

## Day 4: Sunday, May 19, 2013

Ni'hao!

This was our last full day in the city of Beijing. We started off the morning by boarding the and driving a short distance to Tiananmen square. This is one of the world's largest gathering places, which can hold 1 million people at a single time! This could hold the entire population of North Dakota and then some...or possibly the greater majority of North Dakota's cattle herd! Tiananmen Square was built for large celebrations, such as the Chinese May Day celebration. It is also well known for its political history- many protests against the government have taken place here.

After Tiananmen square, we proceeded to walk through an underground passage that led us to the entrance of the Forbidden City. The only people allowed to live here were the Emperor, soldiers, servants, and concubines; the general public was not allowed inside the city gates. It is Chinese tradition that in order to gain good luck you can touch the golden knobs on the entrance doors, but they must be in a 9X9 pattern. We walked



over a mile as we explored the various buildings, while dodging thousands of other tourists and always searching for our tour guide (Sherman) waving a purple flag! All of the buildings follow the same design and color scheme- with red meaning happiness and gold signaling royalty. We also learned that the number of statues on the rooftops of each building determined importance.

For lunch after the Forbidden City we loaded onto the bus and headed to a fancy restaurant with all kinds of glass chandeliers and hanging glass decorations. Upon finishing lunch, we traveled to the Emperor's Summer Palace; there are actually 5 Summer Palaces, but tourists are usually only taken to the most centrally located one. Once again the buildings followed the same theme and were very traditional, much like at

the Forbidden City. The Summer Palace contains a large lake that is 75% of the grounds. We could have taken a boat ride across the lake, but sadly the strong Fargo winds found us in Beijing! As we walked through one of the long corridors we stopped to look at one of the paintings- it was of a heavenly lady, a mortal man, and two children. The story goes that the woman came down from heaven and fell in love with this mortal man, they had children, but it was not allowed for her to stay with them. Her heavenly father ordered her back to heaven but after some time of his daughter being heart-broken and weeping every night, he allowed her to visit her family on Earth once a year. This is the story of the Chinese Valentine's day, which takes place on July 7. We continued through the corridor and up hundreds of stairs to a large temple that contained a statue of Buddha. From the landing at the top of the stairs we could see an amazing skyline view of Beijing and took many pictures!

We worked up an appetite with all of our walking, so we ventured to the bus and headed out to a famous open air market in Beijing called Wangfujing Here, street vendors were selling a wide variety of food options from all over China: starfish, shark, squid, octopus, snake, dog, silkworm, grasshoppers, lamb testicles, candied fruit, and much more! It was definitely a cultural experience, but surprisingly the food wasn't as terrible as we expected- for the most part anyway. With out stomachs full or feeling nauseous, we boarded the bus and headed back to our hotel for the night. It was bittersweet as we got off the bus and headed into the hotel, as this was the last day we got to spend with our fearless leader and tour guide, Sherman!

Tomorrow is going to be a long day but we can't wait to see what is waiting for us in Xi'an!

LaNay Jung and Marcy McNichols

**Marcy McNichols personal reflection:**

My highlights from Sunday were that I felt like we were celebrities walking around. Every where we went people wanted to take pictures with us, we sat outside the Forbidden City for twenty minutes for people to use the restroom and that whole time we had pictures take of us as well as with us. My other highlight was at the summer palace. The view when we got to the top of the Buddhist Temple was amazing! You could see the part of the skyline of the city of Beijing even through all the smog. Lastly the Market Street topped it all! You could eat whatever type of food you wanted. I tried a few things like octopus, sheep testicles and some sugar covered fruit.

**LaNay Jung personal reflection:**

My experience in China so far has completely changed my perspectives- not only of China, but also of my life in the United States. As we walked through Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, and the Summer Palace we were able to interact and see thousands of people. It was very surprising to me that all of the Chinese tourists were so in awe at being able to see an American; they would try to sneak pictures or even come up and ask to take a photo with us. This type of open attitude towards other cultures is very minimal in the United States. We have prejudices and are quick to judge, but here in China they are excited to meet new people and welcome all of their tourists with open arms. Another thing I have taken away from this trip is the need to conserve and become more mindful of what we waste back home. When we were trying foods at the Market Street, if we bought a food item and didn't like its taste or texture we were quick to just throw it away. It wouldn't be 2 minutes later and a homeless person was already digging out what we thought of as 'trash' or 'not edible' and keeping it for his meal. More along with the conservation, but not just with food: we are very wasteful with our energy. In the hotels we have stayed at in China, you have to insert your hotel card key into a slot in order for the lights to

work. No card, and the circuits remain off. I feel that this type of philosophy (maybe not to this extent) would be useful in America. How often do we leave our lights or electronics plugged in or on when we aren't even in the room? There is so much more that I could say about my experiences here and how it has changed my life, but I will leave that for another day.