

China visit blog: Touching down in a bustling Beijing

31 July 2015 Mark Shales



Reporter Mark Shales in Beijing

Reporter Mark Shales is in China on a tour of facilities operated by ABP, the company that are developing a business district in Newham's Royal Albert Dock. Here he blogs for the first time about his experience overseas

The first stage of my Chinese adventure began in what felt like the middle of the night, despite the East Asian sun telling me it was clearly daytime.

Arriving at a humid Beijing airport at 3.30am (English time), the decision to continue watching a beefy Bradley Cooper in the on-flight showing of *American Sniper* at the expense of 132 minutes worth of sleeping no longer felt like the best idea.



Trying tea at the market

After being picked up by our ABP driver, it wasn't long before I began to realise just how numerous everything is in the world's third largest city.



The entrance to the Houhai Lake

So many people, so many buildings and so many cars – some of the manoeuvres being pulled as we headed into the city made a rush-hour commute through the A13 look like a breeze.

After a quick nap in the Maya Island Hotel – designed by ABP president Xu Weiping where everything from the architecture to the wallpaper is inspired by the ancient South American civilisation – I got the chance to tick off another experience from my tourist's guide to China. Haggling in a market.

The infamous Silk Street market boasts more than 2,000 stalls over its six floors and is notorious among tourists for its wide selection of counterfeit “designer” brands and its opportunities to drive a hard bargain from the 3,000 sellers.

After an interesting few hours sipping green tea, testing out various fans and explaining to a very insistent lady I wasn’t interested in buying a pewter bust of Mao Tse-tung’s head – even though she could “give me a good price” – we were off for some traditional local cuisine.

To my shame I often find myself reaching for the knife and fork after a trip to the local chop suey house at home, but I told myself using anything other than chopsticks here would be rude.

After one false start – accidentally covering my host in sticky chicken sauce – I managed to get the rest of my food into my mouth successfully using just the sticks!

We finished the day sipping the local beer day in the idyllic setting of Houhai in the city’s Xicheng District, a serene lake bustling with nightlife cross its shores, with the neon lights of the bars and restaurants reflecting in the water.

Lovely stuff.

http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/china_visit_blog_touching_down_in_a_bustling_beijing_1_4176987