



## Report on a visit to the Neo-Neon Factory in Heshan City China - June 2006

Greetings ILDA members,

At the ILDA meeting during SIB in Rimini earlier this year [2006], we were invited by Jim Hardaway of Neo-Neon to hold the next meeting of ILDA in conjunction with the PALM expo in China – or if that was not desirable, to hold the ILDA meeting at the Neo-Neon factory near Guangzhou. I was able to arrange my May/June 2006 company trip to China, and take a few days off, so as to have an opportunity to attend the PALM expo and to visit the Neo-Neon facilities.

### The PALM Expo - Beijing

The PALM expo is held annually in Beijing - <http://www.palmexpo.net> I attended the expo which was held in a very large and modern expo facility in Beijing. The exhibits sprawled across nine large buildings which appeared to me to be as big as, if not bigger than the SIB expo. Like the SIB expo, it had displays of musical instruments, sound, lighting, video and laser equipment as well as other entertainment related technology such as trusses, staging equipment and even lamp, knob and heatsink manufacturers in case you wanted to go into the entertainment equipment manufacturing business!

Since ILDA has decided not to hold the 2007 Meeting in conjunction with a major trade show, I will omit the detailed report I provided to the board on the PALM expo. For the curious, you can see pictures and some commentary on the PALM Expo on my Flickr log starting at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/l-michael-roberts/157079058/in/set-72157594146354569/>

**PALM Entrance Line-Up**

Today I should have been at the RE-ASIA show until lunch... But those who have been reading along know it was a dismal flop. So off to the PALM expo.... China's premier expo for entertainment technology and musical equipment. The expo is WAST... it seems to be bigger than SIB!

Uploaded on May 31, 2006  
by L. Michael Roberts

L. Michael Roberts' photostream

May/June 2006 - CHINA (Set)

247 photos

< BACK NEXT >

Tags

- China
- Beijing
- PALM Expo

Additional information

All rights reserved

**Flickr Navigation:** To navigate through the pictures in the set, use the thumbnail images to the right of the main image: click the LEFT thumbnail to see the PREVIOUS photo [go back]; click the RIGHT thumbnail to see the NEXT photo [go forward].



## Neo-Neon Factory Visit - Heshan City

After a week of company related meetings in Shanghai, I travelled to Guangzhou to meet with another laser manufacturer. Jim arranged for Neo-Neon to have a company driver pick me up and drive about 1 hour from Guangzhou to the factory location. I arrived in the middle of a major monsoon as it was the "rainy season" and had apparently been raining intermittently for 4 or 5 weeks!

The Neo-Neon facility is very impressive. It is almost a city unto itself with two hotels, restaurants, a water purifying and bottling plant on-site, and a back-up power plant with enough capacity to run the whole place – not to mention the many factory buildings making entertainment products 24/7.

After we dried off, we joined Jim in one of the restaurants for a tasty supper of curried chicken, rice and vegetables washed down with a "Tsing Tao" beer. After supper, Jim called for one of the electric busses to come and pick us up and took us down to the showrooms.



Neo-Neon Main Gate

Pictures of the Neo-Neon visit begin at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/l-michael-roberts/165374485/in/set-72157594146354569/>

The showrooms are vast and are permanently equipped with computer controlled LED fixtures, moving head lights, smoke machines, sound systems and lasers. We were treated to some demo shows on the dual head RGB laser, played back from Pangolin systems. The solid-state lasers use analogue modulation so the colours were very good.



Neo-Neon Hotel Buildings

When the tour was over, I decided to stay the night in one of the Neo-Neon hotels. The large room was quite unique as it had two double beds with a partition wall between them making for 2 separate sleeping areas... a large bathroom with shower, a living room area with mini-fridge, and a large TV with cable.

The in-room CAT 5 broadband internet worked just fine although it was a touch slow in the early part of the evening but ran faster later – possibly due to lots of guests using it. The lobby is a sight to behold with a large statue of a winged woman pouring tea set in a fountain with

submerged LED colour changing lights... capped off with a 2 story tall colour changing fibre optic chandler! All this cost a mere Y700 [about \$100 C\$ or \$88 US\$] per night - group rates are lower.

The next morning we were up bright and early and joined Jim for an "American breakfast" at the restaurant. The breakfast was good... My only complaint was that the service was rather slow but apparently the rain had delayed some staff arrivals and they were short-handed.

Jim then took us on a tour of the laser portion of the factory where the low-end "spaz and flail" type disco products based round green DPSS lasers are built. From there, we went through the airlock into the clean rooms where the lasers are actually assembled from scratch, and then into the RGB projector system assembly portion of the factory. We ended our tour at a different showroom where we were again treated to a full colour laser demo.



The Neo-Neon facilities are large, modern and impressive. They have enough space in their showrooms that they could easily stage the Laseoff and Awards banquet on-site. There are also some smaller "boardrooms" nearby that could be adapted for seminars. Lasers are manufactured on the premises so we could have the use of 4, 5 or 6 RGB 30K systems for show playback allowing ILDA to stage multi-projector shows as they were meant to be seen.

The hotel is great and the spacious rooms, with their unique layout, would allow laserists to easily double up for cost saving while still having some privacy.



"Disco" laser systems assembly line

**Disclosure:** I paid my own flights to and from Guangzhou and I paid for the hotel room at Neo-Neon. I did not receive any special treatment or other goodies other than the Neo-Neon company provided transportation which is offered to any visitors to their factory; supper with a beer and breakfast – Thanks to Jim Hardaway for providing these.

## Why go to China?

1/ China is an expanding economy and there seem to be laser manufacturers in almost every city. While most of them are making small green DPSS lasers, more and more solid state RGB systems are coming to market at ever decreasing price points. With the manufacturing market shifting to the orient, ILDA should make its presence felt and the best way to do this is to hold the ILDA meeting in China which would attract participants from the region. This would give ILDA greater visibility and a chance to become better known.

2/ Laser safety in China needs awareness and improvements - especially amongst the smaller local manufacturers. What better way to improve laser safety than to have ILDA conduct a safety seminar for the manufacturers as part of the meeting and to provide them with a hand out in Mandarin?



One of the large Neo-Neon demo rooms

3/ Many of the Asian manufacturers are providing laser projectors with an "ILDA connector". Yes the connector is a DB25 but in many cases, does not meet the ILDA standard - EG single ended rather than balanced line. A hand out in Mandarin can be assembled which explains what is required to meet the ILDA standard.

Why would manufacturers be eager to work with ILDA? Business in China is done mostly on a face-to-face basis. If ILDA members, particularly those who are in the tech-com, are meeting manufacturers and discussing the issues with them they will be more inclined to listen than if they get a fax/Email. Asian culture has the concept of "face" and if a manufacturer were to be publicly listed as non-compliant, they would lose face - that is very bad for business! They would be happy to comply with the ILDA standard if they are told/shown what is required and if it means they don't lose face.



4/ The Beijing Olympics will take place in 2008. At this time, there are no laser show production companies in China, which I am aware of, that have the equipment and experience necessary to produce large scale events. Some of the larger ILDA members will find it advantageous to exhibit at the PALM expo to make contacts [remember that business is done in person in China] and to show their abilities.

Not only will there be shows in Beijing related to the Olympics, but the Olympics have become a source of national pride in China. Many other cities, big and small, are planning events and festivities around the Olympics - opportunities exist for all sizes of ILDA members to make pitches for shows, sales and services. Due to the PALM Expo being held in Beijing, one of the demographics is government officials so many good contacts can be made.

Even though the ILDA meeting is planned as a "stand alone" conference, it could be scheduled for a week before the PALM expo to allow members to travel to Beijing for that event [internal flights in China are very cheap]. The PALM expo is an excellent opportunity to source quality products from local manufacturers at reasonable prices which is good the ILDA member's business!

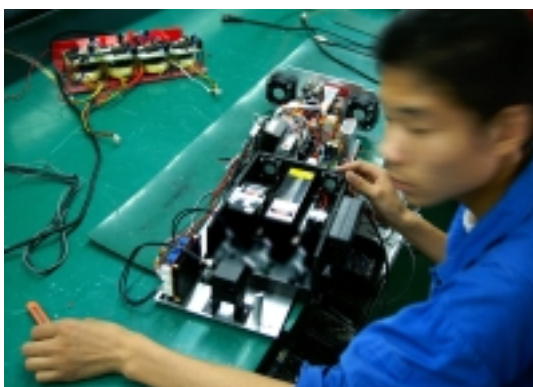
5/ Our host, Neo-Neon is a manufacturer of laser systems which DO meet ILDA standards. We can borrow 4, 6 or even more, full colour 30K projection systems so that we can have spectacular multi-projector shows presented as the artists intended them to be seen - with audience scanning!



The national museum on one side of Tiananmen square - note the Olympics countdown clock.

## Costs involved

The cost of flying to China is about 10-15% more that the cost of flying to Europe [this is based on my recent trips from Toronto to Rimin and Beijing]. This is more than offset by the very low cost of hotels - provided you don't stay in one of the western branded chains [Hyatt, Howard Johnston's, Marriot, etc.] if you visit other parts of China. They tend to charge "foreign tourist" prices.



RGB laser assembly at the Neo-Neon factory.

For example, the centrally located "serviced apartment" I stay in while in Shanghai has a large room with king-size bed, includes a small refrigerator, a microwave oven, a tea/coffee maker, CAT5 broadband internet and daily breakfast buffet with western and Asian selections - all included in a room cost of about \$77.00 US\$/day. Thus **the cost of tourism in China is low** compared to Europe and the USA.

The cost of meals, taxis, entertainment and most consumer goods in China is also very low. Since tipping is not expected in the non western tourist oriented establishments, there is an additional savings. The cost of internal travel, souvenirs and beautiful artwork is also very reasonable if you avoid the centrally located tourist oriented places [which are also cheap but if you have a mandarin speaking guide, you can get much better deals]. Bargaining is expected at all but the biggest department and upscale stores so if you are skilled at that, you can get some amazing bargains.



One cost that all participants will incur is the cost of a Visa. The Visa application process is a one page form, a recent passport sized photo and a reasonable fee - in my case \$85.00 C\$ for a one visit Visa and \$175.00 C\$ for a one year visa [come and go as you please]. The visa service here has been fast and simple as I used an agent. With the proper letter of invitation issued by our host, and a supporting letter from ILDA, there should be no visa problems.

The costs to ILDA for this meeting would be **no more** that can be expected at an event in Europe and in fact, should turn out to **cost 30-45% less** while offering better services and facilities. Lower costs to ILDA would mean **lower registration fees** for the meeting, which means that more members can afford to attend. The people to do the sound and lighting set-up work, a major drag on volunteers in the past, and the cost of equipment is almost zero as Neo-Neon has **all the equipment and fully qualified staff on-site**, so reduced stress and more sleep for everyone!

### General notes about China

China has centuries old traditions of hospitality embedded in the culture. The Chinese love to see happy guests in their establishments and usually are able to accommodate any special requests with a smile. China also has no shortage of person-power so most of the hotels and restaurants are overstaffed by western standards, thus service levels are high.

The second language of younger Chinese is English and most of them are to anxious to practice their English on you! It is not difficult to find English speakers when you need help or directions on the streets or in stores. At major tourist attractions, guides are offered who speak a variety of European and Asian languages so you can experience the sights in your native language.

### China Tourism

China has a centuries old civilization with dozens of world heritage sites. It is well worth considering spending a few extra days before or after the ILDA meeting to visit this fascinating and distinctive country.

For those who would like to plan a holiday around the ILDA meeting, not only can you visit Hong Kong, a world class city, but also other parts of China. With a few extra days to spare, you could visit Beijing to see the many important landmarks there including the nearby Great Wall of China, X'ian to see the Terra Cotta warriors and also visit Shanghai which has many interesting attractions - not the least of which is the Bund.

The cost of internal travel is very reasonable. The sleeper trains are cheap, clean, comfortable and convenient. Air fare is **1/2 to 1/3 the price** of comparable distances flown in North American markets. Waiting until a few days before flying to book a ticket gets you **major bargains** as long as you can be flexible about your departure times.

**Hotels and meals are also cheap** as mentioned above - but not lacking in quality.

If the membership decides to take this opportunity to hold the meeting in China next year, I would be willing to make arrangements for a short, custom tour of the highlights of China if there is a group of 6 or 8 people interested. My contacts in China can provide an English speaking guide and can bargain with travel providers and hotels to get the lowest rates.





## Summary

ILDA has been invited to hold the **2007 conference** in China at the Neo-Neon facilities near Guangzhou which are **more than adequate** for ILDA's needs.

There are **quality hotels** and **restaurants** on-site, **large demo rooms/halls** for the Laseoff and Awards, as well as **boardrooms** for other meetings and a **full array of laser, sound and lighting** equipment is available from the Neo-Neon factory stock.

By holding the meeting in China, ILDA would have the opportunity to **improve laser safety** and technical **standards** compliance amongst Chinese laser manufacturers. ILDA would also have the opportunity to **recruit new members** from a largely overlooked part of the world. All of this can be done at **moderate**, or even **lower cost**, compared to holding the ILDA meeting in another location.

The **pre-Olympics year, 2007**, is the **best time** to hold the ILDA meeting in China due to the many events and festivities planned around the Olympics - the coming of age of the modern China on the world stage. Members have the opportunity to call **on potential clients** as business is done face-to-face in China.



Demo-hall at Neo-Neon



ILDA Members can enjoy **full colour, multi-projector shows** with **audience scanning**, great hospitality, **excellent food**, and the chance to do a little **tourism in a unique country** with centuries of civilization and tradition - all at an anticipated **cost lower than the typical ILDA meeting**.

With the right timing, the meeting could be held a week or 10 days before the **PALM Expo in Beijing** to allow ILDA members to visit, or participate in that event to make new business contacts or even exhibit.

Having visited the Neo-Neon facilities, I recommend that ILDA members **accept Neo-Neon's invitation** to visit China and hold our 2007 annual meeting at the Neo-Neon factory.

Thanks,

L. Michael Roberts