

SOUTH AFRICAN PONY CLUB

CHINA EXCHANGE, SUZHOU, XI'AN 2024



One World – One Pony Club

2024 was the second opportunity for South Africa to take part in the International Exchange between China Pony Club, New Zealand Pony Club and Australia Pony Club. This year Ireland also joined us for the first week so it was very exciting to have 5 countries coming together to share experiences and expertise. I would like to say a very big thank you to our sponsors, TerraManzi, Escape+Explore and the wonderful Chinese hosts for this China Exchange 2024.

Our Team South Africa was kitted out in pale blue caps and navy blue, black and grey shirts for the occasion and a big thank you to our sponsors TerraManzi and Escape +Explore



ESCAPE+EXPLORE
VENTURE INTO AFRICA

The team was also given a LeMieux back pack – sponsored by parents and Escape + Explore. This back pack was so useful and went everywhere with us.

The excitement started when the riders from Cape Town and Durban arrived in Johannesburg and were met by the team manager Thelma on Thursday, they were hosted by Irene Midrand Pony Club and received their International pins at the dinner that evening. Our team flew from Johannesburg to Hong Kong, then a connecting flight

to Shanghai, a trip of over 20 hours. Jessica from China Pony Club met us at the airport and we also met the Irish team who had arrived just before us. The bus trip to Saga gave us the first view of the tall apartment buildings along the route.



世骑家马术中心

Our first venue was at Saga International Riding Centre in Suzhou. The New Zealand and Australian teams had already arrived and gave us a lovely welcome on our arrival at the accommodation. This is an impressive facility with a wide range of horses and ponies. Chinese children are riding all shapes and sizes and it was a wonderful experience for our children to ride Mongolian cross breeds and imported warmbloods. A very big thank you to our hosts for arranging these ponies and horses for our riders to take part in the competitions. On Sunday, we met Berlin, Ted, Wulala and Brand who were our horses for this phase of the exchange. Jade and Spring arrived the next day.



Saga Pony Club has a number of facilities in the area and we were taken to visit a number of them, including one on the top of a shopping centre! Our riders helped with leading little ones, teaching grooming and plaiting.

The two competition days were intense and the pomp and ceremony after each event was new to us. Our team rode well and received many trophies, certificates and sashes. South Africa was placed in every event. Our best achievements on day 1 being Tara 3rd in the Prep Dressage, In the 60cm class Molly came 5th, 80cm our team was 2nd with individual places going to Annabelle 3rd, Molly 4th, Tara 7th and 8th; in the 1:00m class Jonathan came 7th. Day 2 was the 80cm class where Annabelle came 3rd and Molly 4th. Our team came 2nd. The Prelim dressage was our chance to really shine, Jonathan won this, Annabelle 2nd and our team won.



After the prizegiving our team had prepared the Jersualema dance and we performed this a few times during the visit. It became a popular dance and soon all the teams joined in.

Our hosts took us to see a traditional Chinese temple, this one dedicated to an ancient turtle. And then it was time for some shopping in a market selling all types of food and curios.



The second week we moved to X'ian to My Horse Riding Centre. This is one of the riding establishments in the area and once again we were impressed with the beautiful stables, indoor and outdoor arena. Both arenas are an ebb and flow surface. The welcome dinner was hosted by Mr Wan and our teams enjoyed the interesting food and then the dancing began!



The Chinese hosts and coaches went out of their way to provide lovely horses for all 4 teams. We drew Rocket (a Mongolian cross) and Alexia (an imported warmblood. Both horses gave our riders a good time and we had some lovely results in the competitions.

This week we had more sightseeing opportunities; one was a day hosted by Greenland school in the Industrial park. This innovative school has horse riding as part of their curriculum and the ponies are brought from their stables daily to be used for lessons in the small arena at the school. We all attended a class at the school some did Kung Fu and others painted a classic Chinese picture. In the afternoon we visited a living museum which showcased insects and the children created their own specimen box with a Chinese butterfly as the specimen, then a visit to a fig orchard and a dragonfruit orchard.



In the evening we were taken to a traditional Chinese restaurant to experience a wide range of Chinese foods and flavours.

We were taken to 2 very special sightseeing trips, one was to the TerraCotta warriors, one of the 8 wonders of the ancient world and the other was an evening in Sleepless City. We had one more shopping opportunity in X'ian, to an Outlet centre to find designer labels at bargain prices.



Team SA had the opportunity to train with Emma Barker an FEI Level 2 course builder who is based in New Zealand. All 4 children passed this Achievement Badge.



The last 2 days were the competition days. This time our International teams competed in the 80cm and 1:00m classes. Our riders rode well and had huge applause from the coaches for getting Rocket over the 1:00m track and even getting his first ever clear round at 80cm.

Sunday evening was a lovely celebration to mark the end of an amazing trip. More interesting food, awards, singing, dancing and a fireworks display brought to a close this China Exchange of 2024.

Monday morning dawned to rather subdued riders, saying goodbye to our new friends, hosts and horses is always difficult. However, the flight home held the anticipation of seeing families again and riding our own horses once more. We parted in OR Tambo airport, to return to our normal lives, carrying unforgettable memories of this opportunity.

Thank you Pony Club South Africa for arranging this trip.