

# CHINA TOUR - 2017

## XIAN - SHANGHAI

**TOUR DATES: 15 MAY – 30MAY  
2017**

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15 May Fly directly to Xian to start extension of tour for the purpose to witness and see The Terracotta Warriors. Due to flights being delayed Tour guide Amanda arranged for transfers directly to Hotel and straight into room. Karen and walked the streets that evening to The South Wall to see activity, light show and people, also bought a Helicopter light toy for the boys. Walking back to Hotel, Karen getting soo many stares and funny looks. While looking for an electronics shop to buy replacement camera battery a young local slowed down to a glide on his bicycle staring at Karen (Blonde hair) and nearly fell off his bike, soo funny.

16 May Start the day by visiting The Wild Goose Pagado, built of stone and is a surviving Buddhist Pagado from the Tang Dynasty. I bought a Jade turtle there and the guide Amanda made me take it back for a refund, fake Jade and told me to wait for real Jade at Factory visit. Also watched local doing traditional Chinese writing, and Karen bought parchment for Jas & Matt (strength).

We then moved on to the Terracotta Warriors reproduction factory, was amazing to watch the ladies create the replicas from mold and the detail in artwork was amazing. Also, the other items for sale were of high quality and the Mother of Pearl inlay in liquor furniture was perfection. Bought a mid-size Archer Warrior.

Next stop the 'Terracotta Warriors', Warriors & Horses Museum, the life sized defending Army to the 1<sup>st</sup> Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang. Wow, Wow & Wow, everything I thought & more to witness this World Wonder. Spent the most time in Pit 2 which was the most impressive pit, then made out way back to Hotel for an overnight stay before the morning travel by Bullet Train to Beijing.

17 May Breakfast in Grand Noble Hotel, transfer to Xi'an Railway Station for High Speed Bullet Train to Beijing (4.5hrs) journey at average speed of 217kph.

Amazingly smooth and fast train ride, very comfortable with seating, food and drink carriage. Bought a replica bullet train for a laugh. The landscape was truly amazing, that the provinces never stopped and the construction of high rises apartments and small provinces continued for the entire journey. The mix between High rise, rice paddies and shanties were breathtaking. Arrived in Beijing and transported directly to Hotel Lijingwan Int Hotel.

18 May The morning begins with a tour of Tiananmen Square, 1 of the largest public squares in the World. It also takes in the Imperial Palace and the Forbidden City, which was originally constructed by the third Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. Whoa!!! Was a very hot and humid day, which China was in general for the whole trip. So up the Water and Hydralite intake, umbrella and towel..... Was a long day and soo much to see with the intricate detail in sculptures and architecture! History 'IMPRESSIVE'

After we move onto a Sales Organized tour of The Pearl Factory and an understanding of how pearls are cultured and then manufactured.....

Next is an optional tour, 'Visit the Hutongs' (narrow lanes), Beijing oldest 700 years old. Visited by Pedicab and to experience this mix of lanes and housing, community and shops. Karen and I were constantly given funny looks by locals, as guide explained local people who have never left China only see Caucasian people in Movies, along with blonde hair so they constantly look at as funny, take photos and talk to us.

After the rickshaw ride and walk through streets we had lunch with local family in their home, and we were entertained by a real character, Famous Cricket Wrestler/Trainer. Also the meal/food served was endless with great variety and very very enjoyable.

After we then went onto to visit Schichahai, an historic area consisting of 3 lakes (Qianhai (Front Sea), Houhai (Back Sea) and

Xihai (West Sea) which re part of the surrounding places of historic history and scenic beauty and remnants of the old style local residences.

Beijing is famous for Peking Duck, well the group made our way with directions in Chinese to a local famous (Best) Peking Duck restaurant. Well that was easy NOT, but what a laugh finding this place, but hey we did, and the story is Gold. We walked in, only locals and no English spoken, everything lost in translation and thought at one stage we asked to leave, refused, kicked out etc. However not the case and stayed to have to most AMAZING dining experience ever.

The duck was impeccable, carved at the table by the Chef, wrapped in pancake style wrappers with condiments and the beer was awesome. Then they served us Duck Bone Soup, we thought, 'Yeah Right' but hold on, was really good. So, all in all a memorable, amazing night of degustation of food, beer, laughs, friends and experience.

19 May Breakfast, and out comes the Vegemite, sooo Aussie and fitting for a days tour of The Great Wall of China. But 1<sup>st</sup> like a Tour we stop off at the Jade Factory (Typical Sales) tour, however Karen did buy an amazing Jade bracelet from money given by the boys for a Mother's Day present. I also bought my replacement turtle, rat and lucky coin necklace. Jade is pronounced 'Yu" and has a history in China for 4 thousand years.

A scenic drive through the local countryside and mountains takes to China's most renowned monument – The Great Wall.

We visit the Juyong Pass which is very accessible and less frequented by tourists.

The Great Wall meanders through China's northern mountain ranges from the Yellow Sea to the Gobi Desert-a distance of over 3,500 miles.



It's a typical hot humid day and hydration is at its peak, and the trek up the Wall is a struggle and to even reach the separating Towers was soo physical and strenuous, it was intense.

However, I soldiered on to not be beaten, but it beat me and could only do so much, as well Karen was done. We stayed for as long as we could to absorb the Wall, the History and the view (Incredible & Surreal).

At the gift shop we ordered a timber scroll with our names engraved to say 'We climbed the Great Wall', key-rings, fan and ice creams.

Tonight, we are going to attend a large scale dramatic musical 'The Golden Mask Dynasty'. Wow and Wow – what an amazing theatre stage show including acrobatics, massive waterfall effects, dance and theatrics, soo worth the effort to witness.

20 May And we're off again, breakfast and hit the Bullet Train again for a 5hr journey from Beijing – Suzhou which dates back to 514 BC, sometimes called 'The Venice of the East'.

Today we visit the 'Lingering Gardens' where families live in different parts of the house during different Seasons. Is also regarded as an UNESCO World Heritage Site. There was also an amazing Bonsai garden full of miniature, large and scenic Bonsai displays. Suzhou is also famous for its Silk Spinning and factory, another (Typical Sales) Tour.

21 May Off on an adventure day, but first the silk factory there were needlepoint silk artwork, so impressive that 'No' photos were allowed, e.g. Mona Lisa and an amazing double-sided piece having 2 separate images when swiveled. So impressive Karen bought beautiful Silk table runner for Dining Room.

We then made our way to do a Grand Canal boat tour, Wow what an experience to see these homes built along the canal, some in so disrepair they were collapsing into the canal. However, in the past year or so these homes were being listed Heritage and wealthy entrepreneurs were trying to snatch them up for investments.

At the end of the canal trip we disembarked and walked the alleys/streets to experience the local living, shops and traditions. Here we bought Karen her backpack for holidays, ate some amazing flat bread, hot nuts and the live fish in the tubs at a market shop was gross.

Walked the lanes and kept talking and interacting with locals, was wonderful, also people continued to stare at Karen especially, taking photos. I took photo with a gorgeous elderly man, and the local Police.

22 May Overnight stay, breakfast and head off for 2hr coach ride to drive the countryside and expressway towards Hangzhou (2hr) the Tea capital of China, so what do you do when being a tourist, again (Typical Sales) tour of the Tea plantation and demonstration and sales pitch on selling their product. En-route we stopped off on the expressway for lunch, amazing huge Roadside eateries and I ordered a spicy type wrap, WOW & WOW soo fricken' spicy even for me, could not finish it and threw in the bin, and then went and had like 2 soft serve ice-creams....hahahahaha

From here we made our way to The West Lakes, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here we walked through the gardens and onto a boat to experience the Lake and its features, Hangzhou's Willow draped islands.

That night the crew made our own way out to The Markets to do some local venturing, shopping and getting famously lost. We found our way to this amazing eater lane where a lot of Expats eat and dined in The Fat Cow, Aussie owned Burger joint, very nice and bought 2 tall beer glasses.

23 May So another 2hr bus ride from Hangzhou to Shanghai, amazing city – I would describe Singapore on Steroids.....So we walked in the rain (slight drizzle) to experience and see The Bund – Shanghai is divided by the Huangpu River where modern mega high rises are seen along with the tall radio tower. The Bund is a five-block river front promenade with many of Shanghai's Banks and Trading houses (Financial District).

Onward to the Shanghai Museum with over 120,000 art objects on show including Jade, Bronze, Ceramics, Paintings and Furniture. Museum was too much, not quite Karen and my thing, and it seemed not the majority of the tour groups thing either.

Night approached so we tried to hit the local markets for shopping and bargains, disappointing and then it was time to take a night time cruise along The Bund. Well apart for the weather (raining) the light-show from all around was impressive and some good shots were had, also some laughs were had as well when the massive collected rain spilled out from the boats shade sail covers onto some unexpecting guests (Drenched is an understatement).

24 May Last day, although had some free time to kill before transfer to airport for flights. So, the group of Rebels booked a town car from the Hotel and headed off to the Shanghai Zoo to see the Panda's.

Walked the Zoo's trail to see the animals on display and the gardens of the Zoo. Finally, after many animal enclosures found the Panda enclosure and would you know it, timing perfect.

The Pandas were due exactly the minute we arrived to come out from their hid-e-hole to have a meal of Bamboo. Wow what a treat to see them lively, funny and eat the bamboo shredding it like soft pasta.

Stayed and watched until the bamboo was gone and continued through the zoo's exhibitions until we decided time to leave and head back to Hotel to pack for flight home.



The last farewell did not go as planned in the Airport, delays impacted everyone's flights and stress levels. It was pandemonium and getting to the gate to catch our flight was sooo stressful that we didnt have time to say out goodbyes to the group, and ran and rushed and stressed all the way to the gate, yes we made it but not without any casualties. (Feelings\_\_\_)

25 May Arrived home to Adelaide, safe and sound with soo many good friends made and memorable moments had. Thankyou China, and thankyou Brian & Nicola Lunn and Danielle & Craig Walsh.....