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"Exploring Chinese Charisma": Lingnan University concludes the 2nd Shandong Language and Culture Study Tour

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▲ Study tour teachers and students climb Mount Tai.



▲ Lingnan University's "Exploring Chinese Charisma" Study tour before departure.



▲ Prof Kong Zi (right), Vice Dean of the College of International Education at Shandong University, and Dr Zhou Bo (left) of Lingnan University meet.



▲ Lingnan students' technology-integrated lessons in the holographic classroom on Shandong University's Qingdao campus.



▲ Teachers and students on the study tour visit the People's Liberation Army Naval Museum.



▲ Lingnan teachers and students experience traditional Shandong Yangge dance and interact with locals at May Fourth Square.



▲ Closing ceremony of the study tour.

The 2nd "Exploring Chinese Charisma—Language and Culture Study Tour," hosted by the Chinese Language Education and Assessment Centre (CLEAC) at Lingnan University and financed by the Lingnan Education Organization (LEO), has successfully concluded its 14-day programme in Shandong.

With the full support and guidance of Prof Li Donghui, Associate Vice-President (Experiential Learning Projects) and Head of CLEAC, the tour was planned and led by Dr Zhou Bo, Senior Lecturer, who, with Ms Julie Zhang Meng, Lecturer, took 30 Lingnan students on an immersive journey of cultural exploration and creative writing practice.

Building on the success of the inaugural tour, CLEAC expanded its exchanges with the College of International Education at Shandong University to optimise course design and resource sharing. This year, the cohort grew to 30 students from diverse academic backgrounds, and the itinerary was extended from nine to 14 days. The students went to Jinan, Tai'an, Qufu, and Qingdao, where they visited the former homes of famous writers, watched the sun rise at Mount Tai, and explored the roots of Confucianism at the Temple and Cemetery of Confucius and the Kong Family Mansion in Qufu. The itinerary included modern industrial and historical sites such as Goertek in Qingdao, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Naval Museum, and the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, and this blend of ancient heritage and modern innovation provided students with a multifaceted understanding of the nation's historical depth and contemporary development.

A significant breakthrough of this year’s study tour was using generative artificial intelligence in writing Chinese travelogues. Under the academic requirements set by Dr Zhou Bo, Prof Sun Xuexiao, Associate Professor of Shandong University guided the students through four progressive writing workshops, focusing on themes such as "Impressions of the City of Springs", “Spiritual Resonance of Mount Tai and the Sea, Cultural Heritage of Qilu”, and “A Tale of Two Cities”. Students conducted field research to produce vlogs, marketing copy, and in-depth travel essays, and the course encouraged them to use AI to broaden their ideation and refine their language. To ensure originality in emotion and core concepts, students were strictly required to submit their AI dialogue logs as part of the grading criteria. This initiative aligns closely with Lingnan University’s liberal arts education objectives in the new era, teaching students how to leverage new technologies in Chinese expression comprehensively.

To consolidate learning outcomes, the students' creative work will be compiled into an anthology, and the media team accompanying them has produced a documentary of the journey that Dr Zhou Bo says pays homage to the traditional academic practice of older generations of scholars "travelling grandly to author books", and represents a vital practical experiment in the humanities. The visual documentation was led by Lingnan University alumni Mr Cai Jianyu, a graduate in Animation and Digital Arts, as videographer, and Ms Zhan Aifan, a BA and MPhil graduate in Chinese, volunteered to assist with academic affairs and filming. These professional contributions to their alma mater exemplify the University’s motto, “Education for Service”, and highlight the enduring value of the Lingnan spirit and whole-person education.

Cultivating cultural confidence and national identity

This was the first visit to the Land of Qilu for most of the 30 Hong Kong SAR students, and immersed in the rich tapestry of nature and history, they admired the majestic landscapes and gained a deeper appreciation of the foundations and modern pulse of Chinese culture. As student representative Zheng Haoer said at the opening ceremony "Moving from books to the earth, and from the classroom to culture", the trip bridged academic pursuits and national development seamlessly, creating a natural cultural confidence and emotional integration between the youth of Shandong and the Hong Kong SAR.

Strolling through May Fourth Square in Qingdao, the students met local elders who were performing the traditional Shandong Yangge dance. They asked the seniors to teach them the dance steps, and about Qilu folk customs. This unexpected cultural encounter allowed the students to step enthusiastically beyond their textbooks and experience Shandong's traditional heritage personally, successfully fulfilling the study tour's core objective of fostering an understanding of regional cultural roots.

During the closing ceremony, various awards were presented based on the students' assignment performance. The accolades included the Literary Excellence Award, the Fragrant Ink Award, the Promising Pen Award, and the Delightful Charm Award, recognising their outstanding performance in literary writing, multimedia expression, and AI-assisted practices. The students returned not only with enriched knowledge and experiences but also having demonstrated the remarkable talent and enthusiasm characteristic of Lingnan scholars.

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