DAVID C. COUPER · VETERANS FOR PEACE

Peace Be With You!

Safety, order, faith and neighbors: what a month in China taught us

Peace and Friendship Tour — October 2026

THE ROUTE

Nine cities, coast to desert

From Shanghai and Hong Kong on the coast to Urumqi, some 1,500 miles west of Beijing.



VETERANS FOR PEACE

It began as a peace delegation

In the meeting rooms

Roundtables, handshakes and banquet toasts with officials.

On the street

Where the real learning came: looking curious, Google Translate in hand, and excellent city guides.

It’s all about the wonderful people we met.

Our delegation







THEN

A father-son team

THE JOURNEY

25 days, nine cities and 10,000 miles across China

Shanghai

St. Ignatius Cathedral and Fuxing Park

Beijing

Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven

Nanjing

Sanzang Pagoda, City Wall, High Mass, Ming Wall

Chengdu

Wenshu Monastery, People’s Park, Pandas

Xinjiang Province

Silk Road cities of Urumqi, Korla and Kuqa

Xi’an

The parks, a harmonica, Terracotta Soldiers

“Most everything we thought about China before we went was wrong. Very wrong.”

SAFETY

A society where safety, order and respect come first

Officers on foot

Walking their beats, red and blue lights blinking on their shoulders. Most carried no gun.

Safety in every room

Smoke masks and fire blankets in hotel rooms. Fences and guards at every school.

Streets at midnight

Families at night markets, spotless sidewalks, almost no one visibly homeless or in crisis.

Checks everywhere

ID, bag and body scans at public places like Tiananmen Square.

ORDER

Safety tools

On street corners, in shops and hotel lobbies, I found racks of gear for anyone to use: a long “man-fork” that pins an attacker at a distance, a clear shield, sometimes a helmet and baton.

The danger on China’s streets is the blade, not the bullet. These tools are ready within seconds.

> *No one has to win the fight. They only have to keep a distance until police arrive.*



THE PRICE

Presence without accountability

What a visitor sees

- Friendly officers on foot.
- Neighborhood “grid” workers on every block.
- Calm, orderly streets.

What a visitor doesn’t see

- Security monitors report on households to the Party; cameras everywhere.
- No free press, civilian review or court to turn to.
- Policing that answers upward, not to the people.

How much freedom will we trade for safety? And is our own quest for freedom pushing against our neighbors’ right to feel safe?

A PARABLE IN STONE

Every brick carried its maker’s name

Along Nanjing’s 600-year-old Ming wall, each brick is stamped with the name of the one who made it. If a brick failed, its maker answered for it.

DAILY LIFE

A country on the move

Giant cities

Several cities about three times the size of New York.

Bullet trains

Hundreds of high-speed trains, gliding along at 180 mph and more.

Traffic swarms

Pedestrians, bikes and e-scooters in a daily dance, with few accidents.

No cash needed

Didi for every cab ride, WeChat for every purchase.

FOOD AND RESPECT

Good tables, and honor for elders

Fabulous, affordable food

- Soup dumplings off Shanghai’s Bund.
- Peking duck, Chengdu hot pot.
- Xinjiang lamb skewers and fresh naan.

A culture of respect

- A hospital visit, and excellent care.
- Signs reading “Elderly patients first.”
- The vehicular traffic “dance.”

Wow! China works!

The business of China is business.

An economy that blends communism and capitalism, and allows religious expression as “cultural practice.”

FAITH

Spirituality or culture?

A Buddhist monastery and two Catholic churches

CHENGDU

Wenshu Monastery

A working Buddhist monastery in the heart of a city of 20+ million residents





FAITH

Urumqi Catholics





FAITH

Lunch with young Catholics



NEIGHBORS · HAN CHINESE

Harmonica diplomacy!





NEIGHBORS · UYGHUR

Seeking out the Uyghurs

What we found

- We sought out so-called oppressed Uyghurs and talked with them. They didn’t seem to be.
- A bustling Grand Bazaar, signs in Mandarin and Uyghur.
- In Kuqa, elders greeting us, hand on heart.

The history behind it

- Armed police on an armored car by the bazaar.
- Riots in 2009, an attack in 2014, then a vast crackdown.
- In 2022 the UN rights office found serious abuses against Uyghurs; Beijing denies it.

Silk and classical Chinese theater









COMING HOME

What we carried back

Be present

Walk among people. Presence builds trust.

Safety tools

Time and distance save lives.

Seek peace person to person

Order is not necessarily peace. Peace needs trust and accountability.

In the end, it’s all about people!

China scenes












天干開泰













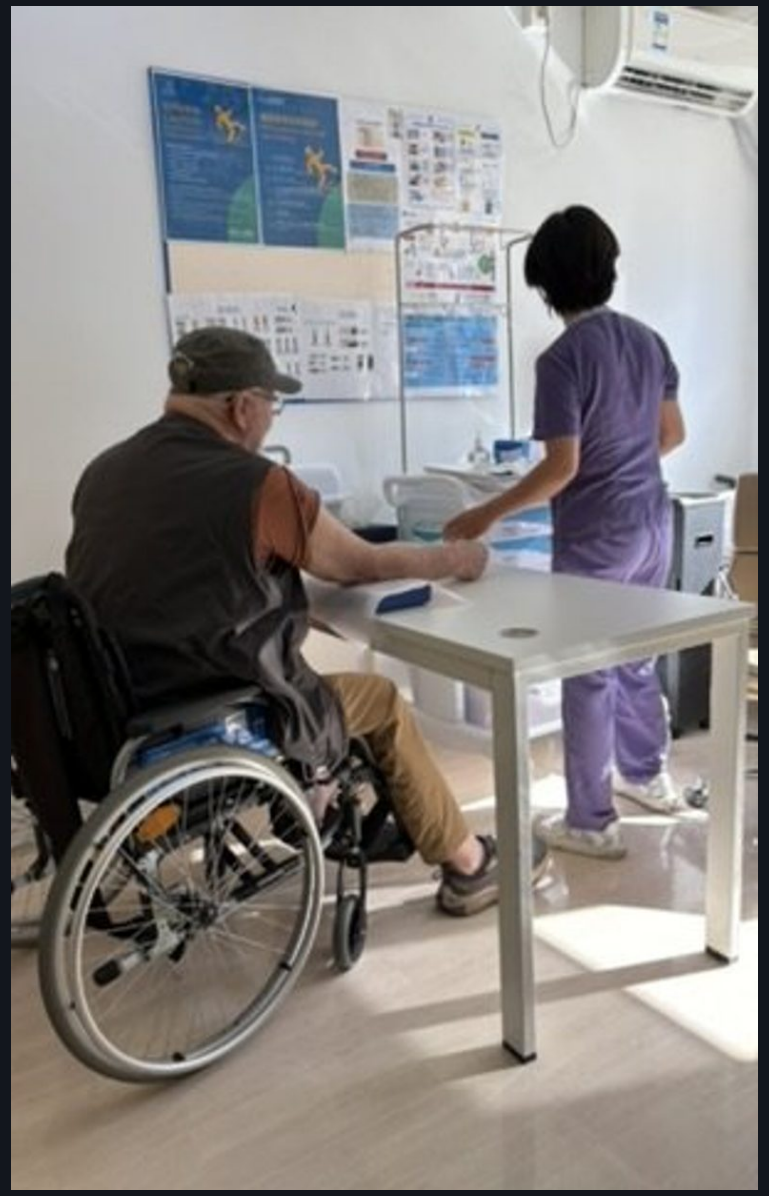

货批发城全场









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erans For Peace




Cotti Coffee






Notice to V

Give peace a chance.

— John Lennon

Peace be with you!

More on YouTube at “The Couper Dispatch”