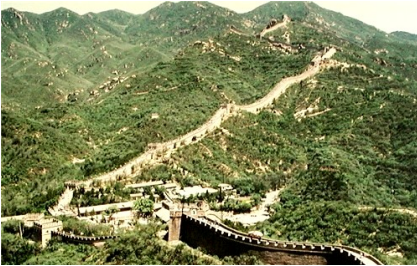


Judy's Trip Back to China

I was filled with anticipation coming back to China, as our plane came rolling into the terminal. I remembered when I was here last my heart filled with such joy knowing that I would see my dear friends again.

When our plane landed in Beijing, we got our luggage and headed out to meet one of the students that would be picking us up. As I came out I looked up and down for them but something must have kept them as they weren't there. O.K. no problem, we decided to take this time to exchange monies. It's important that you always have someone with the luggage as you can lose a piece very quickly in China. With monies exchanged, I went back to find that our contact had arrived. You couldn't help but see the happiness on her face to see us. How could you hide joy like this?

Our first day in country was to be a relaxed one. Our hotel was located in an area that had little shops and a mall that turned into a daily trip as it had a Starbucks coffee shop! Yes, even in China. Not only was there a McDonalds on the opposite corner but a Kentucky Fried Chicken in the middle of the block. Were we in China or Main Street USA? We walked, looked at all the shops and spent the day relaxing. When you shop in China the exchange rate is an 8 to 1 ratio. If you want a Frappuccino at Starbucks the cost would be 32,000 RMB. It sounds like a lot but the cost is still the same as here in America. But my true passion when it comes to shopping is negotiating a price for something you want. They will always start with a high figure but I look at what they want and figure out on 1/3 to 1/2 of what they are asking for the item and that's the price I will pay for it. It sounds like a lot of work when you think that you're passing a calculator back and forth until you agree on the price, but it gives me a little more time to have fun with the merchants.



The Great Wall

Tourists we became, so off we went to see the Great Wall of China. I have never been at the same entrance twice. This entrance had a trolley that went straight up the mountain; each trolley could carry four people at a time. Four of the ladies got into the first trolley as our student and her two friends from another province climbed into the trolley with me. Here we met one of the Chinese men dressed in native costume with a native sword. He asked one of the men to sit down on the wall and lunged at him. The man I might add is still speaking in a deep voice as the sword missed him. ☺ In China there are about 23 provinces and 56 nationalities. Everyone speaks Mandarin but with 56 nationalities they all sound different. It's the tone of your words that give them different meanings.

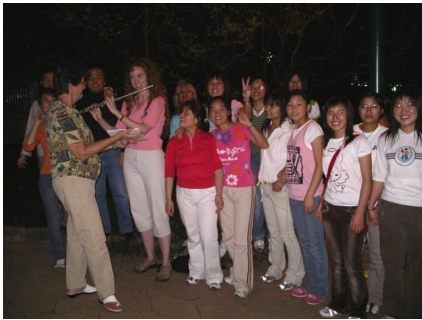


Tiananmen Square

Most Chinese people do not know about the uprising that happened at Tiananmen Square. They have never heard about it nor did they see anything on their television. If you ask any of the population if they know what happened they are in disbelief about it but are anxious to know. The last time I was here an old lady was selling kites so I bought one from her, flew the kite and gave it back to her. I think she thought I wanted my money back and didn't want to take it but when she realized I didn't want the money she thanked me.

There are several more stops you should visit while in Beijing. Some are; The Temple of Heaven, The Forbidden City and the Summer Palace. Most of these are a 3 to 4 hour trips so be prepared to have good walking shoes and a back pack with water in it. Some of the places you will be able to buy bottled water. Before you leave Beijing you have to have Beijing Duck. There are plenty of restaurants but only one that has been serving this dish for decades. It really is quite the dining experience. Just the presentation is worth the whole meal.

Another place of interest is in Xian; there you will find the Terra Cotta Soldiers. The story goes that while a farmer was digging he found one of the Soldiers and by the time the Chinese government was done digging there was a football field of them. You can tell the difference between the soldiers from their shoes. The toes of the foot men are straight and the officers are turned up. There are horses, carriages and other artifacts that were interesting also. The day that I was there they had that very farmer who made the discovery and his books, so I was able to buy one and have him autograph it. This farmer became famous overnight!



The Chinese people love to go out at night. You will see them walking all over town, usually because it's too hot for them to stay indoors at night as they don't have air conditioning.

In every city you will find the parks open and alive with all kinds of things going on. In one area you might find classical dancing, in another there are musicians or acrobats. We began our evening by holding an impromptu open air concert. Our flute player played wonderful music and the ladies began singing. As the people gathered to hear us they didn't want us to stop. It was a great time and we got to meet a lot of people.



The students make and sell bookmarks to support themselves while attending school. We got to spend a whole day with the students and had a great time. This was one of the places where we stayed. It had all the conveniences of home, including a western toilet!!! (If you must know, the rest have a hole in the floor. YUP.)



I had met this young student last year and our group was able to help buy her a scooter. One look at her smile and you can see how blessed she feels! This young lady might be small in stature but she works very hard at what she does.

Well, I hope I peaked your interest for China. You will laugh, cry and be delighted for the people and the country but I promise you one thing; you won't come back the same.