

Pony Club Australia - China Exchange

Nanning and Haikou - 17th to 22nd May 2019

I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of the coaches to travel to China on exchange with six riders, Lachlan Nicholls (Vic), Abi Brooks (Tas), Gabriella Nicholls (SA), Rohan Smith (WA), Natalie White (Qld) and Lani Ikumai (NSW) and another PCA coach, Margrete Erling (NSW), in May 2019.



I was unsure what to expect from the exchange as I had not spoken to a coach who had been previously and riders I had spoken to, were not very forthcoming in information. Below is an account of my trip to Nanning and Haikou.

It was an experience I will never forget and I am very grateful of Pony Club Australia and China Pony Club for the opportunity.

We definitely made many new life time friends and that is something horses and Pony Club is all about.

China was very welcoming of our team and super appreciative of our year of expertise with Pony Club and horses. It was great to have people so enthused to learn from us and take what we had to say seriously. We have all been welcomed back and hopefully we will get back to see our friends and see how they are progressing.

Day 1

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Our first stop was the city of Nanning; we literally hit the ground running on our arrival day. On arrival we were greeted by an enthusiastic group from China Pony Club and host parents, where we were shown



to waiting cars to travel to Capitano riding centre for lunch. We were made very welcome and shared a traditional Chinese banquet for lunch.

After lunch, our Australian riders got to spend a little time with the horses they would be riding in the show jumping competition. Our riders were paired up with

riders from China Pony Club and saddled up their horses for a brief ride. After a little familiarisation our riders mounted and had a 30 minute ride. We spent a little down time in the recreation room cooling down, before heading to Wuyue Shopping Centre, the home of Pony Club @Sky.



While at Pony Club @Sky, the riders had an archery lesson to develop their skills for the mounted archery competition on the weekend. After a lot of fun and laughter learning archery, it was off to dinner (McDonalds) before returning to our hotel and the riders to their host homes for the night, to get some rest for an early start to the next morning.

Day 2



The next morning after a brief walk from our hotel, I arrived at Pony Club @Sky to examine E, D and D Star Certificates, while Margrete and the Australian team headed back to Capitano to jump the school horses. The riders were very well presented and prepared. Later in the morning I was joined by the rest of the team and we headed off for lunch at a minority people style restaurant.

The afternoon was the commencement of the International Youth Equestrian Open opening ceremony, where we filled in to the arena as teams to our national anthem. It was a very moving moment. There was over 100 spectators watching the moment, who were all very

excited to see the Australian team.

All riders rode two individual gymkhana races, the mug race and the Canadian race. Our Australian riders rode well on horses they had only just met. At the completion of the competition we were taken to the recreation room for an interview with local students. The interaction between our team and the Chinese students was one of fun and laughter.



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Back onto the ponies and it was time for the archery competition. The Australian team did very well, even better than they did on foot. The Chinese hosts were surprised how good the riders were and asked them to do further demonstrations to a school group that had arrived. After the completion of archery, we were back to the media room, which was now filled with students, some parents and teachers. Riders were split into two

groups with Chinese student, where my group was to demonstrate mounting, sitting correctly and holding the reins. The other group with Margrete were discussing horse care. After the completion of the demonstration, the groups swapped. It was great to see our riders helping the Chinese students to learn about horses.

It was then back to the competition arena to do archery on foot, before Japanese for dinner. After dinner was a presentation night. We had no idea



that it would be the centre stage of the shopping mall. We arrived to a cheer from the crowd, before sitting down to a stage show of dancing, martial arts and a fashion parade. It was a very overwhelming experience. Margrete and I made some presentations of certificates from previous assessments before heading back to the hotel.

Day 3

马术月卡五折优惠



Early rise for day three of our exchange, to design and build a show jumping course for today's competition. I designed the challenging course and Margrete was to judge. The competition was in three heights, poles, 30-50cm and 50-70cm. The morning was very warm and was going to prove a

challenge for the competition. The Australian team were to compete in the two higher heights and a number of neighbouring clubs had also entered riders.

The Australian riders rode well and even though some didn't get to ride the horses they had practice on. Due to the heat we kept the riding of the horses to a bare minimum. Some of the Chinese riders proved to have some great skills and it will be wonderful to see them in the near future, as I am sure they will prove to be great riders.



After the 30-50cm course, we raised it before lunch and had a bit of down time in the heat. It was take away McDonalds again today. During the lunch break, one of the Chinese riders demonstrated her skills on the piano and gave us a small show.

The afternoon of show jumping went a little quicker, with less in the higher class before the mounted games. Each Australian rider was a captain with 3 riders from China, to compete in "The Housewives" race and the "Hydrangea" race. It was great to see the interaction between the two countries and many laughs were had.



At the completion of the mounted games, the Chinese hosts asked if the Australian team could give a demonstration on riding them at speed. Our team jumped at the chance and our host country loved what they saw. Rohan is a mounted games specialist so demonstrated vaulting on, something I am sure the Chinese riders will now want to practice.

After a quick freshen up at our hotel, we arrived at Pony Club @Sky for a presentation dinner. As we walked in our jaws dropped. We were greeted by a large presentation stage, huge white table clothed tables and a massive Japanese banquet. We were presented with more stage performances from singers, dancers, kung fu demonstrations and a presentation from our own riders, of the song "Home Amongst the Gumtrees" and a whip cracking demonstration.



2019CPC中澳青少年马术（南宁）公开赛
2019CPC China-Australia
Youth Equestrian Open (Nanning)



Following the stage performances, the awards began. They had beautiful trophies, prizes and money for the winners and placegetters. It was great to see Natalie standing on the winner's podium for both the higher heights.

Day 4

An 8am start this morning with our host picking us up to visit Nanning Middle School. We were given a brief tour of the grounds before arriving at a classroom. Once in the classroom our riders gave a brief introduction of themselves, before the class was divided up and paired with our riders.

We then left the classroom to board a bus to Pony Club @Sky. Once at



@Sky, we broke into two groups, Margrete with three Australian riders and half the Chinese students; and the remainder with me. My group were taught to approach the pony and how to mount, before having a little walk on them, the other group were learning about points of the horse and horse care. These students had never been near horses before. We then swapped groups.



At the completion of this exercise it was time to say good bye to the middle school students and load into our host's cars for a short drive to "Ma Shang You" horse club, where we were to go on a trail ride on Tiger Ridge. On arrival we were shown to the dining room for lunch, before saddling up for our ride.

No time to get familiar with the horses, it was straight up and off we went. A few horses were a little bit unsettled to begin with, but settled in to the ride. We travelled all types of terrain, gravel roads, paved paths, muddy tracks, bridges and even local streets. It is certainly a ride none of us will forget in a hurry.

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Tonight was to be a big celebration dinner between the hosts and their families. We arrived at the restaurant and as a group we proceeded into the venue, only to be greeted by singers with instruments to welcome us. I had asked if this was what occurred at this restaurant all the time, only to be told no, just a special event for our Australian guests.

We arrived to the biggest round table I had ever seen, with a motorized lazy Susan. The dinner spread was huge with lots of local variety. I was sat next to Margrete and Thomas (host from Singapore) and next to him was Sean, the British coach they had made us scared of. Let's just say Sean was a blast and we hit it off and have become good friends.

Towards the end of the night the fun began with singing and dancing, as well as a traditional welcoming ceremony for Margrete, Sean and I. Now that was an experience and a half. One of the Australian riders had discovered they could connect their phone to the TV in the private function room and started snap chatting our faces. The room was in fits of laughter.



Day 5



Today was a non horse day, with our first visit for the day being to the Nanning museum. Sean Hope had joined us for today's adventures. While at the museum, we learnt about ancient Nanning and modern Nanning. It was a little difficult to keep the riders focused. Once shown around the two exhibitions, it was off to "Ban Ri Ya" tea house to have a traditional tea

ceremony and learn the processes. Again it was difficult to keep the riders focused, especially when they were told that they were not allowed to speak during the entire process.

It was then off to the museum restaurant for lunch, before heading across the river to one of Nanning's temples. We had a look around and Bruce (one of the hosts) gave us a brief overview of the temple, before preceding a few hundred metres to another museum. Unfortunately the guide was not available, so we just visited the museum shop and café for a drink.



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云端
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After a little bit of a rest and a drink we were back in the cars and on the road to the location of ancient Nanning, now a beautiful spot with modern buildings, set up like older style. While in this area we got to sample a few treats including dumplings, butter cakes and other desserts, before crossing under the subway to the "Eat Street". Here the riders walked through quickly with some of the hosts, while Margrete, Sean, one of the host mums

and I walked slowly and took in the atmosphere. We sampled freshly made lemonade and fried pork in a beetle leaf.

This was our last night in Nanning. As we had sampled so much during the late afternoon, no one was feeling like dinner, so we went back to our hotel to pack and the riders went with their host families to play games for the night.



Day 6



Today we said good bye to our Nanning hosts and new friends, boarded a plane and headed to Haikou on Hainan Island. After a short one hour flight, we landed in Haikou, collected our bags and left the arrival gates. We were greeted by a group of enthusiastic people with flags and camera crew. We were beginning to feel like celebrities by now with the number of cameras on us.

We were ushered to awaiting vehicles and headed to our accommodation. The hosts had pre ordered KFC for us to eat on the drive to our hotel. We were heading out of the city and we started to wonder where we were being put up for the week, then all of a sudden this tourist area popped up in front of us and here we were, at a luxury resort, Mission Hills, with PGA golf courses. We were all a little excited at the prospect



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of staying at a beautiful resort. We collected our room keys and headed up the elevator. The riders were on level 5, Margrete on level 16 and I was on level 12.

I opened the door to my room and was greeted by a beautifully appointed suite, bigger than most one bedroom apartments in Melbourne. It was pure heaven. I quickly unpacked, before meeting the rest of the

team down in the lobby for a quick walk around the resort. It was off season, so a lot of the facilities were closed. They had large lagoon pool, river rapid pools, wave pool, indoor pool and beautiful outdoor hot springs. Margrete and the riders stayed down for a swim, while I went and rested for the afternoon.



Our hosts came back at 5pm to take us to a traditional Chinese banquet. Margrete and I were in two separate rooms with three riders each, to enable us to get to know our new hosts. The venue was a little loud so difficult to hear. There was a stage show, that they included our riders in, before calling us all up on stage to present us with a lei.



Tonight proved a little bit of a challenge with the riders being super excited about being in a luxury resort and no longer in host families.



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Day 7

Today we set out to look at some private equestrian facilities as a bit of PR for Pony Club and to get to know what is available on Hainan. Our first stop was a facility which offered riding school horses and cabins to stay in. It was quite well set up and the owner was very knowledgeable. We had a tour and a discussion with the owner before moving down the road a few kilometres to another private facility.



This facility was owned by a company and was very well set up and beautiful big arenas. The head stable manager was from Beijing and trained in the British way. The stables were immaculate and well set out; the tack room was almost OCD; good wash bay area and a great mix of horses, with a bit of height. After a few photo opportunities it was back into our transport for a tea ceremony back in the city of Haikou.



After the tea ceremony, the riders were asked what they wanted to have for lunch. Our hosts were worried they were not eating the traditional Chinese food. So KFC it was again! After our KFC feast we headed back to the area of our hotel, to the tourist area, where we were shown the NBA exhibition and the BARCA experience.

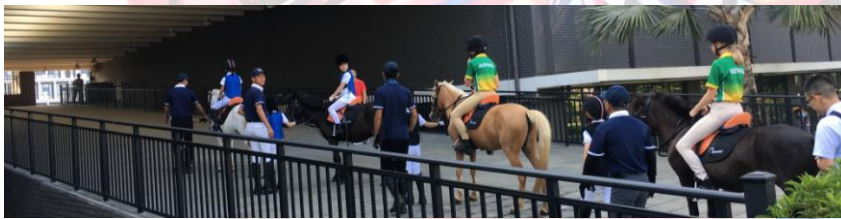


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Both facilities were very interactive and gave an opportunity for our riders to let off some energy. It was a great afternoon with many laughs. We were interviewed by some media, given private tours and completely immersed in the interaction of the facilities, before heading to a little local restaurant for a traditional Chinese banquet.

Day 8



Early start to the morning to visit the Peking Elementary School. Our two smallest riders, Abi and Rohan, rode ponies with

two China Pony Club riders through the school grounds to the sports oval. Ponies were very well behaved to the screaming school students. Once the riders had lined up and the students had settled down, I then made a presentation to the students and parents about horse riding and its benefits then went through parts of the pony and saddlery.



Riders then gave a display of bending race. Students were cheering them on. The China Pony Club riders were not 100% sure on what to do, I ran with them to help them. After riders gave a display, they were given promotional key rings to hand out to the students. The key rings were unicorns, Pegasus and the like. They were a very good idea and well received.

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The team was then shown to a classroom, to learn calligraphy. It was coming up to international children's month, so we learnt to do 1/6 (1st June). We were split up around the classroom and shared the table with students (about 7 or 8 years of age). The students had a ball learning with us in the classroom. After our calligraphy lesson it was off to the gymnasium for our riders to join a PE class learning some martial arts.

Riders had a great time learning martial arts and joining in the class. At the completion of the class, they had some spare time, where the gym just broke into a hive of activity. I think the teacher thought it was getting out of hand and he blew his whistle. It was amazing to watch the Chinese students, just stop and line up. Our riders were still running around.

We then reformed and met at the front of the school. We were given an introduction to the school by three students in various positions in the school grounds. The students spoke very well and their parents were super proud of them. Some more photos were taken before leaving for lunch at Pizza Hut.

After lunch we visited Nicole's Kindergarten. Riders had prepared one minute videos of them riding a horse, which was played before each of them introduced themselves. The kindergarten kids loved it. The riding school had brought along a horse of which Rohan demonstrated on how to get on and Margrete explained how to stay safe around them and the fun that riding horses can bring.



With so many large meals, everyone was feeling full and when asked what we wanted for dinner, the riders asked just for KFC chips. So off to KFC again, for take away chips, before heading back to the hotel.

Day 9



Today we were based in the morning at Hainan Equestrian Academy to promote Pony Club to prospective Chinese families. This centre was on the roof top of a shopping centre and relatively set up. We gave a number of demonstrations and assisted prospective riders how to groom and saddle their ponies.

Our riders and Chinese riders had some on foot games, riding hobby horses to have some fun interaction. The club had set up a small (5 fences all on the left rein) to show the crowd jumping. Our riders were placed on unknown horses and jumped the course. Our riders did well.



Off to a Chinese restaurant for lunch before heading to "Mahagala Sino" for an afternoon of VIP's. We had a presentation on business by a gentleman that is friends with Kevin Rudd, ancient coins and their history and a presentation on evolution of horses and how to age a horse from a vet. Our riders gave a less formal presentation of Aussie slang. It lightened the mood in the room indeed.

Before another banquet dinner, we were given the opportunity to make spring rolls and dragon boat dumplings. It was a great night mingling with others and learning about the Chinese culture and them learning about ours.

Day 10



2019CPC CHINA-AUSTRALIA YOUTH EQUESTRIAN OPEN (NANNING)

Assessment day at Hainan Equestrian Academy at Wuyue shopping centre. This riding centre was on the ground floor of the shopping centre. It had an outdoor and indoor arena, stable area with wash bays, multi-purpose rooms and an office. We started the morning with an opening ceremony, as this centre was only a few weeks old. Carol Hobson (Tas) gave a speech, before many more photos.



I was then given the opportunity to teach the riders sitting their E and D Certificates what was required. We set up four tables with brushes, saddles and bridles to give the riders the opportunity to learn the English name of all the parts. I had our riders working in pairs helping the



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Chinese riders. This took up the remainder of the morning. It was off to Cantonese lunch before the afternoon of assessment.

Margrete was doing the assessment, so the riders and I had some down time, so it was off to do some shopping in the mall. It was a huge afternoon of assessment before meeting back up with Carol Hobson for a Chinese BBQ dinner and Karaoke. We had a great night laughing and singing.

Day 11

An early morning start, we headed to the Hainan Vocational Training School to meet the Equestrian students. We arrived to a large welcoming party with more photos, before being guided by their tourism students, showing us through their tourism centre. We then met up with students where our riders were given two buddies to look after them all day.



After a quick introduction it was off to the Equestrian class, where Margrete and I gave a lecture. I gave a presentation on the horse industry in Australia and the importance of it to our economy and gave a brief overview of Pony Club in Australia. Between the two lectures, we were taken to a



balcony to watch the school do their morning exercise. It was so well presented and precise.

Back in the classroom, Margrete gave a presentation on jumping equitation, showing the class how to design a course (using my course design from Nanning), then explaining how to ride it and faults that occur during a show jumping course. Our riders also had the opportunity to stream their videos to the students, before we were taken to the schools restaurant to have lunch that their hospitality students had prepared.



The afternoon we got into a luxury mini coach, while the equestrian class got into an ordinary coach and we headed out of the city to the Changchi Group Equestrian Centre. The centre was a mixed



enterprise, with racehorses, dressage and jumping horses, as well as carriage horses. We were taken to a media room for a presentation, which was recorded for use on the local news. The equestrian students asked our riders questions and I was asked to give our views of the horse industry in China that we had seen so far.

We were all then given a tour of the stable complex and introduced to some of the horses from Australia. During the tour Lani and I were interviewed by reporters for a segment on the news shown that evening. We were then taken out to the racetrack in golf buggies for a look. The track had a two very tight turns. It would be interesting to see the horse's race on it.



Back to the Indoor to be shown a private dining room for a very fancy dinner. The room was spectacular and we felt a little under dressed in our riding wear.

Day 12

Our last day in Haikou and China. We had no pre arranged commitments, so it was have everything packed ready to go and head to the pool for a swim. Our hosts then met us in the foyer and it was off to the airport. We were presented with a large number of gifts from our new friends before they headed off to get us lunch back to the airport. You guessed it KFC again.



It was a little sad to leave as we were all having a great time. On the plane and off home via Hong Kong and Sydney.

