

During my vacation last May, I had a hard time choosing a tour. Flights to Japan, Hong Kong and Australia are just too common. What I wanted was somewhere exciting and exotic, a place where I could be spared from the holiday tour crowds. I was so happy when John called up, suggesting a trip to Cherokee, a county in the state of Oklahoma. I agreed and went off with the preparation immediately.

We took a flight to Cherokee and visited a town called Qualla Boundary surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery, the town painted a paradise before us. With its Oconaluftee Indian Village reproducing tribal crafts and lifestyles of the 18th century and the outdoor historical pageant Unto These Hills playing six times weekly in the summer nights, Qualla Boundary tries to present a brief image of the Cherokee past to the tourists. Despite the language barrier, we managed to find our way to the souvenir shops with the help of the natives. The shops were filled with rubber tomahawks and colorful traditional war bonnets, made of dyed turkey feathers. Tepees, cone shaped tents made from animal skin, were also pitched near the shops. "Welcome! Want to get anything?" We looked up and saw a middle-aged man smiling at us. We were very surprised by his fluent English. He introduced himself as George and we ended up chatting till lunch time when he invited us for lunch at a nearby coffee shop. "Sometimes, I've to work from morning to sunset during the tour season. Anyway, this is still better off than being a woodcutter ..." Remembrance weighed heavy on George's mind and he went on to tell us that he used to cut firewood for a living but could hardly make ends meet. We learnt from him that the Cherokees do not depend solely on trade for survival. During the tour off-peak period, the tribe would have to try out other means for income. One of the successful ways is the "Bingo Weekend". On the Friday afternoons of the Bingo weekends, a large bingo hall was opened, attracting huge crowds of people to the various kinds of games like the Super Jackpot and the Warrior Game Special. According to George, these forms of entertainment fetch them great returns. Our final stop in Qualla Boundary was at the museum where arts, ranging from the simple hand-woven oak baskets to wood and stone carvings of wolves, ravens and other symbols of Cherokee cosmology are displayed. Back at home, I really missed the place and I would of course look forward to the next trip to another exotic place.

Cherokee: A Trip to Remember

I struggled to choose a tour during my vacation last may, as I wanted to go somewhere exotic and less crowded. So, the John came up with the idea of a trip to Cherokee, Oklahoma. Our first destination was Qualla boundary between the scenic mountains. The sights of tribal crafts and lifestyle reflects the past of 18th century Oconaluftee Indian Village. We braced our way to souvenir shops stocked with unique artifacts, despite the language barrier. When the shopkeeper enquired us, we were surprised by his flawless English. He invited us for lunch at nearby cafe, where he told us that trade is not the only source of economy here as great funds are collected from the crowd which comes at 'Bingo Weekends' to play games. Moreover, we visited museum, which was our last spot. and I cherished this trip at home and would like to visit it again.

[Word count: 158]