

Beijing

These past few weeks, days, hours, and even minutes have been filled with events most of you never imagined you would get to experience. For the majority of you this started in Beijing. As I look back on all the experiences--accomplished goals, "firsts," and self-growth--you had in Beijing, I am amazed we were only there for a short time. I know in my life I have gone weeks, maybe even months without experiencing the growth that we all experienced in the short few days we were in Beijing. We:

- Experienced (note I didn't say ate) a Chinese hotpot dinner
- Watched an incredible acrobat show
- Saw some beautiful jade at the museum/store
- Saw the amazing Ming Tombs
- Walked on the Great Wall of China, and lived to tell about it
- Went to a silk factory and saw famous Chinese silk being made
- Walked through the memorable Summer Palace Shopped at numerous "fake" markets (and undoubtedly got ripped off, but polished the bartering skills)
- Walked through the ancient and mysterious Forbidden City
- Attended probably the most unique branch of the LDS church and hung out at probably the most American house in China.

These are only the experiences that we had as part of the Beijing tour; this is not mentioning the numberless personal experiences you had. China really forces people out of their comfort zones. Not just because it's a new world (not just a new country), but because you have to learn to be in the spotlight 24/7, you have to relearn how to eat food with these crazy new utensils called chopsticks; you have to have to learn how to order food, how to cross a road, and how to turn look the other direction and accept things that normally would upset you and put you off. My favorite part of this trip was getting to watch each of you enter into China like a baby enters the world--some of you needing to be slapped to help you realize you actually made it--and watching you leave Beijing with more than just a whole new group of friends, but as someone who is ready to experience whatever China might throw your way.

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Chinese Phrases of the Month

“多少钱?”

“Duo Shao Qian?”

“How Much does it cost”

“太贵了!”

“Tai Gui Le!”

“Too Expensive!”





Beijing

Beijing was amazing! It felt unreal to finally see all these places I've heard about. The Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and all the other places we visited. I had a lot of fun bargaining at the markets (I'm sure I got ripped off a few times). I'm so glad we got to go to church in Beijing, and meet President Lewis before we went to our schools. This trip really helped our group become close; in fact, I can't think of another group of strangers that I've been set in the middle of, and feel this close to in such a short amount of time!

-Andrew Olsen

Thoughts From the Airport

When we left the airport to go to the hostel, the very first thing that I thought was, "This bus smells like cigarette smoke. Open a window!" Then I remembered a few friends telling me that practically everyone in China smokes, so you better get used to the smell. While we were riding, I was looking at the Chinese characters on everything, wishing I had a clue what they said. Although I knew I wanted to be there, I started making a mental list of things I knew I would miss. The number one thing I was going to miss, above even my family, was definitely being able to flush toilet paper down the toilet.

-Eve Hosford

Only in China...

...do they serve the entire animal in the dish.

...do movie covers not have a single scene from the movie on them. They have someone else's head on Will Smith's body along with a scene from Lost and possibly Cloverfield.

...are there really weird English translations on Chinese products.

...do they use the shoulder on the freeway as a passing lane.

...You are told it's 'unacceptable' to not drink alcohol.

...Are you told you are 'much fatter' than the picture you sent.

...You can pick out your own frogs and snakes, but not for pets...

...Do children stalk you in the grocery store, but hide anytime you look their direction.



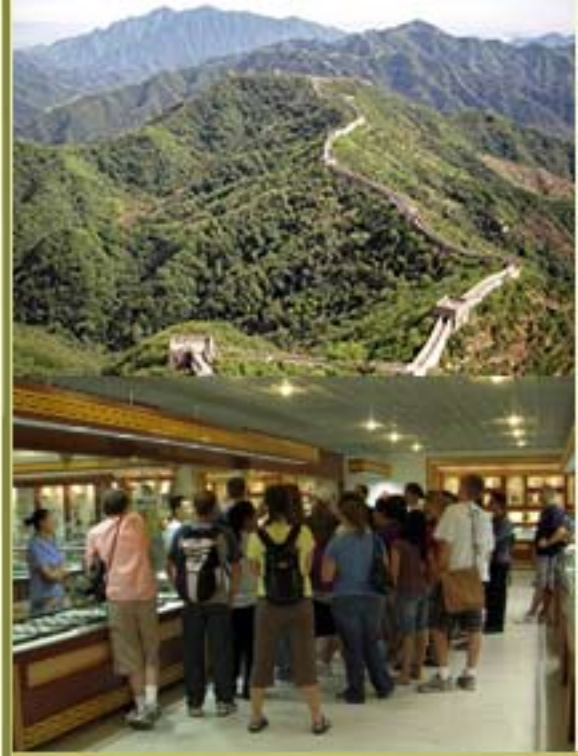
My First Day Teaching

The first day I taught English in China I only taught one class (that'll never happen again). So I was feeling pretty confident; I mean, how hard can it be to teach my native language, right? Wrong. I arrived at my class in Yongzhou #1 middle school and got started, and for the most part, those kids caught maybe 20 or 30 percent of my lesson (if I was lucky). I figured I had landed somewhere between "These kids don't understand enough English to learn anything from me" and "I have zero English-teaching skills." I consider that first lesson to be a dismal failure. I went home and sat on my couch. I zoned into what I call "Sam mode," where there is no interaction, only deep thought, and all I could think about was how if my teaching level was where I thought it was (level 0), and if all my classes are like this one, then my time in China was going to be pretty rough. So I decided it was time to ramp up my own learning curve. I started plowing into a book about teaching English as a second language. I was surprised at how much I learned in such a short time. Consequently, most of my classes have been amazing. I love these kids and I am impressed with how much English they know, but that first day really spurred me into a different mindset. I want to improve myself now and give these kids everything I can in the little time I have with them, and now that I feel that way I can recognize significant development in myself.

In that first week of teaching I presented each class with some basic rules. One was, "It is good to make mistakes." I made them all repeat it and explain it to me to make sure they understood. About my third day I asked why it is important to make mistakes (I asked every class this). One of my students gave me an answer that caused my jaw to drop. In English, he said, "Failure is the mother of success." I have no idea where that proverb comes from, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that this was true for my students AND for me.

China has been a paradigm shift for me. I'm usually the person who won't try until he knows he can kick butt. But failure is the mother of success. So just like I want my kids to try English and make mistakes, I will study and then do the same in my life. I will try, and I will make mistakes and learn. I'll do this when I teach, when I speak Chinese, and in a lot of other areas of my life. Needless to say, I'm pretty happy here.

-Sam Griffiths



...."Failure is the mother of success".... I have no idea where that proverb comes from, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that this was true for my students AND for me....





China Head First

After an extremely long flight to Shanghai our plane got diverted to the domestic airport on the other side of Shanghai. Meanwhile Spencer, who was meeting us upon our arrival, was still at the international airport searching for us. While we waited everyone around was extremely (overly) helpful. After two hours, Spencer finally arrived. He had gotten stuck in really bad traffic on his way from the other airport. He took us to the train station where we boarded our overnight train. We slept soundly (we'd been up since 4 am!) and woke up the next morning in our city. Tong Cheng is a really cool place: the streets are lined with little vendors and farm stands, people are zipping around on bikes everywhere--it's very "China." Tina, our liaison, was waiting for us at the train station, and we went straight to the school, a huge boarding school just outside the city. A few days after arriving, Tina came early in the morning to bring us to sign our contract. On the way over to the administration building she informed us we would start teaching that morning! (The Chinese have yet to fully grasp the western idea of advanced notice) So we signed our contracts, and then went straight to our first class. We had no time to get nervous, we just had to go for it! After we had finished all our classes Tina came to tell us that the Headmaster would like to interview us. We both figured he wanted to ask us about our first day of teaching and if we liked the school. Well...that's what we thought...until we noticed the big TV cameras and the microphone set up! Apparently we are news worthy!

-Sadie Knowlton & Maddie Cloward

Church in Beijing

When I first decided I was going China, I only had one worry: I was afraid I wouldn't be able to go to church or partake of the sacrament. I didn't know how I was going to go four months without that. Now that I have been in China for almost three weeks, I realize what a blessing it is to attend church and participate in the Beijing International District Branch. The first week of church was amazing. When we entered the church, I felt the Spirit hit me like a bus. It was almost overwhelming. And because I'm in a place where I can't openly discuss the gospel, I feel I am able to recognize the Spirit even better and appreciate it a lot more. During sacrament meeting, President Stratford compared Ammon's experience to being in China. Just like Ammon, we are teaching the Chinese people through service. We can be examples to them. Even if we cannot bear our testimonies by word, we can bear our testimony through example.

My first Sunday in Yongzhou, I felt the Spirit just as strong as I did in Beijing. There were nine of us and I know we all felt the Spirit. It was so humbling to be in a small bedroom, having the sacrament blessed. I felt so grateful to be able to renew my covenants and think about Christ and the Atonement. It was truly an amazing experience. After the meeting, we had roll call over the telecom. People called in from 20 other locations! In some, there were large groups like ours; in several other places, just one older woman called in by herself. I feel like I have a connection to everyone, even though I have only heard their voices and have never met them in person. When I used to think about coming to China, I felt that I was missing out on spiritual matters. Let me just say that these past two weeks at church, I have felt the Spirit stronger than I have in a long time. The Beijing International District Branch is awesome and I feel privileged to be able to participate in something like this.

-Brooke Hunter



Experiences with Food

At the school cafeteria we have eaten duck feet, chicken feet, and eel. The duck feet were not like chicken feet at all. Chicken feet are full of little foot bones; the duck feet were actually mostly edible, at least we think they were. They were chewy, and it was just what you would expect cartilage to taste like. With all the spices added in, they tasted all right. It's a little weird because we didn't know people ate duck feet! Plus, who knows where those feet have been?! It was funny to make them walk around our plates. The eel actually tasted pretty good, too. It was a lot of fun talking with the other teachers and trying to figure out what we were eating.

-Winnie Ballard



The leaders at my school knew my birthday was coming up, and they kept mentioning all this stuff they were going to do and how it would be a big celebration. The night of my birthday they picked us up to take us to dinner. We drove to a run-down building in the middle of nowhere. Everyone got out. Turns out, this was where we were eating! Normally they take us out to really nice places, so this was kind of strange. There were chickens and dogs running around at our feet, and we found out those are the dogs they eat! The smell was awful and the food was pretty bad, too, but they made us try everything, of course. Then as dinner was winding down I looked up and saw a cow walking towards our table! I said something about it and no one seemed phased for some reason. It just walked right up to our table and would have eaten the food off our plates if a worker hadn't come and chased it away. As it turns out, that wasn't my birthday celebration at all, but it was definitely a dinner I will always remember.

-Allison Hubble

Who has Swine Flu?

As I left for China, I was really excited to be going on a great adventure, but that fateful Tuesday when I reached the airport, my temperature started climbing. As we passed the check point at the airport in Beijing, a Chinese man in a mask came up to me, and in broken English, said, "Your temperature is a little high. Follow me." My fever reducer hadn't done its job, so they told me I needed to take an ambulance to the hospital so I could be tested for swine flu, but that there was only a 1% chance that I had it. I got to the hospital where they gestured me into my private room with a portable toilet, which they were very excited to show me. They even brought me some food and bottled water. The test was painless, just a mouth swab. Late that evening the doctor told me I was free to go. I tore off my mask (my favorite souvenir) and wondered what I would do once I got outside. But I was handed over to a really nice Chinese girl that spoke great English. She took me back to our hostel. I was so happy! Actually, my quarantine experience was heavenly. I didn't have to worry about my bags, I didn't have to go through the airport, I got a free taxi ride into the city, I was served lunch in bed, and I got to sleep all day after a really long flight. I can't complain a bit other than I missed out on the activities of the day, but I think I would have ended up sleeping through the show anyway!

-Jamie Sheffer

Fall 2009 Teaching Locations



Teachers and Their Locations

Winnie Ballard	Changzhou
Jason Ballard	Changzhou
Barbara Wilson	Daoxian
Jamie Sheffer	Daoxian
Matt Carter	Dong'an
Kristal Carter	Dong'an
Lauren Benson	Hengyang
Megan Sutherland	Hengyang
Shane Gagnon	Liuyang
Holly Larsen	Longhui
Alison Hubble	Longhui
Allie Brown	Longhui
Jessi Epley	Longhui
Haiden Siepert	Shuangpai
Emily Soule	Shuangpai
Maddie Cloward	Tongcheng
Sadie Knowlton	Tongcheng
Eve Hosford	Xiangtan
Leah Dunn	Xiangtan
Lauren Sisto	Xiangtan
Synthia Flores	Xiangtan
Dane Nielsen	Yangzhou
Alesha Nielsen	Yangzhou
Hannah Christenson	Yongzhou
Wayne Christenson	Yongzhou
Rebekah Olson	Yongzhou
Andrew Olson	Yongzhou
Brooke Hunter	Yongzhou
Jason Hughes	Yongzhou
Sam Griffiths	Yongzhou
Jonathan Rygg	Yongzhou
Jessica Wilde	Zhenjiang

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