

Day 3: Saturday, May 18, 2013

Ni'hao!

Today started off with a special treat for all of us students; we got to sleep in! Unfortunately for most of us, our biological clocks are still geared towards North Dakota, and we woke up early anyways.

The Beijing traffic is always a little difficult, and you never know how it will be at any time. So on that note, we started the day off a little later than planned. But, we took off with our full bus to the Lasson Canyon Nursery farm. This California based company has been working in China for around six years. It is interesting to hear what it is like to work in China when their economy is so closely related to the government. This nursery prepares strawberry plants for local Chinese greenhouses to grow. As we drove up to the entrance, the first thing I noticed was, that yes, there are John Deere tractors in use! A highlight of the visit was touring the onsite greenhouses and having plenty of strawberry samples! We would like to thank the former NDSU Bison, Wayne Ausk, for helping set us up with this great tour! Mr. Ausk and his wife moved to Beijing three years ago and own an international company (Ausk International, LLC) that deals with fumigation/pesticides for the fruit and vegetable industry in China. He is originally from Chaffee, North Dakota!

For lunch, we made a short trip to a nearby restaurant that contained enamel manufacturing on the bottom floor. We all enjoyed this lunch, and I sure got a kick out of watching some of my peers (and myself) eating French fries with chopsticks. I think this is the fastest the group has gotten in and out of a restaurant because we were all so excited to get to our next stop.

Next we made our journey to The Great Wall of China. This is something all of us had seen pictures of, but it is completely surreal to see it in person! The way to the top was almost a mile of steep slopes, uneven steps, and some very low handrails. There was no shortage of pictures taken on the trek to the top! To be so close to something built 2,000 years ago has nothing to compare to. It is a part of history and conflict and it involved so many people, it is not surprising that it is one of the 7 Wonders of the World.

With our time at the Wall complete, we travelled back into Beijing to have the most famous meal in China, the Beijing Duck Dinner. As Dr. Newman put it, "If you aren't full after that meal, there is something wrong with you!" Needless to say, there was plenty of food for everyone (and probably a couple more people). With plenty of steps climbed and a long day ahead of us tomorrow, I am sure every single one of us will sleep well.

Good Night from Beijing,

Matraca Steen & Cody Midthun

Mattie's Reflection

Today, the Great Wall was incredible. It was an experience like nothing I have ever had and I don't know if the chance will come again. And ever since I saw the picture of The Great Wall on my grandma's cover of the current National Geographic, I have wanted to see it in person. Not only did I get to see it, but I also continued my travelling tradition of taking handstand pictures. There was definitely more than one funny look received.

A unique experience besides the Wall itself, was seeing how the other individuals visiting the wall reacted to seeing us there. More than one group of Chinese young and old, took pictures with different groups of us. That is something you wouldn't see in the United States. Even in North Dakota, there is quite a bit of variation between each person. There are every few groups of people that stick out like a sore thumb at home as we did visiting this world wonder.

Not only are there reactions humbling, but also fascinating. Coming from a small town, I didn't have a ton of interaction with people of Asian descent. So not only is it pretty neat for them, but it is a great chance to learn more about them. Plus, it makes you feel kind of like a rockstar or a celebrity, which I don't know many people who would pass that up!

Cody's Reflection

Today was an incredible day! We got to tour a strawberry farm and talk to the men that operate and manage it, Wayne Ausk and Randy Ito. The farm was large for China, 40 acres. In the US that's nothing. Also, the equipment that they use is very small compared to what we use. After walking through there greenhouses and sampling the strawberries, we drove to an enamelware shop that had a restaurant on the second level of it where we ate lunch. After eating lunch we drove to The Great Wall. We all walked/jogged/ran up to the very top of the wall. Actually being able to be there and experience the view was amazing and can only be experienced to truly understand and appreciate it. Everyone was pretty much dead on their feet by the time we finished and got to the bottom.

After leaving the Great Wall of China, we went out to have our much anticipated Beijing duck dinner. The restaurant was very fancy and the food was incredible. Once we got back to the hotel, sleep was the only thing that we were concerned with. Today was truly a once in a lifetime kind of day!