

Freddie Assor – Stanley Ho Funding for trip to China 2023-24



My recent trip to China was an incredible journey through six cities, each offering unique experiences and insights into the country's rich history and vibrant culture.

I began my adventure in Beijing, where I explored the Summer Palace on a beautiful sunny day. I took a boat out on Kunming Lake, enjoying the serene views and clear skies. The following day, I ventured to the Great Wall of China, a true marvel of history and architecture. Walking along the Wall, I was captivated by the breathtaking views and had a great time chatting with locals. Their reactions were priceless as I wished them "加油" in Mandarin, surprising them with my Chinese.

Beijing also gave me the chance to explore the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. Both sites were steeped in history, and I learned so much about China's imperial past. I then took the high-speed rail to Chengdu, where a Chinese pen pal introduced me to the local culinary scene. Although I couldn't try everything due to dietary restrictions, the aromas of Sichuan barbecue, hot pot, and even bullfrog were tantalizing. I was fortunate enough to visit the panda sanctuary in Chengdu, where seeing these gentle creatures in their native habitat was a highlight. I also hiked Qingcheng Mountain, a birthplace of Daoism, where I absorbed fascinating lessons on traditional Chinese spiritual practices.



Chengdu at night was a revelation, with friendly locals who made us feel at home. They even gifted us tea to take back! Our next stop was Xi'an, reachable by high-speed rail, which once again highlighted China's advanced infrastructure. Xi'an is a beautiful blend of traditional architecture and modern development. I toured the city wall at sunset, marveling at the view. The Wild Goose Pagoda's light and water show was a spectacular retelling of Chinese history. Seeing the Terracotta Warriors and the First Emperor's mausoleum was surreal—a vast historical discovery that brought our university classroom to life.

Continuing by high-speed rail, we reached Chongqing, a sprawling metropolis that showcases China's modern feats. Seeing a train pass through a building and visiting the Three Gorges Museum

underscored the city's relationship with the mighty Yangtze River. Our penultimate stop was Zhangjiajie, a place of otherworldly beauty. We hiked through the national park, which inspired the Hallelujah Mountains in Avatar. The landscape was awe inspiring, and I loved spending time with the playful monkeys in the park.

Our last stop was Shanghai, which we reached after an exhausting but unforgettable 22- hour train ride. In Shanghai, we strolled along the Bund, witnessing one of China's most important financial hubs. Visiting the Jewish Museum offered insights into Shanghai's role as a sanctuary for Jewish refugees during World War II, revealing an interesting chapter in China's history.

Overall, my trip through China was transformative. The country's landscapes, from majestic mountains to modern cityscapes, were extraordinary. I was continually impressed by the warmth and hospitality of the people, who were always eager to help or share a story. Each city had something unique to offer, making my journey a mosaic of unforgettable experiences.

