

《Talking about China to Texas folks》

By Tom McGregor, CCTV.com Panview commentator and editor

Editor's Note: CCTV.com Panview had taken a 2-week tour of South Texas, visiting Houston, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Port Aransas. We witnessed Texas' economic development, visited tourism attractions and saw how Texans and the Chinese are drawing closer together. We will feature a series of articles on China-Texas ties and its impact on the world-at-large.

Shrimp boat docked at the bay on Port Aransas Photo/Zhou Yawei

I've lived and worked in Beijing since Oct. 2010, and so I've gotten accustomed to following up on the latest news updates on the world's 2nd largest economy.

Yet, when I returned to my native State, Texas, coming here for the first time in for over 7 years - there were moments of awkward interruptions during conversations.

Here's how it usually went:

"Then there was the time Xi Jinping talked about ..."

"Who's that guy?"

"The President of China and he also launched the Belt & Road?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The B&R is an initiative to build major infrastructure projects with other countries ..."

"You mean like President Trump's \$US1 trillion rebuild America plan?"

"Yes, but even bigger since many countries have already signed up."

"That's huge and serious ..."

China as unfamiliar territory

Returning to Texas served as a reminder that many Americans continue to look inward and remain unfamiliar in regards to other nations.

To discuss matters on China you should keep it simple and try to connect it with Americanized topics. It's essential since China hopes to gain greater recognition, so global citizens can see the Asian powerhouse nation in a more positive light.

When asking Texans what they knew about China they often used buzz phrases, such as: pandas, the Great Wall, 'Made in China,' and kung fu."

3 children from Dallas, Tx. listen to Chinese tales on a visit to Port Aransas Photo/Zhou Yawei

Getting the word out

China has a great story to tell the world. It holds a rich cultural heritage spanning more than 5,000 years. The Chinese of yesterday and today have introduced many new inventions and stood at the forefront of the science & technology fields.

There're amazing artworks, literature and performance arts that have originated from the country. China's grand history is the reason the nation has gotten so strong with its economy and diplomacy.

Nevertheless, there are more Chinese who travel abroad than people from other countries who come here for vacations, which has led to a travel cash account deficit for the country.

China has plenty of tourism attractions for outsiders, but more should be done to convince Texans and others to hop on a plane for a holiday trip to Asia's largest country.

Sometimes it takes small steps to persuade Texans to believe China is a place worth visiting. China's tourism board should move forward on marketing and advertising campaigns to tout China travel.

Texans can open their hearts to China

Texans are willing to think more positively about China, but they need some gentle persuasion and the Chinese should find ways to make comparisons between the Lone Star state and China.

For instance, my wife, Zhou Yawei, a Chinese citizen, spoke with her mother-in-law, a native Texan. There was a conversation about the gorgeous water scenery at Port Aransas, which is located near the Gulf of Mexico.

My wife mentioned the region reminded her of a trip she had taken to Xiamen, a coastal Chinese city in Fujian

province. The mother-in-law felt inspired to learn more about China.

Additionally, more Chinese when traveling to the USA, should communicate more directly with Americans. Too often, Chinese go on tour groups during vacation, and they avoid talking to the natives of the country they visit.

Sculpture standing tall in Downtown San Antonio Photo/Zhou Yawei

Open communication lines

My recent trip to Texas was an eye-opener not only for myself, but for those I spoke with. Yes, many Texans lacked detailed knowledge of China, but then again, how many Chinese could answer this question: "Who coached the Dallas Cowboys in their last Super Bowl victory?"

In other words, culture shock will be inevitable, but a good cure is for people of different cultures to talk more with each other, so people can open up their hearts.

The Texans greeted my family with gracious hospitality, and we hope that some day soon those Texans take the bold step and come to China for a visit, so we can return the favor to them.

