

Five of our students went on a trip to China with 40 international students from AFS

Four F6 students and the AFS student from Iceland on a year's exchange in our school went on an AFS trip with 40 exchange students in Hong Kong to Shaoguan from December 27 to 31, 2007. They were led by the AFS helpers and our former principal, Mr Anthony Tong Kai Hong.



Some of their reflections

Evaluation of the AFS trip to Shaoguan

By F6C Yeung Man Ting

If given the opportunity to go to Shaoguan with those AFS friends again, I would definitely say yes without further hesitation as the trip was simply fantastic to me! In these five days, I tasted the warmth of friendship, and have received the best New Year's gifts, one of which has already crept into my daily life, that is the knowledge that I have got everything I need.

I am nothing more than an ordinary Hong Kong student who lives in a normal way that a student does. I was already honoured to have the chance of travelling around and getting to know new friends. Talking about making new acquaintances, how to meet the AFS students was always my biggest worry. At first, I was so shy that I didn't even dare to open my mouth and try slip out some words that I could find in my little database. However, everyone was as nice as pie! The ice was quickly melted and I just got into the swing of it! They were actually chatterboxes and I enjoyed the light air filled with laughters. Moreover, I saw great differences between the Eastern and the Western culture simply from the point of view of us regarding the same matter. Western people are a bit open-minded while Chinese people are prone to be conservative. For instance, ancient China prohibited boys and girls to have any physical interactions even a touch of a girl's hand while the common practice of western countries is hugs and kisses whenever they meet each other. But the spirit of Chinese culture is always about blending different branches of learning, I guess it can be applied when I try to accept the fact that Westerners don't mind eating ants!

Where we had been to had also left me profound memories. Especially the visit to the Bibei Hope Primary School. The learning condition was far from satisfactory that even the children at primary 4 or so there don't know words like head, shoulder, knees, toes and so on. I couldn't have imagined it as these words are already deemed as kinder garden vocabulary. It dealt a big blow to my heart and I suddenly realized how I myself am blessed, I can read and speak English, I can now write my reflection on the computer, and I can at least cherish everything here I got but the kids there do not have any at all. And this reminder was really the best New Year's gift to me!

Walking through the old, developing and modern China not only broadened my horizon but also deepened my belief that the living standard of our Motherland would one day climb up high and even beyond those of the developed countries. From then on, I wish I could go to the Mainland and just have a little trip every year.

Evaluation of the AFS trip to Shaoguan

By F6B Yip Wai Fung Andy

Last Christmas holiday, I luckily grabbed the chance to join a trip of a lifetime held by the AFS Intercultural Programs to Shaoguan. The trip lasted for five days and started immediately after the six-hour bus journey. The itinerary could be roughly divided into three parts; the interaction with students there, the visit of natural scenic spots and that of some historic or landmark attractions. In fact, I really got something from this fabulous and inspiring trip.

First of all, my database of China turned richer and my basis of Mandarin was strengthened after the trip. I have come to know more about the history of Buddhism, the story of the sixth patriarch and some interesting Buddhist sayings through the visit of Nanhua Temple. I remember asking one of the monks there about one Buddhist saying “Ying Wu Suo Zhu” and at last I could translate the meaning to my French friend that it means “we should not situate our desire in any aspects, otherwise we will be trapped in the trouble in the world of mortals”. My friend Lea and I were really impressed by the meaning behind. Besides, the views of the Danxia Mountain and Lion Rock were breathtaking. When I reached the main peak of Danxia Mountain, I felt really fresh and my study pressure was just flushed away. Another gain was found from the comparison between the prosperity of the “walking street” and the poor condition of the “Yao” family. I learned a sad fact. Despite the rapid improvement of the living standard of the world, many paupers fell behind and turned out to be the sacrifice lamb of the developing world.

The above benefits could also be gained in other trips. What makes the trip so different is the experience of getting along with people of different cultures. There were Italians, French, Americans and so forth. To be honest, my mind was full of the worry of how to get on with the western companions before the trip but in fact they were very nice.

At first, I was too shy to chat with them but then they were so outgoing that they quickly introduced us into their groups. Because of my nationality and my languages, I got many chances to help them solve the problems. And therefore, I made lots of friends there. I could never imagine I could have so many friends from another side of the world. It was absolutely a great gift to me! Another highlight was the exchange of Shaoguan’s secondary students and the teaching of English to the “Yao” children.

They inspired me a lot. Although all of them were younger than me, they all took the chance to learn and practice their English. I was ashamed that I had made so little effort in my studies. I will definitely treasure my chances to study well in the future. The visit even got funnier when we had a basketball game with the students there!

I would like to say thanks to all of the helpers in the trip here. They, especially our former principal Mr Anthony Tong, had put in much effort in ensuring our safety, planning the itinerary and the like. I could never forget the trip in the rest of my life.

Evaluation of the AFS trip to Shao Guan

By F6C Lung Suet Hin

Honestly, I have got a lot from the trip to Shaoguan in December 2007. It was my first time to join an exchange tour. Getting along with so many foreigners during the entire journey even made my first exchange tour much more special. My English communication skill has been improved by communicating with 40 AFS international students in English for five days. Besides, I have also learned more about the cultures of various countries, as well as my own country, China.

Through talking with AFS students, I noticed the cultural differences existing between us. I do not have such a strong feeling about the differences before the trip. In the trip, however, I found that sometimes even I could hear any single word they spoke, and I could not get the underlying meaning of the whole sentence. Moreover, most of the AFS students could easily pick up some difficult pronunciation from one another, although they come from different countries, while we four Chinese cannot do it well in seconds. This depressed me a bit as everyone there could do it except us. Anyway, I enjoyed interacting with them as they were so nice and friendly. Cultural differences did not appear only in languages but also in having meals. I saw that most AFS students did not eat much and did not enjoy their meal at all while I had my mouth full. It seems that this scene will not be repeated when we visit foreign countries since we live in Hong Kong, where numerous kinds of cuisines originating from different countries are common. I really hoped they could enjoy the delicious food as I did so that we could share the joy of eating. On the other hand, hearing about the experiences of the foreign friends was really fun as they have totally different lifestyles in their homelands. It was like listening to some newfangled stories. It was very enjoyable.

Visiting Shaoguan, I found that I actually do not know much about my mother country. When we visited a school there, I was utterly unfamiliar with the content on the educational posters and boards, which talked about the history and basic knowledge about China. In Hong Kong, there is not much education about national knowledge like telling students what the stars on the national flag of China represent or what had been done by the government to stop people from abusing drugs in the past. I think people living in Hong Kong should know more about our homeland, China. Being Chinese, we have the responsibility to understand our own country well. I was really ashamed when I found that I could hardly describe the whole picture of China history to others.

I enjoyed the visit to Bi Bei Primary School very much. We taught children English there. When I was small, I hoped to be a teacher in the future. I was so excited that I had become a real teacher. I love the students there so much as they were so cute and docile while many children in Hong Kong nowadays are intractable and annoying. The duration of the visit was too short and I did not want to leave in fact. Luckily, we had

our lunch there and thus had the chance to receive a grateful letter from a student. It was truly touching and warm. From that moment, I felt it is absolutely worthwhile to make the trip.

After all, I did really delight in the trip. I have made a lot of new friends and learned the cultures of various countries. The only fly in the ointment was that the visits were too short and insufficient. I would surely join some similar trips again if possible.