

My China Adventure

Travel

I arrived in China on the 30th of August 2019. On the way from the airport to our hotel, the first thing I had noticed was how big and busy the roads were, the driving wasn't something I was used to, as there were a lot of honking and cutting lanes. Travelling in Beijing and in China in general can be a stressful, confusing experience at first but when you get the hang of it, it's cheaper, faster and more organised than anything in Ireland. During my time in China, I visited



a few tourist attractions. I've found that the more popular tourist attractions like the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors were very accessible and accommodating to non-native Chinese speakers and people whom don't speak a word of Chinese. While other smaller, lesser known attraction like the Temple of Heaven don't offer much towards non-Chinese speakers, they are still no less interesting and full of history than the mainstream attractions. Because China is so big, a lot of the attractions are spread out and aren't concentrated in one area, you do have to travel a great distance to see everything. The actual cost of long-distance travel was the most expensive part for me when travelling. I travelled from Beijing to Xian which is 1,200km, 2.5 times the length of Ireland.

It took me 4 hours by fast train or it could have taken me 16 by slow train. This cost me 80 euro compared to 20 euro it would have cost on the slow train. Because of this, I didn't leave Beijing often but that didn't stop me from experiencing China. Even traveling inside Beijing, there was always something new to see, I was never stuck or bored. Some of the Tourist spots I visited in Beijing were The Summer Palace, the Great Wall of China, Hong Luo temple and Yanqi lake. Even when homesick, there was an Irish bar that we visited a few times to watch rugby matches, it felt similar to a pub here so it would cure some homesickness. China's a very beautiful country and I only regret not travelling enough.



Food

The food in China was expectedly different and delicious. I didn't realise before going abroad that each area of China has different flavours of food. Beijing food is known for being salty and oily, Shanghai is known for sweet things and Sichuan is of course is known for their spice. In China, it's normal to order a few plates of food for everyone to share which I wasn't accustomed to but I now prefer it. The hot water in restaurants' instead of cold water was another unexpected change and most drinks aren't refrigerated which I found odd. The food is one thing I miss when I left, especially the instant noodles selection which were tasty and cheap, great when on a student budget. One thing I couldn't get used to and probably never will, was live animals in shops like Walmart because it's something we don't really practice in western culture. The idea of purchasing animals for cooking live is a weird concept to me and I don't think it is something I could ever get used to.



I have a big sweet tooth so Beijing's selection of wacky and odd flavours was something I enjoyed exploring. I thoroughly enjoyed trying flavours of crisps like smoked eel or crab and different types of dessert. Their other snacks like pre-cut fruit and their selection of pastries were very different to what we have here in Ireland and were so much better. Most of these were accessible and really cheap which was good but for someone like me, but it tempted me more than I would care to admit.

Chinese culture and how it differs to Ireland



This picture was one of the first pictures I took while in China. This was in the hotel we stayed at for our first three days in China, I took this photo because it was the first bit of Chinese culture I had seen which differed to Ireland, the city scape in the background is the shunyi district of Beijing. Because Beijing is constant busy, in a lot of places, when crossing the road, cars and bikes will drive around you which in my opinion was nerve wrecking. During the first few days and weeks, I noticed how big Beijing was and how fast and organised their public transport is compared to Ireland's disaster of a transport system. For me, there wasn't really a big culture shock, it was more of an accumulation of small things, which some were expected and other unexpected. I knew generally that Chinese commodities were cheaper than Irish but I didn't realise how little money you

could spend which is great as a student.

China and the West don't celebrate the same holidays which was one of the bigger shocks. Even though I knew they don't celebrate Christmas, it was still odd not having decorations so close to Christmas, instead they celebrate golden week or national week and Chinese New Year. Although Christmas is not as celebrated, I enjoyed partaking in the celebrations of national holidays and it was interesting to learn of the



differences in celebrating holidays between Ireland and China. In general, most of the Chinese people I had spoken to were very nice and accommodating to my poor level of spoken Chinese and would correct any mistake I might have made without judgement. I would definitely go back to learn and see more of China.

