

The Great Wall of China - 20 May 2006

On the 20 May this year I was lucky enough to be allowed to take time off work and travel to China with some HMC members to do a marathon, (well why else would you take a holiday if you where not doing a marathon?) The run included going on part of the Great Wall of China, down around the local villages then back on the wall. Definitely one of those things you must put on your to do list "visit the Great Wall that is".

What a fascinating country, the old next to the new technology, some parts were almost overwhelming. Like part of the run that went up a 2 kilometre hill to a village, the day before the locals got out with their brooms and swept the road for us, the whole of the villagers where out on the side of the roads cheering us on and children giving high fives. Then there was the women doing her washing in the irrigation ditch on the side of the road, not to mention the toilet at the half way point - hey, what an achievement for the legs to squat and rise to run again half way thru a marathon.

If you are looking for a challenge this one caters for everyone. With a 5km, 10km, half and full marathon, it also caters for the support crew, so everyone is included in everything. To get details on the marathon go on to the web site (www.great-wall-marathon.com), there is a kilometre by kilometre description of the event. The marathon itself was tough, coming under endurance event for me. Hang on it did start with a five kilometre hill climb just to get to the wall, and then there was them steps "just a few." As I was being a tourist I took my disposable camera along with me on the run, and did not worry as to how long I was on the road for. The down side of it was the smog and dust in the air from the sand storms from the Gobi Desert. Having someone to run with and share the sights on the way was fantastic.

The driving skills in China are incredible, buses get into spaces with two inches' clearance on each side. Many a time you would be at an intersection with traffic coming straight on, but no rage road was to be seen, they just casually weaved in and out and got thru. We found everything we had booked in advance was fantastic, you were picked up from the airport, delivered to your accommodation, picked up from there and taken to you next destination, all guides could speak English. I have plenty of pictures for anyone who wishes to see them.

Helen Kuck

