

Leah Kofmehl
China 2010 Travelogue
GOTCHA

The trip to Beijing was fantastic. It was a wonderful opportunity, and an excellent learning experience. I am truly grateful for the scholarship, which allowed me to go, and I appreciate what it allowed me to do.

The first day was entirely flying, a 13 hour flight from Newark to Beijing. I was thrilled when we hit solid land again, although flying over the North Pole was pretty neat. When we arrived, we met one of our guides and our driver, who took us to the hotel and then allowed us to unpack and settle in. We were exhausted. However, we had an excellent dinner and our first try at chopsticks, which was quite entertaining.

The second day (and first full day of travel and touring) we visited Lama Temple, one of the largest Buddhist temples in China. We learned a lot about the Buddhist faith, and saw many people practicing rituals for good fortune and good health. We then had a hot pot lunch, which was a boiling pot in the middle of the table full of sauce, which we then put in different vegetables and meats to cook and then ate right out of the pot. It was one of my favorite meals. The rest were quite traditional, but this was neat. We also visited Simplot China, which makes all of McDonald's China's French fries and hash browns. We learned how their factory works, where they grow their potatoes and how they work with farmers, and got to go on a tour and get samples.

The second day we visited Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and the Temple of Heaven. All were great historical sites, and we learned a lot about

Chinese history, but also a lot about Chinese modern culture as we interacted with a lot of Chinese citizens and watched how they acted in different social situations. We also visited the Pearl Market, and met a guy who had a nephew that went to Penn State!

For our third day in China, we visited Yanjing Brewery. It was pretty much your standard brewery, but as the largest in China, its size and production volume astounded us. Later we visited the Olympic Village, which was really cool, to be up close to something I had watched on TV for so long, and to see how close all of the events really happened.

For the weekend, we visited the Great Wall and Ming Tombs, which were about an hour and a half from Beijing. The Great Wall was AWESOME. I cannot say enough terrific things about the view, the structure, or the history. The Ming tombs kind of creeped me out, but were very nice and cool, as they were underground and it was very hot out. We also visited the Summer Palace, which may rival Penn State's campus in size and amount of people, but was also very fascinating to see. Our last stop was a Taoist temple, the Dongyue temple, which was a religion I had only heard about in passing. The temple was very open-air and the guides gave us a very good overview of the religion.

Monday morning we visited Chao Lai Agriculture Garden. We learned their different techniques for growing things organically, and some history of agriculture in China. We even saw an antique noodle maker. Later we visited a modern art district and saw some up and coming Chinese artists.

Tuesday we visited two different farms. One was very touristy, having several different tour options and seemed a little more business oriented than agriculture oriented. The other was super educational. It was an entire village that was self sustaining, making their own natural gas from animal waste, growing their own food, making their own furniture from their lumber and then still having enough to sell and make a profit of almost six million RMB yearly. It was one of the most interesting villages I had ever been to.

On the last day, we visited a food corporation that made beverages, wine and produced pork. It was interesting, how large the corporation was, and how much of their production was government only. We also visited China Agricultural University and discussed their curriculum and visited their MBA students, who were quite interesting characters.

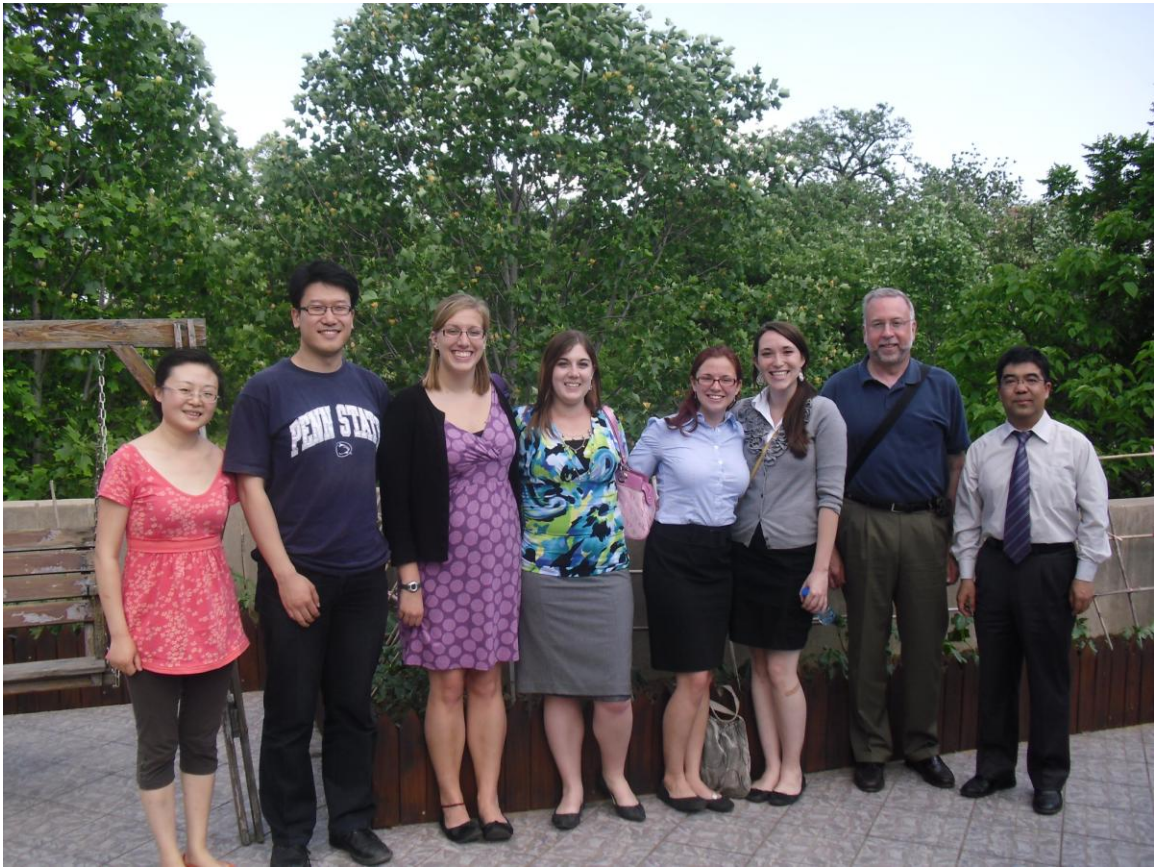
I learned a lot of things from this trip, a lot about agribusiness, and a lot about Chinese culture. I am thankful for this experience, and I will take it with me the rest of my life.



Me with some tourists at the Temple of Heaven

The group at Tiananmen Square





Us with students and the Dean (far right) at China Agricultural University

Me at the Great Wall

