Diary blog from China

WEEK 5

Michael McKinney is one of the group of mature students participating in a Springboard Diploma in Professional Selling and International Marketing at Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT). He is one of 13 students currently in Shanghai as part of the programme.

A nd so we have entered the home stretch, we have officially passed the halfway mark of our Chi-
na adventure and it has seemed too fly by. Sure, we’ve had glimpses and snapshots here and there and even fully lived in the moment, but with a city of 24 million you could realistically live here your entire life and never have seen every street or every site there is to see. However, we have two weeks that after the official programme has finished and we have already been making group and individual plans for getting to see more of China, both towards Beijing and out into “real” China. Much like I’ve spent years telling American tourists in Ireland, you have to get out of the cities in order to really see what a country is like!

W eek five began with St. Patrick’s Day, and from the moment we entered the office our Chinese hosts embraced the spirit of the day. They handed us all their colour badges and wore themselves dressed in green. It was brilliant to see them make the effort and Adella, Shuang, Fei Yu and Christine from the ITC were all wishing us “Happy National Day” as soon as they saw us. I can’t overstate how good each of them have been in helping us here with everything from work to advise on where to go and do things in Shanghai.

O ur St Patricks Day morning started off with a seminar on corporate social responsibility in China versus the same in Ireland. It was interesting to hear of how this new area of interest for Chinese companies has been shifting with consumers here taking more notice of such initiatives by companies. The weather was over 25 degrees with the sun shining so it was like having St Patrick’s Day in the middle of a great Irish summer.

T hat evening we all jumped in taxis and went to the French Concession where there are a proliferation of western bars. We met up Fiona Bonner and Robert Nuttall who had represented our group in the official Consulate event to mark the day. Here we met many times before like Mr Jai and his staff, some we had never have seen before, we have two weeks for that after the official programme has finished and we have already been making group and individual plans for getting to see more of China, both towards Beijing and out into “real” China. Much like I’ve spent years telling American tourists in Ireland, you have to get out of the cities in order to really see what a country is like!

O n Tuesday evening we were invited back to Jaiding to a site visit to a company with a large number of services. The best way to describe them would be to say that collectively they were like the Department of Social Protection mixed with RELATE and a few other charities in Ireland. The people, and the work they carry out is simply amazing!

O n Wednesday the festivities all over and recovered from, we visited the Public Model Centre of the New Pudong Area here in Shanghai. The building housed many worthy and hard working associations who carried out a large number of services. The best way to describe them would be to say that collectively they were like the Department of Social Protection mixed with RELATE and a few other charities in Ireland. The people, and the work they carry out is simply amazing!

The rest of the week continued with us all working in the office and doing a little exploring each night until the weekend, thankfully arrived! On Friday night five of us gathered in my room for a few drinks and a chat but on Saturday I discovered a haven on my doorstep. I had been told by Fiona and Zhao Ting He of a park only three stops from the hotel on the subway and set out to find it. Pudong Linshi Park isn’t overly large but once you are in it you forget that you are in the middle of a sprawling metropolis. There are bluebells in full bloom, an ornamental lake filled with fish, beautiful trees and singing birds. I hope to go back there tomorrow with a book and enjoy it fully. One of the things I really miss about Bundoran is walking the dogs along the cliffs in silence and solitude and this park is the closest I have gotten to that in China. I even came complete with a mini children’s bouncy house to amuse Mr Harrisons on the seafort!!!

That’s it for week five here, only one more to go before I enjoy some free time and then prepare to return to Ireland — at least for a while if, as I suspect, China calls me back!