

Summercamp

Arriving in China was a experience I remember really well. All the excitement, which has build up after all the hassle with the visa, were about to climax, as soon as I introduced myself into this foreign culture, of which I have thought and researched so much. Full of excitement I looked out of the window of the plane, as soon as I felt the familiar bump of the plane tires touching the ground, just to see what?

Smog. I couldn't see further than a 100 meters. Disappointing.

These were my first few moments in china, defined by disappointment. But little did I know how much Beijing alone had to offer. The first day, though really stressful, as I couldn't find the hotel, ended in one of the most memorable nights of my life, where I learned one of the most interesting things about china. As a foreigner you can get treated differently in China. If you go out clubbing, what I strongly suggest you should do, foreigners might only have to pay for the cab, as drinks are provided for them by the club for free. This to be honest, though it might sound great, still leaves a bittersweet taste of white or better foreigner privilege in your mouth.

But besides all the “special” treatment, I also greatly enjoyed the hostility and friendliness of locals, who helped me out more than once trying to find my way around in this amazingly huge and quickly developing city. It has to offer so many different things to do and see the summer camp will fall short in time, if you'd try to explore the whole city. It doesn't matter if you look for good or interesting food, try to immerse yourself in a different culture or just trying to bring your Chinese skills to the next level, Beijing can and will help you with all of that.

One side note as I'm speaking of food, you should definitely try out the street food, it is usually cheap but pretty good and furthermore typically asian.

Coming to the summer camp itself, it yields the perfect opportunity to do all of this in a fun atmosphere with a group of (at least this was true for my group) interesting warmhearted people, just as foreign and lost in this city, as you are. Exploring the fake markets together in a group may give you an amazing advantage and going out to the club with your own reserved table is also pretty cool. Also there is always someone around who can help you out if you are in need for help for any reasons whatsoever.

Sightseeing, especially with young Chinese students guiding us through the sights has been one of the best parts of my travel to china, right next of course to all the new friends I made and with whom I spent some crazy days and nights.

On the final note let me give you some advice, which I wish I would have had in advance:

China in summer is super hot but as the temperature is not changing much from day to day you'll get used to it. Beware though the so called air-conditioner sickness or in Chinese _ Don't put your AC on super cold in the room.

Many toilets in China are squatting toilets, by many I mean a majority which don't provide toilet paper for free or at all, so be prepared to bring some tissues just for the case.

Immerse yourself in the nightlife, but don't get too "carried away", as the security and especially the police can be more than just a little rough. Believe me if I say you don't want to experience a unprofessional security staff member get angry at you.

Don't drink the tap water. I didn't knew it and drank 4 glasses right after I arrived at the university and I was fine, but still though it is not advised.

Don't expect to eat dog or cat meat in Beijing. Seriously we tried to find it and couldn't though legend says you might get lucky at some Korean places.

Expect to use a lot of Chinese, even though your Chinese is pretty poor many locals english will probably be even poorer so learning some key phrases like duoshao qian?

(多少钱?- how much is it?) might be a good idea.

If you'd like to access Facebook or Youtube etc. you should definitely try to configure a VPN (virtual private network) in advance. Many universities offer such a service for you for free or you could try to find a commercial one, though many of the commercial ones are efficiently blocked by the Chinese government. If you use Tor you should get some OBSF4 bridges in advance. In my opinion Tor is the easiest to use option as it is one installation and copying and pasting 1 thing.

Finally, though China might not be a country for everyone, going there is a great thing and a lifetime experience offering not only lots of fun but just so much more.

Also many things are cheap and they got Baijo a liquor with 50% alcohol by volume in a 3 litre bottle for more or less 3 euro.