

Sino the times

For Jetset Port Macquarie consultant **Maxine Adams**, her recent trip to China was an eye-opening experience – and like many Australians she is already planning a return visit

“Prepare to be surprised” is my new message to clients travelling to China after returning from my own recent trip there.

China Eastern Airlines was the first of many pleasant surprises China had in store for me – a very comfortable flight into Shanghai and some very easy to follow directions to my domestic connection to Beijing.

With the eyes of the world on Beijing you feel prepared but standing in the centre of Tiananmen Square – a site of such historical significance – was just one of those special moments when a tingle runs up your spine and you just know it will provide a unique and lingering memory.

Then there is entering the gates of the Forbidden City to be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the complex and the history of the Ming and Qing dynasties. A rickshaw ride through a Hutong, visiting the home of some locals, a sculling cruise on Houhai Lake in the middle of Beijing with its small islands, beautiful tree lined avenues and restaurants around the lake – all normal tourist experiences but ones that left me with a real feeling of satisfaction and safe in the knowledge that there would be more in store.

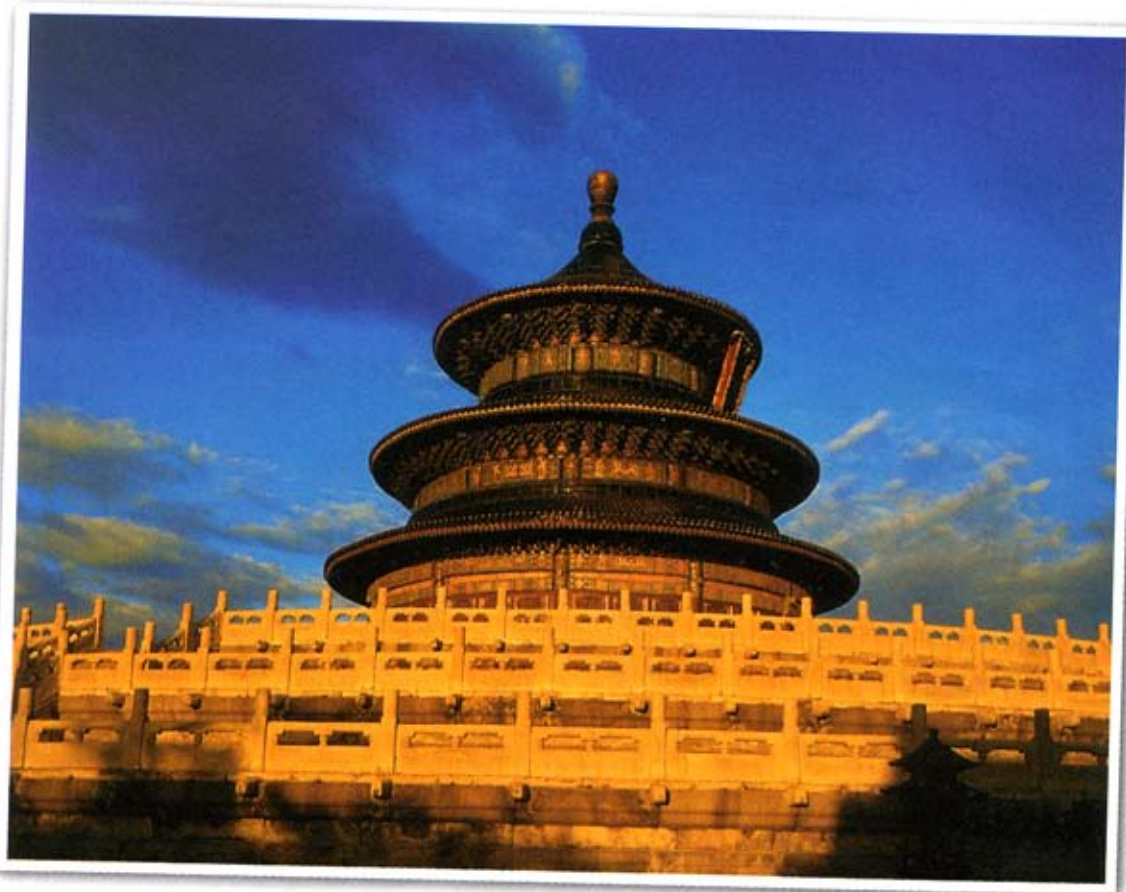
Driving to the Great Wall of China, passing overloaded trucks heading to Mongolia, I had the sudden feeling that I was slipping back into a mainstream tourist experience. How wrong I was.

Walking the wall was a surreal experience and, while there were others there, it felt much more like meeting fellow pilgrims on a journey of discovery. The climb was far more challenging than I expected – initially I had imagined an easy stroll – yet the extra effort only

enhanced the exhilaration and sense of achievement I was left with.

The third major surprise for me was Xian with its 800 Terracotta Warriors and horses; each with its own uniquely sculptured features. It is amazing to see how much work is being put into restoring them and I could only marvel at the magnitude of the effort which created them in the first place. Visiting the warriors is a “must see” in any Chinese itinerary.

The whole China experience was enhanced by a visit to the Summer



Above: the glorious Temple of Heaven in Beijing

Below right: the great wall of China is always a favourite with tourists

Palace in Beijing with its painted “Long Corridor”, the opportunity to eat traditional Beijing Duck, and to savour all the flavours of dumplings in Xian.

I am ready for more surprises and have already planned a return trip to cruise the Yangtze, visit the pandas and spend more time with the locals. This trip to China is something I will remember and treasure for years to come. I was certainly surprised at the outcomes. ■

The author visited China courtesy of China Bestours