

Since so many have asked about my China trip, I thought I would share my excitement! Well, I arrived home on Monday evening, August 22, 2005 from China. What an experience! It was definitely a very different culture over there. Everyday driving on the streets of Beijing, the driver of my bus would come inches away from hitting anything in the way, people, bicycles and cars! I must admit, the thing that shocked me the most was they did not use public toilets as we know them. They were just holes in the ground!! So, that definitely was something we all had to get used to.

I was able to go on many tours. We went to Tiananmen Square, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Ming Tomb, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven and... They were all quite interesting. I really liked the Summer Palace; it was huge! The buildings were incredible and were all spread out around this big lake which was in the middle. I had my birthday the day we climbed the Great Wall, so it was very cool. Also, that night we went to Hard Rock Beijing and boy, were we all ever so excited!! The first non Chinese food we had seen all week!! I do not think I'll eat Chinese food for awhile!!!! Every restaurant we went to had the exact same dishes with the exception of one here and there. Eating the same thing for lunch and dinner can definitely get to you! Let's just say, the only thing I recognized was the rice!

The softball was so fun! My team consisted of girls from California and Arizona. I only knew a couple of them before going. It was fun to build new friendships. It was amazing how quickly we created a "team" and played so well. Although the Chinese were not as good as we were expecting, it was still an experience that I am so glad I had. We played a total of 6 games and 4 teams, winning them all by run rule. My stats for the games are 18 UP, 16 AB, 11 hits, scored 7 runs, had 5 RBIs, had 4 stolen bases, and my batting average and OBE% was .688.

The ages of the teams varied from 13U to even college teams. It was kind of sad when we played the younger teams because China, being a communist country, the government decides who plays what sport even if it is not what the child wants to do. Also, the government makes the younger kids look alike. So, they all had the same hair cut and sad to say, many looked like young boys. At the beginning of each game we would do a gift exchange. It was so fun to see the different things we got! We gave them miniature softball gloves, they were really pretty cool! At the end of the tournament we were able to have them sign balls and the miniature gloves; it was so exciting! I mean how many people can say they have the signatures of Chinese softball players!?!? To our surprise some even spoke a little English, so that was neat.

Let me tell you, if you are a shopper, this was your paradise! I love to shop, and it was so fun. Everywhere you went there were venders walking around asking us if we wanted to buy anything. It was funny because they would not ask any Chinese if they wanted to buy anything, just us Americans. A few times on the trip some people were given back fake money from these venders, but we learned very early to check to make sure it was real. We went to a Silk factory and a Pearl factory as well! Those were both so fun! I like pearls; so there I got a pair of earrings and a ring for my birthday. On the last day we went to a place called the Silk alley. It used to be all stores in an alley, hence the name, but due to the Olympics coming there in 2008 they made a 5 story building to house it all. It is a shop until you drop place!! There was everything there--clothes, purses, jewelry, electronics and shoes. You can bargain everything down there, even though everything is already so cheap, but it was still really fun! I ended up coming home with a lot more than I expected; I mean who can pass up shoes that are priced in the US for \$90.00 when they were only \$10.00 there? It was definitely a highlight! Our entire group thought it was a super place! Well, I just wanted to let you know how my trip went!