

Cara Nordberg's Beijing Experience, Summer 2010



Monday, May 10 – Tuesday, May 11

We flew out of the Newark airport around 12pm on Monday and arrived in Beijing around 2pm on Tuesday. Our flight was almost 14 hours long, and Beijing is 12 hours ahead of Newark's time, so we lost a whole 26 hours! Once we arrived in Beijing, we had to go through body heat monitors to make sure that we didn't have the flu. Luckily, we all passed! We got our passports and visas checked and stamped, then we got our luggage and found our driver and translator. We packed up all of our suitcases and headed to our hotel, a Courtyard Marriott. Since it felt like it should be the middle of the night for us (about 3 or 4 am back home), we were all pretty tired. We rested and got ready for the start of our adventures!

Wednesday, May 12

We were supposed to start the day by visiting the Beijing Huiyuan Beverage & Food Group Company, but they weren't allowing visitors due to the flu that was going around. Instead,



we went to the Lama Temple, a Buddhist temple where many people still went to pray. There were several small buildings, all with different Buddha statues. Each statue represented a different characteristic, such as good health or fortune. So if someone wanted to pray for good

health for a sick relative, he or she would pray to the Buddha statue that represented good health. All throughout the Temple were places where worshippers could burn incense as they knelt down on their knees and prayed.

In the afternoon, we visited our first business, Simplot China. Simplot China produces French fries and hash-brown patties that are distributed throughout China to McDonald's. We got to watch potatoes go through the production line as they turned into French fries. The best part of the tour was at the end when we each got to sample a serving of fries and hash-brown patties. They were so fresh and delicious compared to what consumers get at McDonald's about 9 months after the products are actually made.

Thursday, May 13

Today was all sight-seeing. We started the day with Tiananmen Square, where the student protests took place in 1989. Chairman Mao is also buried at the Square, and there was a huge line to see his body. Apparently he has been embalmed and visitors can view the top portion of his body. After I heard this, I'm glad we didn't go in to see it!

We then walked to the Forbidden City, which was just across the street from Tiananmen Square. The Forbidden City was so big (9,999 rooms), and each major building had its own name. I don't know how anybody ever kept track of them all!

When we were done at the Forbidden City, we went to the Temple of Heaven. This Temple is affiliated with the Taoism religion. It had several buildings, each beautifully hand-painted inside!

Friday, May 14

We visited another business in the morning—Beijing Yanjing Beer Group Corporation. We took a tour of the facilities and saw each step of the beer brewing process. I've never taken a beer tour before, so I can't say how Yanjing's brewing process differs from American brewing processes. The bottling machines were busy preparing tons of beer to be shipped out all over China. At the end of the tour, we each received a free small sample of the beer. To be honest, it wasn't very good!

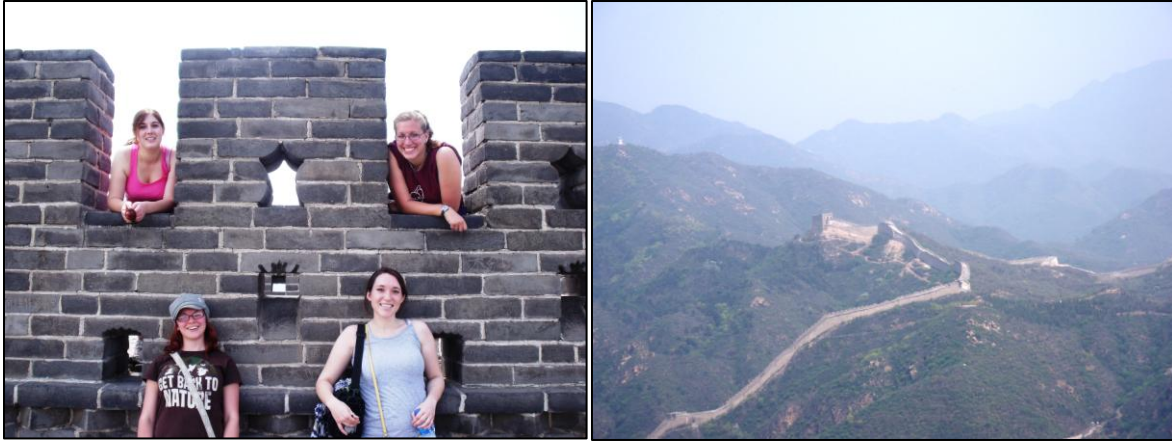
Next we visited the Olympic Village, where the 2008 Summer Olympic Games were held. National Stadium (a.k.a. the Bird's Nest) was amazing! The design of the stadium was beautiful and inside was very spacious. There weren't any



sporting events going on at the time, but it looked like workers were preparing the field for a soccer match in the near future. We also got to see a tiny house on the roof of the stadium, where a man was living in an attempt to break a world record. I can't remember exactly what the record was, but it had something to do with walking across a tight rope. To honor him, a couple of people from the man's hometown in rural China came to play traditional farming music. It was pretty cool stuff! After we left the Bird's Nest, we went over to the Water Cube. It was closed for maintenance, so we weren't able to see inside at all. It still looked amazing on the outside though!

Saturday, May 15

Today was the big day—the day we went to the Great Wall of China! The Wall kept going on as far as the eye could see, and it sloped up and down to run perfectly parallel to the mountains. It was amazing! The part of the Wall that we went to, Badaling, was pretty crowded. When we got there, we could go either left or right onto the wall. We chose to go to the left where it was much less populated, but it didn't take long for us to figure out why there were so fewer people. It was a very steep climb most of the way up, and some parts (luckily not the steepest areas) didn't even have stairs! I held onto the railing most of the way both up and down the Wall. Once we got to the top, and the end of where visitors were allowed to climb, the view was so great! The only downside was that there was a lot of smog that impaired our view a little bit. Overall, it was fantastic though!



After we got off of the Great Wall and refueled ourselves, we traveled to the Dingling tomb, one of the Ming Dynasty Tombs. Here, Emperor Wan-li and his two empresses are buried. The tomb was underground, so it felt cool and refreshing after our exhausting climb on the Great Wall!

Sunday, May 16

We continued to sight-see today, with the Summer Palace as our first stop. Not too far inside the entrance, there was a gorgeous lake where visitors could take boat tours of the Palace. We agreed that we would take a boat tour at the end of our visit, but it never happened because we were all still tired from the day before. Near the lake, there were a few beautiful pavilions that featured traditional Chinese painting. We climbed to the top of the Palace, where we had a great view of the whole area. After getting back down, we explored a



small village-like area that surrounded a canal. There were not railings, so we had to be careful as we walked along the inside perimeter!

Next, we went to the Dongyue Temple, another Taoist temple. After I took a picture of what looked like a statue of a warrior, another visitor told me that taking pictures of the statues would curse my soul. Out of respect, I didn't take any more pictures of the statues at the Temple. The perimeter of the Temple contained several small rooms that each represented a "department" of the Taoist religion. A few examples of the departments are the Department of the Rain Gods, Department of Opposing Obscene Acts, and the Toxicant Department. Each department was represented by its own unique statues.

Monday, May 17

Today, our first visit was to the Chao Lai Agricultural Garden. Here, they were growing a wide variety of crops, such as tomatoes, bananas, and cactuses. Old-fashioned farming equipment, such as an ancient wheelbarrow, was also displayed. The Garden was fresh and relaxing after a tiring weekend!

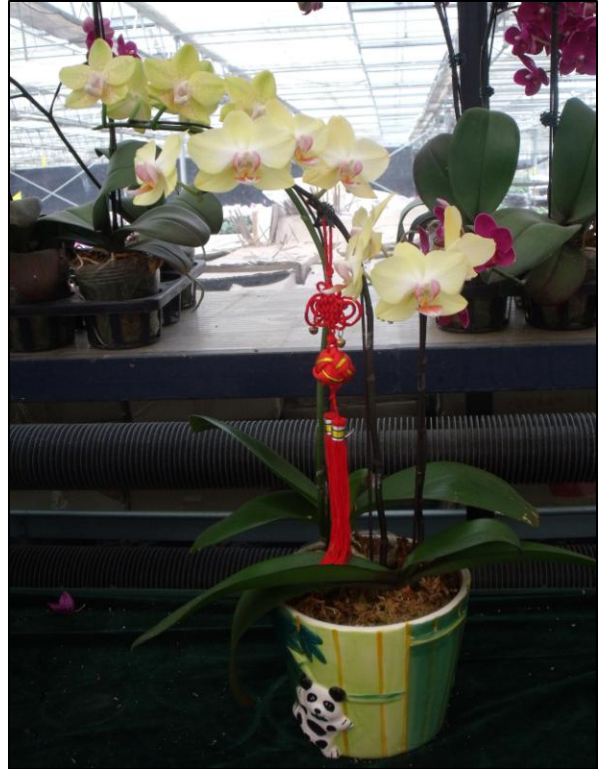
On our way back from the Garden, we stopped at the Beijing 798 Art Zone, an indoor/outdoor modern art park. Some of the most notable pieces of art were a large statue of a fat naked man, a man with wings who appeared to be hanging onto the roof of a building, and a statue of two hands that seemed to be reaching toward each other.

Tuesday, May 18

We started off the day with the Xiaotangshan Modern Agriculture Science & Technology Park. Here, we got to see some strawberry plants that were almost ripe. We also saw many

beautiful orchids that came in several colors: pink, purple, white, and yellow. I think the yellows were my favorite! The Park also housed some animals such as peacocks, peahens, and pretty blue birds.

Our second stop of the day was Liu Minying Ecological Farm. The Farm is a large, self-sustained community. They even produce their own methane gas from manure. When we walked by the methane plant, it was very very stinky! The Farm also produced several crops and raised chickens that were used for food.



Wednesday, May 19

Today was our last day of visits and our last full day in China. First, we went to a few factories that were run by Shun Xin Agriculture. The first factory produced pork and pork products. We watched as some poor little pigs got sliced up into pieces for food! The next factory was more appetizing. It produced many flavors of fruit juices. We also went to a rice wine brewery, where we each had a free sample of rice wine. The rice wine was better than the beer we sampled.

Our tours of these factories were accompanied by MBA students from China Agricultural University. After the tours were over, we rode with them to the CAU campus, where we had lunch with them. The students kept offering us beer, but we declined since we were meeting with

the Dean of Agricultural Economics in the afternoon. When we met with the Dean, he talked to us a little bit about agricultural economics and CAU. After, we went to another building on campus where we visited with the MBA students for a little while. We played balloon games and listened to a male student sing in a perfect female-sounding voice. When it was time for us to go, all of the MBA students were sad to see us leave.

Thursday, May 20

Today was the day that we flew back to America. While we had all really enjoyed to trip, I think we were all ready to come home. Our flight departed around 4pm in Beijing on Thursday, and we arrived back in Newark at 5pm on Thursday. Instead of losing a whole day as we did flying to Beijing, we basically only lost 1 hour coming back. I was happy to be home, but I had an amazing time in China that I will never forget!