

Field Trip to Wudang Mountain and Wuhan City in Hubei Province!

For four days from April 7 to 11, the group, along with the CIEE GAP year team Lihong Yang (Program coordinator), Lihua Liu (housing coordinator) and Yanfeng Li (Academic Advisor, core course instructor), took off for Hubei Province in central south China. Highlights of the trip included three days in Wudang Mountain and one day in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province. Wudang Mountain is known for its Daoist Monasteries constructed by the Ming Emperor during the Yongle reign (1403-1424). The mountain became the Daoist culture center in China after then, and the taiji form of martial arts is supposedly invented by a famous Daoist priest of Wudang. Wudang Daoists also developed many other forms of martial arts generally known as the internal martial arts, featuring meditation and internal energy/power development. In popular culture, Wudang Mountain is the counterpart of the Shaolin Buddhist Temple in (Henan Province) that is famous for its “external martial arts.”

“I can’t do this!” I whispered under my breath. “Maybe if I count... One. Two. Three. Four... GAH! Don’t give up!” It was the first day at Wudang Mountain, and the afternoon activity was a stroll to the top. We were all under the impression it couldn’t be too bad, right? Wrong. The hike, a mere 4.5 km, consisted only of stairs! At first the hike was easy, but soon my stamina vanished. The boys raced ahead while I stopped to catch my breath. “Forget them!” I said as I reached for my iPod. I continued for the next hour at my own pace.

After what seemed like an eternity, my quivering legs and I reached the monastery below the peak. “I am not stopping now!” I shouted as I passed three of the boys waiting for CIEE to purchase their ticket to the top. Ticket in hand, I hiked the last few staircases and reached the Golden Summit.

For the next forty-five minutes, Josh, Ben, and I celebrated our summit with crazy photos and small snacks all while soaking in the beautiful scenery. Success! **(By Catherine Looseley)**



My favorite part of the trip was definitely looking out from the top of the golden summit. Looking out over the vast mountain, I blocked out the sounds of noisy tourists and eager vendors, and imagined the lives of the original Daoists who lived on Wudangshan over 1,000 years ago. It’s not every day one has the opportunity to observe and partake in ancient history, and to do so in a place with such a rich religious and cultural background was especially powerful. **(By Ben Jacobs)**



Two weeks ago, us CIEE Gap Year students traveled to Wudangshan. We arrived at Wudangshan, took a bus to our hotel and spent two days on the mountain exploring the tiny town, inspecting the multitude of sword and crossbow shops, and hiking for a few hours up and down the trail to the top.

The kung fu show was my highlight of the trip, and consisted of an old master and his pupils (one of which was only ten) putting on a performance of tai chi and kung fu using swords, halberds, whips, and hand-to-hand combat techniques. The youngest of his pupils was the most impressive, employing a fighting style called “drunken fist,” which consisted of a lot of falling down and unpredictable thrusting and slashing with his sword.

It was a very educational and interesting trip. Even the long train rides were fun, thanks to Josh’s foresight in bringing playing cards along. **(By Marius Boehm)**

As I sat silently on the cold, stone floor of the Daoist temple trying to clear my mind and ignore the stares and mummers of the on-looker Chinese tourists, I was struck by a moment of realization. I am on Wudang Shan with a kung fu master teaching me meditation and tai chi. This is cool. Though I clumsily stumbled through the basic tai chi movements and failed to count ten breaths before my mind naturally began to wander, I gained a new appreciation for this kind of Daoist lifestyle, living in accordance with the natural way and building command over your inner spiritual energy, or qi. I felt the power of a kung fu master’s qi first hand as he effortlessly threw me to the ground as I futilely attempted to push him down first. The trip to Wudang Shan was an experience I will never forget. **(By Joshua Lee)**