

The 2018 China Trip

LaTosha

Every 2 years the Northwest Chinese Academy schedules a trip to China for 3rd graders and above to use their Mandarin skills by being immersed in the culture. This year we had 7 students providing translation for 6 families as they visited the wonderful cities of Tianjin and Beijing. Our first stop was in the city of Tianjin so that the students could visit our sister school.

Do you remember what it was like to go to school for the first time? Now imagine if you were going to school for the first time in a different country and it wasn't your native language. I have to admit, it was a bit scary to think that I was going to leave my children in a school where they could have a problem communicating. My mind was at ease from the moment we met the staff and walked into the school. The students and parents of the Northwest Chinese Academy felt welcomed by Cathay Future Art Primary School in Tianjin, China. Everyone, especially the children of Cathay, were excited to see us. They waved and smiled as we toured the school. Their smiles became bigger as we waved and smiled back. Body language is universal. The moment finally came where we had to leave our NWCA students to be truly immersed in the culture and we did so without hesitation. After we returned to Cathay for a special lunch that they prepared for us, our kids came running in with excitement and we all instantly felt like one family. Actually, we felt like a royal family. The teachers, students and staff gave us gifts and prepared an amazing performance. Our visit ended up on the local news, so we felt extra special.



Next, we traveled by high speed train to Beijing where we stayed for the remainder of our trip. We had a bus with a tour guide that showed us around the beautiful city. We visited the Forbidden City, the Great Wall of China, the Summer Palace, and we ate delicious food at some of the must-see restaurants. Being from America and not looking like the locals, we attracted a lot of attention. Everywhere we went people were taking pictures of us and with us. When the locals realized that our students could speak Mandarin, crowds started to form as more people wanted to get pictures with the kids that spoke with no accent. The kids loved being in the spot light and they did a fantastic job of representing our school. NWCA's mission is to develop global citizens and connecting with others in their native tongue accomplishes this.



Lastly, being in a foreign country and not speaking the language can cause some anxiety. What if you had to depend on your 9 year old to get a taxi on a busy street in Beijing? We made a last minute decision to go the zoo and not return to the hotel with the rest of our tour group. The bus stopped and we jumped off onto a busy street. We didn't have a chance to discuss our game plan or prep our daughter on what to say. We weren't really in safe spot to figure it out, so we held up our hand and taxi pulled over within seconds. This was the moment. My 9 year old said with confidence [insert Mandarin here] and the taxi driver shook his head yes. What a relief! We jumped in and we were on our way to our way to the Beijing Zoo. When we arrived, our daughter got in line and purchased our tickets. Every penny we paid for her immersion education made it all worth it for that moment. The Beijing Zoo has a Panda House with a panda store. Needless to say, my husband bought every panda she wanted as a reward for getting the entire family there safely.

NWCA has done an incredible job of preparing our children for the real world, both locally and abroad. Honestly, I never thought I would go to China. I figured I would only go if I knew someone that spoke the language. Little did I know that my 8 and 9 year old daughters would take me on a trip of a lifetime. Witnessing them being immersed in the Chinese culture and having to rely on them for 2 weeks gives me confidence that they will grow up to be true global citizens.