

**Centre of Buddhist Studies  
The University of Hong Kong**

**UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT**

**Programme Name**

Dunhuang Experiential Learning Programme – Following the Footstep of Xuanzang

**Programme Date**

June 1st – 14th, 2018

**Name of Project Holder**

Venerable Sik Hin Hung

**Number of Participants**

22 Students + 2 Faculty Members + 1 Staff Member

**Programme Objectives**

Dunhuang is one of the most important Buddhist cultural sites on the Silk Road. The sculptures and murals in Dunhuang Grottoes, as well as the manuscripts found in the Library Cave which have been preserved for more than a thousand years, have become the invaluable research resources for the contemporary study of culture, history and arts between China and the Silk Road.

In order to actively increase the interest of HKU students in classical arts and humanities and to enhance the cooperation in teaching and academic research between HKU and the Dunhuang Research Academy (DRA), the Centre of Buddhist Studies of HKU was planning to organize an experiential learning programme at the beginning of summer break 2018.

With Buddhism arriving as early as first century A.D., Dunhuang was an important centre of religious and cultural exchange for more than a thousand years between China, India, Persia, Greco-Roman, and Central Asia. Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang started and completed his legendary and influential seventeen-year pilgrimage to India walking along the Silk Route.

We hope that by following Xuanzang's footstep in Dunhuang, students can, in addition to knowledge gained in classrooms, have a first-hand experience of the

important Buddhist sites and the rich history of religious and cultural exchange between China and the world. Through this experience, we hope that they can have a deeper understanding of the root of Chinese culture and the history of its influence to other countries and the world. As a result we hope that their personal quality in culture and humanity will be enriched by this experience.

Following the signing of memorandum between HKU and DRA on 13 October 2017 in Dunhuang, CBS would like to take this opportunity to further the learning experience of full-time undergraduate students through the experiential learning programme. This programme would be a great start for the University's academic collaborations in preservation research and promotion of Dunhuang cultural heritage with DRA.

### **Learning Focuses**

1. Visiting grottoes (Bingling Temple, Dunhuang Grottoes and Yulin Grottoes)
2. Visiting museums: Gansu Museum, Museums of Dunhuang, Dunhuang Exhibition Hall, Guazhou Museum
3. Visiting universities and academy: Dunhuang Research Academy and Shaanxi Normal University (College of History and Culture)
4. Conducting seminars: visit the caves during the morning and attending seminars in the afternoons
5. Meditation experience: meditations inside the grottoes
6. Art workshop: activities and interview with scholars and artists

### **Itinerary**

May 9th	Pre-trip Orientation
June 1st	Hong Kong to Lanzhou
June 2nd – 13th	Lanzhou to Dunhuang
June 14th	Return to Hong Kong

### **Feedback from Participants**

In general participants are very appreciative of the opportunity to visit a number of the most important cultural and religious sites in China. They learnt about the history and culture of the heyday of the Silk Route and had an exposure to basic Buddhist philosophy and history. In particular, they treasure very much the chance to learn from Dr. Tsui who is a leading scholar and expert in the Art and History of Dunhuang and Venerable Hin Hung, who is well versed in Buddhism while staying very much in-tuned with the lives of youth in the society. Some students from Arts and Architecture programmes are particularly inspired by the ancient artifacts and structures; while most of the students have developed interest in learning about Buddhism and practicing meditation which they have been introduced to during the programme.

### **Feedback from Project Holder**

This is the first time the Centre of Buddhist Studies has hosted a learning experiential programme for undergraduate students. From the onset of designing and planning the programme we hope that this experience will be unique and valuable in that students can have a direct experience of the history, art, and practical aspects of Chinese culture and Buddhism. We are happy to see the active participation and enthusiastic curiosity the students have towards these subjects, during and even after the programme. Many students even decide to enroll in the courses offered by the Centre after the programme.

I am very glad that we had the opportunity to organize this programme and brought the students to get up-close-and-personal with one of the most important sites for Chinese history and for Buddhism in the world. We are also surprised by the enthusiasm these young people brought with them and hope that they will continue with their academic, social, and spiritual development with some of the inspiration and experiences from this programme.





