



Blog: Living and training in China

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Jonathan Phillips, who played at the Omega club in Reading in the 80s, has returned to table tennis in recent months – while living and working in China. This is his blog about the experience.

I have always wanted to visit China, especially to play table tennis.

I used to play in the late 1980s at Omega Club, Green Lane, Reading and was lucky enough to be trained by Jimmy Stokes, senior. I was also lucky to play national league for this club.

At age of 18 I was going to move to China to play table tennis full-time – in pursuit of becoming a better player. Fast forwarding some 30+ years later, here I am now in China! Also, I have not really played much table tennis since then, so I need to work hard to get my level up.

To live and work in China is easy. I am a trained English language teacher and there are hundreds of teaching positions available online to teach in major cities. Generally you work part-time, receive a good salary and free accommodation. This means that you have plenty of time to play table tennis.

Generally you need CELTA qualification and or a degree to teach but being a native speaker is the number one priority. In fact, English teachers in China are in high demand.

I live close to Guangzhou so have easy access to the International Table Tennis Centre. Mr Lee was playing with a friend who invited me over to play with them. He was under-17 Champion of China in 1983. He then played professionally for national men's second team.



Inside one of the training halls

I practice with Mr Lee every week and he helps me to improve. He is training me up to play better players. He gives me advice to improve, as does one of his practice partners.

They say my attitude and work ethic is very good. They told me: "If you love table tennis you will make many friends in China."

I also use a private coach, at least twice a week – they typically cost £15 per hour. Again, this is great. They strip you back to basics and reinforce the importance of spinning the ball. Every aspect of your stroke is analysed and videos taken. The first thing he asked me was how was my health because the training is intense. I love training so the hard work is not a problem. Through hard work my table tennis is improving.

Apparently on Saturday nights there is a competition where you can play ex pros and the winner receives 1000 Yuan – I'm told they play into the early hours of the morning.

Life in China is great, people are very friendly and relaxed. The cost of living is low. Transport is excellent. The main table tennis centre has three floors and competitions are usually played at the weekend. Outside there are table tennis shops, which are often busy changing rubbers for players. Many other sports are played here and under the centre is one of Asia's largest shopping malls.



The view from the centre

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