Culture Challenge - Trip to China

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Summary

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Culture Challenge: the competition

For the past 3 years Bangor University’s International Student Support Office has celebrated cultural diversity and collaboration with its annual, action packed event: the Culture Challenge.

The Culture Challenge, which this year was organised in partnership with Bangor Confucius Institute, is a great way for Bangor students from different backgrounds and nationalities to meet up, make new friends and work together as a team to compete for the first prize: a trip of a lifetime to China.

The first part of the Challenge was to find a creative way to present the culture of one or more of the team members’ native countries to a panel of six judges composed of: Dr David Joyner, Executive Director of the Bangor Confucius Institute; Alan Edwards, International Student Support; Gwenan Hine, Senior Assistant Registrar; Nick Parker, IELTS Office, Fiona Watkins, Halls of Residence and Shân Rees Roberts, Corporate Communications and Marketing.

All of the nine teams who competed this year made very interesting and informative presentations, which captivated and entertained both judges and audience. In the second part of the Challenge the teams had to answer questions, pub quiz style, about a range of topics including geography, history and arts from Wales, the UK and the rest of the world.

The points gained from both the presentation and the quiz were then added and the Orange team, composed of Zahrah Khimani, 26, from Pakistan who is studying for an MSc in Clinical Neuropsychology; Zhang Qinrui, 19, from China who is studying Accounting and Banking; Abigail Price, 24, from Wales, a Bilingualism PhD student and Wai Yu Cheung, 22, from Hong Kong who is studying for an MSc in Applied Behavioural Analysis, won the first prize.

The team members had not met prior to entering the competition, but during the process of preparing for the challenge they have learnt about each other’s cultures and made lifelong friendships.

The Culture Challenge provides not only a fun and lively competition, but it also enables the participating students to develop their team working and presentation skills, essential tools for a successful professional career. It also provides an opportunity, for the participants and the event’s audience to learn more about the various cultures and nationalities present at the university.
Shanghai

We arrived very early and, after so many hours flying, were very tired and grateful to have a driver to pick us up.

The Hotel was very central (only 10 minutes’ walk from the People’s Square, the geographical centre of Shanghai) and as soon as we dropped the bags we went for a traditional breakfast (one of many) of xiăolóngbāo (steamed dumplings) and soup. The rest of the day was taken with sightseeing and shopping and also resting from our travels.

The following day we visited Shanghai Normal University (School of Music) where we had the chance to meet some very talented students who performed for us, playing both modern and traditional tunes.

We spent the rest of the day visiting the University premises and having lunch in their canteen.
The afternoon was taken with the visit to the Tian Zi Fang, (an arts and crafts enclave that has developed from a renovated residential area in the French Concession area of Shanghai)

In the evening we met former students of Bangor University who are all currently working in Shanghai. We enjoyed a wonderful dinner with Shanghai specialities (including Hong Shao Rou, red braised pork) and then went to have a drink and admire the view of the city from the roof of the Shanghai Art Museum, based in the north part of the People’s Square.
Due to the time constraints and poor weather conditions we were unable to go further afield and visit as many sites as we wanted but we had the opportunity to share the experience of Shanghai massages, and visit Nanjing Road, the very busy shopping area near the hotel.

We also managed to squeeze in an after dinner walk on the Bund, joining thousands of locals and tourist to admire the colonial era buildings and the more modern vertical gardens adorning much of the western bank of the Huangpu River.

We left Shanghai on the third day to go, via a very comfortable and fast “bullet” train, (which goes around 300 km per hours), to the capital, Beijing.
Beijing

After arriving in our very centrally located hotel (only 15 minutes’ walk from Tiananmen Square) the team decided to visit the Dong Hua Men Night Market, where hundreds of types of street food were on sale. From fresh coconuts to Stinky Tofu, dishes from every Chinese region were represented, making it a really wild gastronomical adventure.

The following day was a very early start negotiating the capital’s heavy traffic to reach our destination: The Great wall of China. Under the scorching sun the team bravely ascended the very steep stairs, racing each other to the top. There they were welcomed by a clear blue sky and amazing views of the wall, gracefully draping itself over the mountain range. After all the effort the team treated themselves to an amazing homemade noodle dish.
The following day, after some more sightseeing of the city, we went to meet students and staff at Beijing Foreign studies University (BFSU). There, after giving a very interesting presentation about life in Bangor the team answered BFSU students and staff queries. We were then treated to a walking tour of the university and a great dinner in one of the University’s most prestigious restaurants.

Before our trip to visit Tianjin Normal University the team had a full day off, to further visit places and discover more about the Chinese culture. Some of the students decided to go shopping for souvenirs and presents and others followed the tourist route by visiting both modern and older parts of Beijing.
Tianjin

After a short and pleasant train journey we arrived in Tianjin and were welcomed by Liang Bin, from Tianjin Normal University Study Abroad Centre. He then proceeded in giving us a tour of the campus, including the student’s recreation areas which included sports halls, shops, food stall and the canteens. The purpose built constructions are very beautiful and modern, with the columned square being one of the highlights of the tour.

Following lunch, the team gave a presentation about living and studying in Bangor to TNU students and they kindly gave us a talk on Chinese culture, covering topics like folk music and Peking Opera.

The students and the Bangor team then had an opportunity to mingle, with the latter answering a variety of questions about what it really feels like to be studying at Bangor University.

The session went so well that plans were made for meeting a delegation of students later in the day, to visit the city and have a drink together.

The following morning the Bangor team and TNU students met again to visit the Tianjin art and natural history museum. Before leaving Tianjin the team had the opportunity to visit the Ancient Culture Street (Gu Wenhua Jie) where plenty of arts and craft stalls provided everybody with ample opportunity for shopping and sightseeing.