

# Grovers return from China

After 10 whirlwind days overseas, chamber of commerce director Travis Palmer talks China

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Travis Palmer was walking past a booth at a conference for chamber of commerce administrators nearly two years ago and got an idea.

"It was a company that specialized in sending groups to China," he said, fresh back from the journey and still battling jet-lag.

The initial informational meeting for the trip drew in 70 interested residents and two weeks ago, 37 boarded a plane for the trip overseas.

The group traveled from Beijing to Shanghai visiting popular tourist destinations on the way including the Great Wall and the Temple of Heaven.

"Everytime I thought I had a favorite thing we did, we would do something new and I would say, 'this could be my new favorite,'" Palmer said.

The chamber opted to spearhead the trip as both a tourist experience and a business opportunity.

"There was an option to meet with business owners in China, it's an outreach program for them," Palmer said.

However, the meeting was cancelled.

"I don't know if it was timing but there was also a state holiday while we were there," Palmer said, noting that he was unsure if the current political climate contributed to the cancellation.

While the group did not get to meet with business leaders, it did make stops at jade and silk factories for the chance to purchase mementos and indulged in rickshaw and boat rides.

The group also found itself the center of attention.

"One of the more surprising things was just how nice and accepting the people were," Palmer said. "We had our pictures taken constantly. The locals never seemed to tire of their interest in tourists, they'd ask to take pictures with you and try to sneak pictures or ask for pictures directly."

The chamber does not plan to make the trip to China next year, instead opting for a yet-to-be-announced destination but Palmer said China will remain on the list for future years.

"China just got better and better and better," he said.



Thirty-seven Cottage Grove residents made the trip to China earlier this month making stop at the Terracotta Warriors, the Great Wall, the Temple of Heaven, Hutong Market, the Llama Temple, the Forbidden Palace, Tiananmen Square and Xi'an.



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