

# Students take trip of lifetime to China

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

Nina Horner and Jadon Bachtold spent two weeks last summer honing their Chinese language skills and expanding their cultural horizons.

Through the Hanban program, which also funds Mandarin Chinese teaching positions in the Sisters School District, Horner and Bachtold traveled to Beijing and Harbin from July 15 through July 31. They paid for their air fare and travel insurance; everything else was covered by the program.

Bachtold, who has been in the Sisters Chinese language program for four years, was looking for an opportunity to immerse himself in the language.

"It really sort of helps you take another step in your language abilities," he said.

He was also looking to "just sort of engage culturally with the Chinese people."

He got everything he



PHOTO PROVIDED

Horner with Chinese folk dancers.

hoped for out of the trip.

The pair were among 21 Oregon students who made the trip. They flew into Beijing, and spent a couple of days in the capital city.

"I could spend the rest of my life without going back to Beijing," Horner said. "It's crowded and the air pollution is insane."

Bachtold confirmed that "the air pollution was unbearable."

The pair was happy to get out of the capital and head north to Harbin, where they spent 10 days of their time in China.

"There we stayed at Harbin English University," Bachtold explained. "We stayed in dorms there."

That northern city is "kind of the vacation spot for China," Horner said. Heavy Russian influence is evident in the ethnicity of the people and in the architecture of the city.

The students participated in intensive language classes.

"The Chinese language classes were intense," Horner reported.

The first two hours of one four-hour class were readily manageable, Horner said. For the second two hours, there was a new instructor who spoke in rapid-fire Chinese. Most of the American students are first- or second-generation Chinese and speak the language at home. For Sisters students who are learning in the classroom, it was hard to keep up.

"I kind of didn't understand the second half of the

four hours," Horner admitted. "It was kind of crazy."

The students enjoyed cultural experiences, including folk music performances, where they were exposed to the different instruments and musical modes of traditional Chinese culture.

The Americans were conspicuously Caucasian and very tall and "kind of stuck out like sore thumbs in Harbin," Horner noted.

They got recruited into pickup basketball games at the university. Horner, who plays the sport for the Outlaws, surprised her hosts with her abilities.

"They didn't expect me to be able to play basketball," she said.

Bachtold recounted jumping in with a group of women who were performing tai chi in the streets.

Both noted that many Chinese they met were eager to practice their English on native English speakers.

"They wanted to practice their English on us as much as we wanted to practice our Chinese on them," Horner



PHOTO PROVIDED

Nina Horner and Jadon Bachtold spent 10 days in Harbin, China.

said.

Thus the program's emphasis on bridge-building between cultures was enacted, one conversation at a time.

Bachtold emphasized how significant the support of the Chinese government has been.

"It's pretty remarkable how much the Chinese government has supported our school and supported us on this trip," he said. "I'm really

grateful to have been able to do this."

Bachtold plans to pursue his language studies through college. So does Horner. She's looking at international business — or a return to China to teach English.

Horner and Bachtold will travel to Portland on October 9 for a reunion with the other Oregon students who made this trip of a lifetime across the world.

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