
On The GreatWall

5 Minute Chinese

Why Do Chinese Malls Feel Like Indoor Cities?



PandaWu: Hello, this is 5 Minute Chinese from On The GreatWall. I'm PandaWu.

Emma: And I'm Emma.

PandaWu: How was Guangzhou?

Emma: Pretty good. Although I think I fell into a time hole.

PandaWu: What do you mean?

Emma: I went to get one cup of HEYTEA, and suddenly seven hours were gone.

PandaWu: You waited seven hours for one milk tea?

Emma: No, I got the drink in ten minutes. Then I spent seven hours inside Wanda Plaza.

PandaWu: I think I know what happened. You did a lot of walking that day, didn't you?

Emma: You know me. Never mind the toes that are still aching. Look at these.

PandaWu: At what?

Emma: My new nails.

PandaWu: Excellent. A manicure reveal on an audio podcast.

Emma: The listeners can hear the shine.

PandaWu: Fine. Ten minutes for tea, then a manicure. We are still missing several hours.

Emma: Well, while I was there, I noticed the cinema.

PandaWu: There it is.

Emma: What?

PandaWu: "While I was there." The most expensive five words in a shopping mall.

Emma: Toy Story 5 was playing in IMAX, and my feet needed a rest.

PandaWu: You rested your feet by buying an IMAX ticket?

Emma: It worked. My feet felt nothing for the entire movie.

PandaWu: Because they were not the part of you being shaken by the speakers.

Emma: Buzz Lightyear was very calming.

PandaWu: Tea, nails and a movie. Did you finally leave?

Emma: I tried. But the cinema exit placed me directly beside the clothing stores.

PandaWu: A ruthless architectural ambush.

Emma: Exactly. So I visited thirteen of them.

PandaWu: Thirteen?

Emma: Possibly fourteen. My feet stopped keeping records.

PandaWu: What did you buy?

Emma: Nothing.

PandaWu: You examined an entire clothing district and rejected the textile industry.

Emma: Is that strange?

PandaWu: Not at all. We have a Chinese phrase built for exactly this.

PandaWu: 逛商场.

Emma: 逛商场.

PandaWu: It means walking around or browsing a mall. You look, compare, wander and take your time. Buying something is optional.

Emma: Then I was extremely good at 逛商场.

PandaWu: Fourteen shops and no receipt. Professional level.

Emma: This is useful. I thought shopping without buying anything was failure.

PandaWu: Buying is 买东西. 逛商场 is the wandering part. It is a perfectly valid plan for an afternoon.

Emma: Or seven hours.

PandaWu: We still haven't accounted for seven hours.

Emma: Almost.

PandaWu: I do not like that word.

Emma: While I was there...

PandaWu: Of course.

Emma: The movie ended around dinner, so I had hot pot.

PandaWu: How spicy was it?

Emma: The first bite was wonderful. The second bite made my mouth file a formal complaint.

PandaWu: So you stopped?

Emma: No. It was delicious.

PandaWu: Your mouth had already submitted the paperwork.

Emma: I rejected the complaint.

PandaWu: Please tell me you went back to your hotel after that.

Emma: I was on my way out. Then I saw the supermarket.

PandaWu: Let me guess. While you were there.

Emma: They had cucumber-flavored potato chips.

PandaWu: That sentence should have helped you leave.

Emma: It did not. They also had lime-flavored ones.

PandaWu: You refused fourteen shops full of normal clothes, but trusted two vegetables pretending to be potato chips.

Emma: Fruit and vegetable. I wanted a balanced diet.

PandaWu: Neither bag counts as produce.

Emma: The cucumber ones were green.

PandaWu: That is not how nutrition works.

Emma: This is starting to sound less like a travel podcast and more like an intervention.

PandaWu: Let me see if I understand your Guangzhou trip. You had milk tea, got your nails done, watched an IMAX movie, explored fourteen clothing stores, ate hot pot and bought groceries.

Emma: That sounds like a productive afternoon when you say it quickly.

PandaWu: You did not visit six parts of Guangzhou. You moved between six parts of one building.

Emma: So it was not a time hole.

PandaWu: No. It was an indoor city. Every time you tried to leave, it opened another neighborhood.

Emma: But if people can buy clothes on their phones, why do malls need all those shops?

PandaWu: Your phone can deliver a dress. It cannot do your nails, show you an IMAX movie, cook hot pot and offer cucumber chips before the metro ride home.

Emma: Not with that attitude.

PandaWu: The clever part is that the mall does not need you to arrive with a shopping list. It only needs you to keep saying, "While I am here..."

Emma: While we are here, would you like to try a cucumber chip?

PandaWu: No.

Emma: Lime?

PandaWu: Start the outro before another seven hours disappear.

Emma: Once again, our five minutes are up, but if you'd like to hear more authentic stories about Chinese food, history and culture, you can head to our topic page on our website, onthegreatwall.com. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye.

Useful Examples

逛商场

Guàng shāngchǎng

To browse or walk around a shopping mall.

我们去逛商场吧。

Wǒmen qù guàng shāngchǎng ba.

Let's go walk around the mall.

我只逛逛，不买东西。

Wǒ zhǐ guàngguang, bù mǎi dōngxi.

I'm only browsing. I'm not buying anything.