



## "Big on YouTube" By Sky Thomas Gidge



Home



My channel



Trending



Subscriptions

# CHINA IS AN UNLIKELY PLACE FOR A YOUTUBER.

For one, the website is -ahem- difficult to access, cutting video makers off from a billion potential viewers that would be able to identify with life in the Middle Kingdom, no matter the language.

Case in point: an English YouTube search for 'Korea vlogger' sees half a million matches. 'China vlogger'? A paltry 140,000 results.

But for the brave few who try (and sometimes succeed) at making YouTube a job, the weird and wonderful of China is the strength of their videos - whether they are posing as a celebrity, comparing countries or adventuring for street food.

This month *That's PRD* looks at China's most notable YouTubers and asks: why do people watch?



### Trevor James

YouTube Channel: TheFoodRanger  
More than 600,000 subscribers  
with 75,000,000 views  
since March 12, 2013

Most popular video: Indian Street Food Tour in Mumbai, India (8,200,000 views)



### Zach Etkind

YouTube Channel: DonnieDoesIt  
More than 20,000 subscribers  
with 2,500,000 views  
since Nov 19, 2012

Most popular video: I CONVINCED CHINA I'M RODGER FEDERER (460,000 views)



### Winston Sterzel

YouTube Channel: SerpentZA  
More than 160,000 subscribers  
with 24 million views  
since Aug 30, 2006

Most popular video: China vs. India (1,200,000 views)



### Matthew Tye (C-Milk)

YouTube Channel: Laowhy86  
More than 110,000 subscribers  
with 17,833,371 views  
since Apr 20, 2012

Most popular video: Chinese Girl Tries American Chinese Food (1,800,000 views)



### Matt Galat

YouTube Channel: RogueLifeStudios  
More than 22,000 subscribers  
with 5 million views  
since Feb 28, 2012

Most popular video: Chinese Seafood Steam Table (2,300,000 views)

Home

Trending

Subscriptions

While the other dudes on YouTube take on topics ranging from mental illness to blind sex toy identification, Chengdu-based James is about one thing: food. The focus has paid off, with the Canadian's more than 120 videos finding a huge audience that watches him feast on everything from 'beautiful' Xinjiang buns to southern-style dim sum, while showing off food-centric Mandarin.

Taking nine-hour train ride 'just for good noodles,' James' foodie enthusiasm is infectious, even finding fans on popular mainland websites like iQiyi.

**"I was like, if I just become this character that I already created and used China as the setting, I could pretty much make a show for zero budget. Since then, I've been steadily gaining new followers who have either lived in China at some point or live there now"**

Oft spotted besuited stumping the streets of Shenzhen, South African Winston Sterzel began uploading videos to YouTube to prove to friends that 'China isn't as horrible as the media paints it to be.'

Eleven years, and more than 700 videos later, he is the self-made face of his chosen city, with videos that dominate a YouTube search simply for 'China.'

"Another informative, in-depth video!" reads a comment on a 15-minute video about convenience stores.

Sterzel's chosen topics might leave expats with an I-could-do-that shrug, but his explanation of day-to-day life in China has found a curious audience in the West.

**"I think people watch my videos because I answer a lot of questions people have always wondered about the more human and daily life aspects of China and Chinese people"**

"He's a world traveler, he's a mountain climber, he's a really awesome guy," Galat says before a tongue-in-cheek interview. The guest? Himself.

Galat's channel saw irregular updates as he talked about fish tanks, recumbent trikes and his worldly travels – until he began documenting his daily prep for a Mount Everest climb. After returning to his Ningbo home, he has run a (mostly) daily vlog.

With a constant smile, a shiny bald head and an industrial grade selfie stick, Galat's vlog gives a look at a businessman balancing his love of travel and his growing family in China.

**"My main goal here is to share with you the amazing food of the world, and show you that it's entirely possible for you to travel cheaply, eat well, and pursue a passion and earn a living at the same time through travel"**

The story goes like this: Donnie passed out in a Legal Sea Foods in Logan Airport before waking up in Shanghai in 2012. Since then (with a foray back stateside) the Boston bro has been rejected by dating-show girls, held down jobs in amusement parks and released videos hip-hopping about a pet goose.

Donnie, of course, is a character played by Etkind, who has had a role in some of the most slickly produced English-language comedy to ever come out of the Chinese mainland.

"When I was averaging about 5,000 views a video on my YouTube page – Couldn't really make a living doing that," he says in his latest video, announcing his move to Barstool Sports where he is being 'paid a salary' to film Donnie's newest booze-fueled hijinks.

**"People can see China for what it really is, a real man's honest take on what it's like to live in the Middle Kingdom and learn how to navigate a culture incredibly different from what we're used to in the West"**

Until recently, Huizhou-based Tye may have been better known as Sterzel's motorcycle buddy. This year his channel came into its own, with subscriber numbers passing 100,000 as Tye honed his skill grafting China-centric topics onto YouTube friendly formats, think: "What NOT to do in China: Top 5 things"

Dubbing his audience 'lao winners,' they come for updates on his growing daughter, his cross-culture marriage and answers to questions like 'Are you fat in China?'

**"People watch my videos as an opportunity to view the world through the perspective of my adventures and interactions... hopefully inspiring or igniting the fuel within to step out into the world or attempt their own adventure"**



-  Home
-  My channel
-  Trending
-  Subscriptions

# WHAT I LEARNED

## Making YouTube a Job

Matt Tye, better known by nom de guerre C-Milk, is one of the few China-based expatriates to make the leap from YouTube hobbyist to fulltime job. Reaching 100,000 subscribers, he reflects on how he did it.

**This isn't a success story,** it is a learning process. I am 10 percent there – not even close.

**It's about 55 to 60 hours a week** working on YouTube.

**It's a starving artist thing** until you put together all the skills that go into it: marketing, shooting a video, knowing how to use a camera, planning out correct topics, following trends.

**My personal channel,** it took about five years to get 10,000 subscribers. And then all of a sudden this year, we pushed to 100,000 subscribers. It's blown my mind.

**What contributed massively** to this year's huge growth was stepping outside of my comfort zone and covering things that would teach people something.

**Vlogging has its limitations.** If you don't cover topics that can reach an audience outside of your core following, then you're going to be stuck retaining the original people that liked you from at the beginning.

**If I make a video called 'walking around the streets of Changsha, Hunan,' no one is going to watch that.** But if I do a video when walking around the streets of Changsha, I make the content about how China has changed in the past eight years that I've lived



here. Everyone knows what China is.

**Ditch anything that is user friendly.** You have a limitation, you're going to reach a peak and eventually you can't do too much more with that.

**A little over a year ago I learned how to use Adobe Premiere.** Did my videos immediately look better? Absolutely not, they looked way worse. I had absolutely no idea how to use the software.

**Learn how to edit your video.** Learn how to make a slick product.

**Search engine optimization is one of the most important things.** I spend about 10 hours a week on SEO.

**Break the barrier** between the comment section and what gets produced.

**I have to script** every single video. At least I have to get bullet points to know what I'm going to talk about.

**If I had any doubt in my mind** about bringing a pay check home to my family, I wouldn't be doing this full time.

**To do YouTube as a job** is the most difficult thing I've ever done. It's also the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

