

CHINA HORIZONS

November 2009

Special Moon Festival Issue

Mid-Autumn Festival

The Moon Festival takes place on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the Chinese lunar calendar. This celebration is also referred to as the Mid-Autumn Festival and is an extremely important holiday in China. On the night of the Moon Festival, families gather together to watch the full moon rise, eat mooncakes, and read and sing poetry about the moon. Some of the other cultural events include carrying bright red lanterns, launching floating lanterns into the sky, and performing traditional dragon dances.

Along with the Mid-Autumn Festival, China celebrates National Day (Independence Day) on the first day of October. This year's National Day had a special meaning for the Chinese. It represented the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The number 60 is extremely lucky in Chinese culture, so 60 years of PRC leadership is truly cause for celebration. Beijing put on an incredible show! (YouTube has some great footage for any who are interested.)

Most teachers received a week off from work for the holiday (think of it like a Christmas break). A lot of the teachers went on some impressive trips during this time and have stories to prove it. Many teachers fought the crowds—and I mean CROWDS—of people and stood in lines for over an hour at train stations to go see the sights China. Oddly enough, some of my best memories and some of the most wonderful places I saw in China started with the adventure of trying to begin the adventure.

In this newsletter we have some great stories from the Moon Festival. Thanks so much to those of you who shared your stories, and thank you for allowing us to share them, too!

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Chinese Corner

学习中文

华夏 夏天 天边

Yellow Huáng sè 黄色

Blue Lán sè 蓝色

Orange Jú sè 橙色

Brown Kāfēi sè 咖啡色

Red Hóng sè 红色

Purple Zǐ sè 紫色

Green Lǜ sè 绿色

Black Hēi sè 黑色

Grey Huī sè 灰色

White Bái sè 白色

The Lady on the Moon

A long time ago there appeared ten suns in the sky, and the earth was burning up. The best archer in the land, a very brave man, was named Hou Yi. He shot down nine of the suns with his arrows, leaving just the one sun to warm the earth. He was now a hero and everyone in the land knew him. He had a very beautiful wife named Chang'e. They were extremely happy together and were in love. Hou Yi had an obsession with finding an elixir that would give Chang'e and himself immortality. One day while journeying he met a woman who had a pill of immortality. Hou Yi bought it from her. She warned him the pill was strong enough for two people, and he and his wife only needed to take half each. When Hou Yi got home he put the pill in a small box, but did not tell Chang'e what was in the box. After many weeks her curiosity was too much. While Hou Yi was out hunting she opened the box. Hou Yi came home unexpectedly, surprising Chang'e. She was so startled she accidentally swallowed the entire pill. Because of the overdose, she became as light as the clouds and started floating away. Even though she was now immortal, Hou Yi couldn't bring himself to shoot her down with an arrow. She floated all the way to the moon. The immortal Chang'e has lived there ever since. The next year when the moon was fullest and biggest, Hou Yi hosted a huge celebration in memory of Chang'e. That celebration has continued each year and is now called the Mid-Autumn Festival or the Moon Festival.



There are a hundred different versions of this story, each one as intriguing as the next. Everyone tells the version of the story they heard growing up, so don't be surprised if this is different from others you have heard.



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Jessica Wilde

Greetings from the best country in the world! I have been here for about 13 weeks and love it! China Horizons put me here with a wonderful school where I teach Chinese children ages 2-7, who love to give hugs and kisses! My experience here has been an adventure full of wonderful foods and friends! Of course though my first few weeks in China were difficult. I went from my senior year of high school to a foreign land where I felt alone. It was hard, but like all challenges you need to find a way to laugh. I even started naming the bugs in my apartment! I posted up pictures and letters from my family and friends. The one thing though that has brought me the most peace and made this foreign land home to me now, is a picture of Christ I have across from my bed. So each morning I wake up to someone who knows me and loves me and I know with him I can do anything!



My head mistress Fanny invites me to her home each night and I eat family dinner with them! I have had some amazing foods, from Spicy vegetables, to FRENCH FRIES! The Chinese are very helpful and make me feel so comfortable. They love America and they always make me feel like a celebrity; I get my picture taken at least once a day, and I'm currently on two posters at the school. A news crew came just the other day to film me playing Simon Says with the kids. The students love the teachers and are so grateful to me for helping them reach their dreams. It's a great feeling to know I am making a difference! I love the kids I teach here in China; they are so full of love and not afraid to tell me! Whenever I feel like this is too hard, I walk into that classroom full of my little friends and it's all worth it. I am so glad I decided to come to China and learn how to love more than ever before!

Only in China



One of our more note-worthy experiences was on Sunday, a few days into our trip to Xi'an. At the hostel our only option for a room was a dorm room. We had to share it with six other people, and that included males. When we woke up to call in to listen to church, Barbara and I found that all our roommates were asleep, and there was no other place for us to go that we would not be disturbed. So we ran to the communal bathroom and changed into our church clothes and then crept back into our room and laid down on our beds, feigning sleep, while we listened in on our cell

phones. During the first hour of the meeting our roommates began to wake up one by one, and before we knew it there were only two German males still in the room with us. As we continued to listen, the Germans woke up, and after a few moments of indecision, decided that they didn't feel like changing in the bathroom. So right as Relief Society started we both found ourselves turning our heads away and beating down our rising blushes. That was definitely a first for both of us, especially during Relief Society!

--Jamie Sheffer



October Holiday Adventures



For China's National Holiday, three of us decided to visit Xi'an. We had only decided to go the day before we left, so our options for traveling were limited, especially considering that we were traveling on one of the busiest traveling days of the year. So when we were able to get standing tickets for a 25-hour train ride to Luoyang, a city close to Xi'an, we took them. Knowing we would have no seats, we brought stools to sit on in the aisle, but we were pleasantly surprised to find the train nearly empty. So instead of a grueling 25 hours of standing, we each had our own bench to sprawl out on, and aside from the monstrous spiders and the occasional unsavory character, our trip was fairly relaxed. Upon arriving in Luoyang, our good luck struck again, and we were able to immediately get on a train to Xi'an, where we were again extremely fortunate to obtain the last three beds at one of the only hostels in Xi'an with any vacancies, which happened to be one of the most gorgeous Chinese buildings I've ever seen. As soon as we arrived we began sightseeing. Our first stop was to see the terracotta soldiers, which was a dream come true for all three of us. We then visited the Da Yan Pagoda, the largest musical fountain in Asia. We also saw multiple tombs and museums, and even climbed straight up to the top of a mountain to see an ancient lookout tower. But by far we all agreed the best part of our trip was bike-riding on top of the ancient inner-city wall at night, with our path only lit by beautiful red lanterns. Xi'an was amazing. It was busy and chaotic, like much of China, but this city has retained much of its ancient roots and combined it with the modern world to make a unique culture all its own.

--Barbra Wilson





Continued...



Our adventure began with a six-hour train ride, from midnight to 6:00am. We had to stand the whole way to Changsha, or sit on the floor with everyone's discarded sunflower seed shells. Then we took a bus to Zhangjiajie. It was a pretty comfortable ride. We stayed there for two nights and visited a monument to the workers' revolution as well as an old pagoda that served as a lookout for forest fires. Then we went into Zhangjiajie Park. It was breathtaking. We took a cable car to the summit of one of the mountains and looked out over a landscape unlike any other, with lush mountain-tops that peeked out from the mist below. We decided to go down the 7,000+ stairs to the base of the mountains to find a place to sleep. Our plan was to sleep in the park. Our plans changed when we saw the monkeys. There were monkeys throwing rocks at people! Luckily, I found a woman who knew of a place we could stay outside the park. The next day we went in search of the legendary "Heaven's Gate." After miles of hiking, we discovered that we were in the wrong national park. There are two national parks in Zhangjiajie. If we would have taken the train into Zhangjiajie, we would have seen that the entrance to the "Gateway to Heaven" is right by the train station. It really was a fun trip though. We learned a lot of valuable lessons about traveling in China.

--The Christenson's



Getting around in China is kinda a hassle. But although one must travel insane amounts of distance to get anywhere in China, the end result is well worth it. Our two-year-old on this trip alone has mounted the following apparatuses: taxi, train, city bus, tour bus, sleeper bus, and stroller. Add that to her ferry, tram, metro, and light rail experiences—she's becoming quite the world traveler.

The train from Yongzhou to Kunming (and also on the way back) lasted 27 hours. We had two hard sleeper tickets to and from Yongzhou, so we got to sleep with our little girls, which was an adventure on the small beds. Adding to the fun of the hard sleeper was the communal nature of Chinese trains. Because there were no doors, nearly every Chinese person came down to play with the foreign kids.

In terms of long trips, it only goes downhill from the train. Which brings us to the sleeper bus...

--The Rygg's

Mooncakes

For the mooncake festival a family bought me an expensive box of mooncakes. We (Haiden, Emily, Jon and his family, Sam, and Jason) got together to celebrate the holiday. I was pretty excited about my huge box of mooncakes, and I insisted that everyone try them. I had heard some pretty gross things about mooncakes but my students gave me one earlier that week and it was so good! It had blueberry-type filling inside! Well, unfortunately, I wasn't so lucky this time. The family spent a lot of money on this box and in return it had some pretty crazy flavors. Of course we didn't know what they were exactly. Jason tried his best to interpret them. There was egg, beef, ham, bean, lotus, and a mysterious green filling. They were...interesting. I'm not so sure anyone was really a fan of the mooncakes.

--Brooke Hunter

-Mooncakes are either round or square.

-Traditional mooncakes are filled with red bean or lotus paste.

-Modern mooncakes may be filled with just about anything, from meat to egg yolks to blueberry puree.

-The imprint on a mooncake includes the manufacturer's name and the type of filling.

-Some mooncakes also have the characters for longevity or harmony imprinted on them.

-Legend has it that near the end of the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1280-1368), certain Han Chinese officials who were held captive by the ruling Mongolians gave mooncakes as gifts to Han Chinese soldiers still on duty. But hidden inside the mooncakes were the orders of when and where they would attack the Mongols. The attack took place on the day of the Moon Festival and the Han Chinese overthrew the Mongols to end the Yuan Dynasty.

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