

Hi all,

Well I am back in Darwin, adjusting to the horrid heat again – I thought the rain would be here by now!

Xian was freezing cold, sky not as blue and parks not as green as Kunming, but nevertheless a very interesting place and the warmth of the friends that I met (and the chilli in the food!) made up for the lack of sunshine!

No kids in this part of the journey, so piks aren't as cute! There were many times watching families flying their kites in the square that my eyes filled up and wished my kids could have been in Xian with me to share the experiences, but this part of the journey was for me to improve my grown up Chinese! Reading fairy tales and singing songs in Chinese is great for my kids now, but I am gonna have to keep a step ahead of them to take them further on their Chinese learning journey.

The immersion of Chinese in the classroom was just the best thing to step my Chinese up a level. Even though I am still frustrated at the amount of Chinese that I DON'T know, I have to say that this time in Xian has improved my confidence heaps...but I still have a long way to go to before I can truly say that I have a grasp of this challenging yet addictive pursuit of Chinese fluency!

Xian was...

...walking or cycling around the city wall...



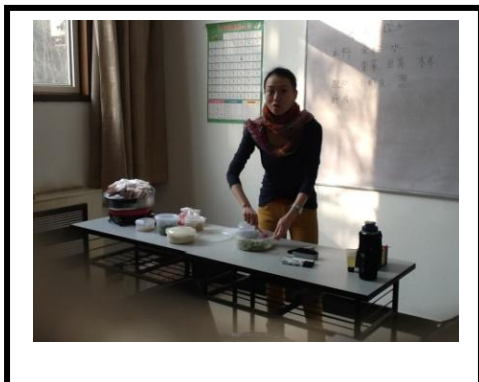
...attending class and making friends with a fantastic group of other Australian teachers in pursuit of that 'grasp' of Chinese so that they can share their passion for the language with their students...



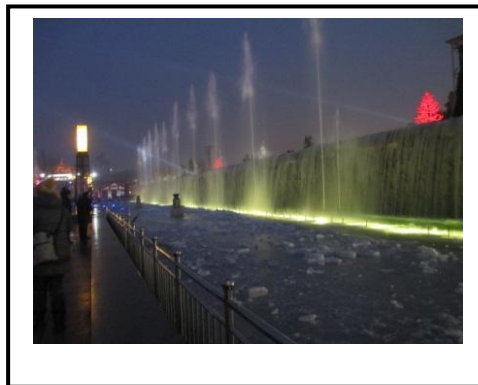
...dabbling in, and experiencing the relaxing effects of participating in tai chi, calligraphy and gong fu tea drinking...although the very patient calligraphy teacher's most common words to me were that my strokes were '不好看' (not looking good) My kids thought my strokes were cool ☺ ...



... making dumplings with teacher Chen...a wonderful Chinese teacher also took time out to take us to tea shops, shopping for bargains, and most of all gave me lots of confidence with my Chinese...



...walking around the fountains and squares around the Big Goose Pagoda, amazed at the use of red lanterns to compensate for the grey winter bare trees, wishing my kids were running with the other kids flying kites, awestruck by the ice in the fountains!...



...jumping in the pit of the first Emperor of China's tomb to get a pick with his terracotta warriors...

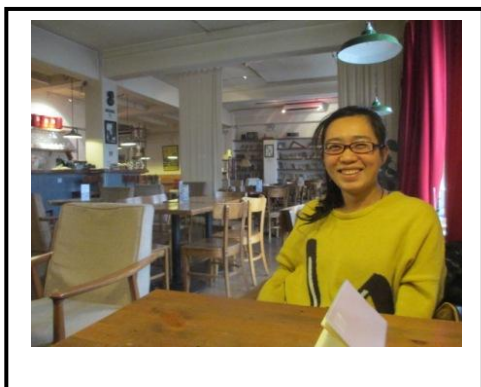


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...walking around in the minus degrees, the only way to warm up was to eat, every dish was full of chillies, like this spicy bowl of qishan noodles...



... spending time, and making a great friendship with my wonderful language buddy, Rui, who not only patiently helped me practice Chinese, (I in return helped her with English, but her English was way too good!), but who looked after me in so many ways, introduced me to the best coffee shop in town, and many local dishes including the scrumptious Biang Biang noodles. Thankyou Rui! This dish was a Shaanxi poor rural man's meal, but has become popular because of its cool name: 'Biang' is the most complicated Chinese character with 58 strokes. Teacher Chen even taught us a cool mnemonic to teach kids to remember how to write it...



The 3 months in China has been an awesome time for our family. Although such a trip set us back financially, the experience that now forms another layer of who we are is priceless.

My little boy had his first day at school today, and my little girl now in grade 2...



So I am now officially not a stay at home mum anymore...I am not sure whether to call myself a lady of leisure...or an unemployed bum! But I am ready now to share my expertise and experience of raising my children bilingual with the greater school community. Our government has big visions of preparing our children to become bilingual, especially in Chinese...that is why they provided the scholarships to prepare us teachers to teach Chinese...I just hope they remembered to give schools some money to pay us! Anyone need a Chinese teacher 😊 ???

A big warm hug to our old and new friends in China, you made our trip very special. A big hug to the Aussie teachers and fellow students in Xian, it was a real pleasure to meet other teachers as passionate (and as frustrated!) with the Chinese language, and to help each other find the classroom each day!(all teachers must be directionally challenged!). And looking forward to catching up with Darwinians soon,

Cheers,

Donna