people meditating in the relatively quiet bamboo forest

My long walk was truncated by a visit to a Confucius temple and many more narrow alleyways and streets, teeming with plenty of people and activity. All good things come to an end which meant a long trip back to Australia.

I feel so privileged to have been given this opportunity to experience and witness what I see as a fascinating and different culture. I felt very safe and welcome to spend 6 eventful days in Shanghai. My recently acquired knowledge of Chinese customs, culture and to some extent their language has made me understand and appreciate China and its people better which can only aid my teaching of business and economics in Australia.

Bernd Meyer
Launceston Church Grammar School