



Study Abroad in China

*Journal Entries for
Beijing, Xian, Zhengzhou, & Shanghai
Summer 2010*

Misty Johnson

Sunday, 9 May 2010

Preparing for departure:

It is Sunday night and I have a flight for China tomorrow morning. China is 12 hours ahead of us, so in order to adjust better it was recommended that we stay up all night so we can sleep on the plane. I have decided not to start packing until around midnight so that I will have plenty to do to keep myself awake. I am getting really nervous, anxious, apprehensive, excited, you name it. My mom will be driving me to the airport and has volunteered to stay up with me all night. I'll miss her.

Monday, 10 May 2010

Heading to the airport

It is now Monday morning. I have not been to bed since Saturday night. I am exhausted and feel like I am forgetting something. Luckily, Mama was able to get in about an hour's worth of sleep. I have 1 heavy suitcase, 1 backpack, a small carry on, and a pillow. Daddy thought we were both a little goofy and running on fumes, so now HE is driving us both to the airport. I am sitting in the back seat trying my best to keep my eyes open. We just stopped at McDonald's for my last taste of some American food. I ordered not a single, but a DOUBLE cheeseburger and the largest fry they sell. I am now full and even sleepier.



MFT's waiting at the Atlanta Airport

Tuesday, 11 May 2010

Flying high

I have been asleep for what seems like days. As soon as I pulled up to the airport in Atlanta, I saw Erica and Alyse getting out of the car. How convenient. We checked in, met up with other group members, and waited patiently for takeoff. The first flight was to

Narita Airport in Tokyo, Japan. I missed takeoff because I fell asleep. We were in the air for about 14.5 hours. We landed in Tokyo and had just enough time to go through customs, grab a souvenir (postcards) and board for our next flight to Beijing. I had hoped for a longer layover, but as sleepy and groggy and disoriented as I was, it was probably in my best interest. The next flight to Beijing was about 4.5 to 5 hours and again I missed takeoff due to my napping nature. We landed in Beijing, got our luggage, and boarded our bus fully equipped with Winston the tour guide and headed for our hotel. We were told we could buy 2 bottled waters from the bus driver for 5 Yuan, which is less than \$1. We arrived to our Beijing Joiest Days Inn hotel around 1 a.m. The hotel room looks like a typical hotel room. The beds are twin size, white linens, but the entire hotel room smells like smoke. Now, we have a wake-up call at 6:30 a.m. to go visit the Great Wall of China. I'm excited, but my ankles are really swollen from the flight, I'm still exhausted from almost 24 hours of travel, and our beds have the support of a cement floor. This will take some getting used to. But, I can't wait to eat some Chinese food. Goodnight.



Beijing Joiest Days Inn Hotel

Wednesday, 12 May 2010

Giddy up, GO!

It is officially Day 1 in China. Our first task of the day was Chinese Continental Breakfast. My first taste of Chinese food was noodles and cabbage dumplings. Coffee is not so popular here. The breakfast buffet was lined with typical “dinner” foods like stir-fried vegetables, cabbage dumplings, noodles, yeast rolls, warm milk. There was porridge, apple juice and orange juice as well.



My 1st Taste of Chinese Food

Soon after, we headed for the Great Wall of China. The Chinese kept grabbing us and taking pictures of us. They pointed, touched our skin, our hair, and “threw” their babies at us. We felt famous. The Wall itself was enormous and extends for about 5,000 miles. The area we were at was really crowded. We got the chance to buy t-shirts from vendors. Dr. Schmier told us to really bargain. One vendor said she would sell me a shirt for 25 Yuan, another tried to sell me the same shirt for 250! Once I got my shirt for 20 Yuan, the vendor refused to give me a Small size. She gave me extra large. It was extra large on me. Someone helped me translate and I finally got a medium, and it was still too big. But I walked away with my shirt.



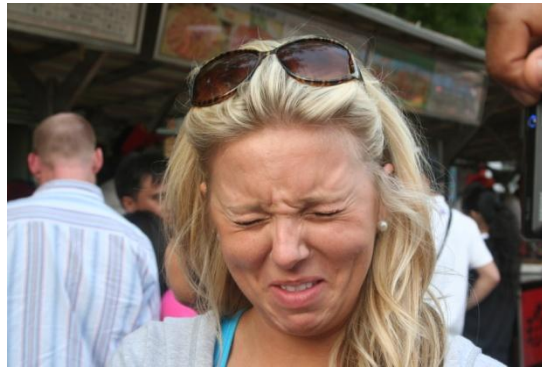
The Great Wall of China

We had our first lunch after the Great Wall. We sat down at large round tables with lazy Susans in the middle. We had very small cups, very small plates, a small bowl, chopsticks, and a small teacup. Several different dishes were brought out for each table and set on the lazy Susan. They didn't look very familiar, except for the French fries. We were given an option of coke, sprite, water, or beer. Traditional “fire water” (rice liquor) was on the table. Fire water was the perfect explanation for the taste. My throat still burns! After lunch we went to a pearl shop that cultures their own freshwater pearls and

got the chance to buy some jewelry. I bought a pearl ring. Then we went to the Wangfujing/Quianmen shopping district and tried some bizarre foods like fried starfish, fried scorpion on a stick, and sheep penis. Believe it or not, the scorpion was tasty. At this point, most people had gone their own ways, and we were to get a taxi back to the hotel on our own. We went to a bookstore and bought Chinese phrase books, hailed a cab, and returned to the hotel to figure out something for dinner. We ended up walking about a mile from our hotel to a place where we could eat Peking Duck. I wasn't a huge fan, but it was nice to try something different. We walked another mile back to the hotel and I showered and am now heading to bed. We have another early day tomorrow.



Scorpion on a Stick



Trying Starfish

Thursday, 13 May 2010

Day 4

Today we visited the Tiananmen Square first. It is a huge plaza filled with people. Our tour guide, Winston, told us since there were so many people and it was easy to get lost, to stick together like "sticky rice." This was the perfect opportunity for people watching. There were lots of families. They were mostly younger couples with their young children. The first thing that stood out for me was that the babies had slits in their pants. They didn't wear diapers. They just had crotch less pants! It was actually really cute. I had my

extra large camera lens and just people watched for the most part of the day. It was really refreshing to be around so many people and so many families. Most families only consisted of a mother, father, and one child. They wanted their children to have pictures with us. They all waved, smiled, and we learned to say hello in Chinese: “Ni Hao.” They laughed and smiled whenever we said Ni Hao. People constantly took pictures of us, held up peace signs, and attempted to say “hello.”



Little girl eating a tomato at the Square

After the square, we walked to the Forbidden City. It was enormous, so again, we had to practice “sticky rice.” We went through temple after temple adorned with Gold Buddhas, animals, ancient scriptures, and prayer mats. Giant cauldrons with incense were at the temples. Chinese natives often stopped to light incense and kneel in prayer. Later, we took a tour in the Hutong village. It was less crowded and seemed less fast paced. It was a more rural area of town with a lot of charm. We visited one house of a hutong family where the husband and wife welcomed us all into their home. They were both retired and said the home had been in their family for many years. We gathered around the living room of their small house equipped with air conditioning. Neither spoke English, but with the help of our professors we could ask questions and have them translated. The husband, who we called Mr. John, began to show us some of his art work. They were very beautiful and he is clearly talented. He painted many pictures of different seasons, as well as some floral pieces. We were all so impressed we asked if we could buy his artwork and he let us. He then agreed to have his picture made with us and the pieces we bought from him. All through the Hutong village we were able to enjoy Rickshaw rides: men on bicycles with buggies attached. By the end of the day, we had a group dinner. After the dinner we watched the Beijing Acrobatic Show. The color and the skill were amazing and it took place in a theater type setting. I must admit, by this time, I was so exhausted, I keep falling asleep. As soon as we left, we went back to the hotel, showered, and now it is 10 pm and I am going straight to bed. I will be waking up early yet again tomorrow.



Myself with Mr. John and the art I bought



At the Acrobatic show

Friday, 14 May 2010

Last Day in Beijing

On the final day in Beijing, we met in the downstairs lobby at 6:30 am for a voluntary trip to the Temple of Heaven. We stopped along the way to eat some street food, which was some type of thin pastry filled with cabbage, egg, and stir fried. It was delicious! The Temple of Heaven was absolutely amazing. People gathered everywhere inside the temple to exercise, chant, meditate, dance, and so on. We played paddle ball with some of the natives, which was lots of fun. The majority of the people were elders and I was really shocked and motivated to see them all out and about so early just to exercise, dance, or pray. At 8:30 we took a mandatory class trip with Dr. Huang to the police museum. Although we couldn't understand much because most captions in the museum were Chinese, it was still very interesting. We then had the chance to visit the Bird's Nest, one of the Olympic Stadiums featured in the Beijing 2008 Olympics. Some of us flew kites, but again, I just people watched and took candid photographs. I tried to notice differences between our culture and theirs. But when everyone was scattered about, flying kites, playing with their children, hanging out with friends, it offered a comforting

sense of familiarity and the humbling feeling that maybe we all aren't really that different, except that we don't wear crotchless pants as children!

Later we visited the Summer Palace. It was the summer home of one of China's most famous emperors. The palace was located near the lake and the temples resembled those of the Forbidden City. Streets were lined with willow trees and cypress. This place was very serene and absolutely beautiful. So many Chinese tourists were also at the palace, also getting a taste of Chinese culture. I can particularly remember being a bit angry during this day because my camera battery went dead and I wasn't able to eavesdrop on the Chinese people like I had previously been doing with my large, obnoxious lens. But, several other classmates had cameras so I sucked it up and continued. I had my first Chinese ice cream on this day, and it was delicious. We took a ride on one of the boats at the palace, just cruising around the lake, eating our ice cream. Finally, we went to the Beijing train station to board our overnight train to Xian. My stomach was really upset unfortunately. But a little Imodium and I was good again. I shared a room with 2 guys and 1 other girl in our group. It was a little awkward because they had loud music and were into drinking and partying all night. I was hoping my Imodium would kick in, so I climbed onto the top bunk and was quickly asleep by midnight. It was my favorite day so far.



With Chinese women at the Temple of Heaven



Dr. Huang's class at the Police Museum



Observing a couple at the Olympic Stadiums



Cute Baby



The Summer Palace

Saturday, 15 May 2010

New City

When we woke up on the train, we were still an hour from Xian. All we could see were luscious green fields full of rice paddies and the occasional worker. There were not many houses around; it was quite rural compared to what we had seen. As we arrived to Xian, we met our new tour guide, Wendy. We had about 40 minutes to grab food and wonder the streets. I found a Starbucks and had my first cup of coffee and a blueberry muffin! The Starbucks staff spoke English and it was the first time we had heard English in what seemed like forever. Next, we went to the City Wall. The wall basically separates the city from its rural counterparts. Inside Xian city were high end stores such as Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton, STARBUCKS, Pizza Hut, and so on. The City Wall is about 5 miles around, very old, and made entirely of rock. The top of the wall is about 15 meters wide and is flat. We got the chance to ride bicycles all the way around the wall. This was one of my favorite memories. Riding the bicycle and taking in the city was amazing. Chinese who were also riding bikes would pass, smile, and say hello! Next, we had lunch. It was the first meal that we had that was buffet style, so I was really able to get what I wanted and get full versus walking away from the lazy Susan's still hungry. We then began our tour to the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. Here, local jade was very popular and we had the chance to buy some. All the proceeds went to benefit the temple. We saw monks, beautiful scenery, and more temples with incense cauldrons. The grounds were nicely decorated with flowers and beautiful trees. However, it was very similar to the previous temples we had already seen. Later we had a chance to go to our hotel, which was much nicer than the first one. It was the Citylion International Hotel. We had showers, got dressed up and went to the Tang Dynasty Dinner Show. Later we went to a karaoke bar for Alyse's birthday. Some of the Chinese kept motioning for us to get on stage, so we did, thinking we would be singing karaoke. After a few minutes on stage with some of the Chinese girls, we soon realized it was NOT a karaoke contest. Rather, it was a "sexy" contest where we had to strut down a catwalk to a song to the end where a "stripper pole" was. We were MORTIFIED. But, we were good sports. We kept doing rounds until people were eliminated. In the end, I was the winner, so my prize was a fruit platter! Looking back, it was fun although embarrassing. We had another early morning, so decided to head to bed around 1 am. It was a great day.



Riding Bicycles on the City Wall in Xian



At the Wild Goose Pagoda



Tang Dynasty Dinner Show

Sunday, 16 May 2010

Day 7

First thing Sunday morning, we took a long bus ride and went to the Terra Cotta Warriors Museum. Our guide told us about the history behind it and the significance of the warriors. It was very fascinating. The warriors are still being replicated today; they are molded out of clay and then basically burned for quite some period of time. I was able to buy some replicas, which were somewhat expensive (about 120 Yuan). Later, a vendor offered me the same thing for 20 Yuan. I was furious! But, come to find out, the vendor sold something that only looked identical. Yes, the warriors were made of clay, but they were sun-dried. They weren't baked by fire. Therefore, they were much worse quality, and if they were dropped, they would probably shatter. We saw all sorts of people and ethnicities at the museum to see this piece of history. After hours of museum touring, we had lunch. It then began pouring rain. The weather became rather dreary and everyone was pretty tired. We were supposed to go to the Hot Springs, but since it was raining, we weren't able to. So we got to go back to the hotel that evening to have dinner on our own.



The Real Terra Cotta Soldiers



Twin Sisters at the Museum

Monday, 17 May 2010

Leaving Xian

On this last morning in Xian, we got a free morning before we boarded the train to Zhengzhou. I was finally able to sleep in past 6:30, which was nice. However, our hotel had such GREAT complimentary breakfast; we had to be downstairs before 9:30 to eat it. We had noodles, dumplings which we had come to love, omelets, bacon, rice pudding, and orange juice. Right before we checked out of the hotel room, I learned there was a small internet café in our hotel with 1 computer. We were all dying to check our grades, so I went to the café. It was very slow internet speed, but as I was standing there waiting, my favorite song OF ALL TIME (Knockin' on Heaven's Door) began playing over the speaker. Then I found out I had all A's and felt that between sleeping late, eating well, maintaining a 4.0, and hearing my favorite song, that it was a great day and possibly a sign that I should move to China! Ha! We went back to the train station in Xian, and I went to the worst restroom of my life. There were no stalls or doors. There were only random holes in the ground. They were very dirty. Chinese women walked up to a hole, squatted without any sense of modesty, urinated without wiping or washing their hands, then left. I was a little too modest for that, so I got a friend to act as my stall door, and I gathered some of my own tissue and hand sanitizer. Now, I AM a country girl, so squatting in holes isn't the problem. But the smell of these restrooms is like no other. Chinese women stared at me and my modest bathroom etiquette like I was crazy. Once we boarded the high-speed train, we chatted for the next two hours until we reached Zhengzhou University (ZZU). As we arrived ZZU, we had a meal that was buffet and rumored to be expensive. Next, it was already getting dark and we walked to our dorms which were about a mile away. This campus was HUGE. Guides told us it would take 3 hours to walk around the perimeter of the campus one time. We were able to retrieve our luggage, go to our dorm, and get room assignments, room keys, and meal cards. Our meal cards had 200 Yuan on them, which is about \$30 US dollars and enough money to buy us 3 meals a day for about 2 weeks. We then went to the local grocery store on campus to buy washcloths, pillows, snacks, and other dorm necessities. The store was very crowded even at night.



Teacher & students on the high speed Train



At the train station in ZZ

Tuesday, 18 May 2010

ZZU

We had an orientation meeting on this morning. After meeting, we went walking around campus. Needless to say, we had many stares. We saw a lot of ping pong tables on campus as well as random plyometric workout equipment. We stumbled across the basketball courts where many college boys were playing basketball. A few of the guys with us made their way out to the court to try to join them and it soon became a game between 4-6 guys (some rotated in and out). They played fair, nothing too competitive. The American boys said they felt like they couldn't be competitive because the Chinese boys saw it more as just a game. Everyone smiled as they played, and we girls stood on the sidelines cheering on both teams: clapping whenever anyone made a goal, regardless of ethnicity. Later that afternoon we met in the classroom and got to meet our buddies. All the Chinese students and American students were in one classroom. The dynamic in the room was great! We of course were so excited to meet them all; we were a little rowdy and chatty. We each gave personal introductions. After a while, the Chinese students began to warm up and became chattier as well. Each time an American student said a Chinese word, they were impressed: awing and clapping for us. This was one of the best experiences so far! We had a group picture taken and spent the rest of the evening with our buddies. My buddy was Jack. He was 20 years old and he welcomed me with a gift: a traditional Chinese ceramic opera mask. I gave him a letter, a Georgia magnet, and a crisp American dollar. We then went for a walk around campus getting to

know each other. His English was limited, but the more he practiced the better he became. We went to an American restaurant on campus with another group and we ordered pizza. The Chinese students were very helpful in ordering for us. They refused to let us pay the bill and said it was Chinese custom to buy the first meal for us. We thanked them, said goodnight, and went back to our dorms.



Shooting hoops on campus



American/Chinese Buddies



At dinner with our buddies

Wednesday, 19 May 2010

Classes begin

Today we had our first day of class. Class started at 10:30 am for Dr. Huang's Police and Society class and met until noon. I had noodles for breakfast which we could heat up with the hot water dispensers outside our dorm rooms. In order to have hot showers, we had to turn the hot water heater on for 30 minutes in advance. Our bathroom was very open, meaning there was no shower doors, just a drain and a shower head strategically located next to the commode and sink. After class, we went back to the cafeteria for lunch. Inside the lunch room, they sold beer! The beer was sometimes less expensive than water. And there is no legal drinking age. When we ordered lunch, we often got a surplus of food, never being able to finish it all. We then had class again at 1:30 until 3. It was our Chinese Media class with Dr. Dan Cabaniss. That evening, a few of us went to a hip-hop dance class. The instructor rarely spoke. He repeated dance move after dance move until everyone was following him. The dance class was 2 hours long and he was the most thorough instructor I've ever seen. After a while, he began to count. To our surprise he counted in ENGLISH! And those were the only words he spoke! During the break, he did some of his own dance moves; he was very talented. The music playing the whole time was American hip-hop: songs all us Americans knew and felt a sense of comfort by. A few classmates went to have massages with some of the teachers. They had a form of acupuncture done on their backs where suction cups are placed along the back to suck out toxins. It turns the skin colors, and lasts about a week, depending on how many toxins are in the body. Later we went back to the dorms to shower and begin our homework. Then off to bed to do it all over again!



In the dance studio



Hip Hop instructor



Students who had suction cup acupuncture

Thursday, 20 May 2010

Lots of class

I finally found some 3-in-1 Nestle coffee packets at the grocery store and had coffee before class. Between classes, we went to lunch with our buddies for about 30 minutes. They took us to a restaurant on campus and ordered eggs and tomatoes, white rice, fish-smelling pork, and other dishes. It was the best meal we had so far! The students even asked if we thought it was rude that they all grab food straight from the lazy Susan rather than from their plates. We didn't find it rude at all. We had nice conversation and that sparked the beginning of a friendship that would continue for the rest of the trip. After our next class was finished at 3, we had a 30 minute break, then a 2 hour long cultural enrichment class. During cultural enrichment, we learned Chinese phrases for two hours. The teacher said words, and we repeated them; she said words, then we repeated them

again. It was helpful, but Chinese is a very hard language to learn. We grabbed dinner and started on our homework back in the dorm.

Friday, 21 May 2010

Party Day

We went to class from about 10:30-3 on this day. We then had another cultural enrichment class from 3:30-5:30. We were supposed to have a party in the evening with our Chinese buddies, and we were supposed to be putting together a show for them with music, dancing, comedy or anything that showed them a glimpse of American culture. However, we had been so busy, we hadn't had the time to coordinate a show. Those of us who volunteered to participate in the show were allowed to leave the culinary cultural enrichment class early to practice. The culinary art was interesting; they carved birds and dragons out of carrots. I decided to create a "crazy legs" comedic skit where we would talk about our adventures in China. Once the party started, the Chinese showed us the things they had been practicing for us: dances, cheers, games, calligraphy, music and so on. Then it was our turn. We got lots of laughs and really enjoyed ourselves. Our professors provided some beer for us students to enjoy together (nothing too crazy, about 100 bottles for 100 students). We spent the rest of the night dancing, talking, and enjoying our Friday night party together. It was truly a great clash of cultures. Unfortunately, we had to wrap it up before 11 pm because we had a curfew at 11 as well as a field trip at 7:45 on Saturday morning.



Dragon carved out of carrot



Traditional Chinese game at the party



Martial arts



Our "crazy legs" skit at the party

Saturday, 22 May 2010

The longest day ever

We headed off on a 2 hour bus ride to the Shaolin Temple and Pagoda Forest. When we got there, we got to watch a kung fu performance. It didn't last long, and it wasn't translated into English but it didn't need to be. It was very interesting to watch. Then we had lunch which was DELICIOUS! We went on to tour the rest of the temple. There was a tree there that was 1400 years old and had what looked like bullet holes in it. Our tour guide said it was from martial arts experts who used to practice on the trees and the holes were really from their fingers jabbing the tree!!!! This day was extremely hot, in the 90's. We were buying water left and right. We visited the Pagoda forest which is basically a cemetery for monks. Some dated back to about 600 A.D.! People still laid roses and flowers on some of the monuments. Then, it was time to go for a hike around 4 pm. The hike was about 2 miles long up a very steep mountain. Most people chose to ride the cable cars up the mountain; however, I wanted the exercise. Little did we know, the entire 2 miles was nothing but STAIRS. It took us an hour and a half to hike the 2 miles up the steep mountain staircase. We stopped for breaks and photographs as Chinese tourists made their way down the stairs. But for the most part, it was quiet, serene, and a nice time with nature. When we got to the top, the view was so breathtaking it almost actually brought tears to my eyes. It made the hike well worth it. Mountains continued for as far as you could see. I decided I would take the cable car down to try to get some different photographs and see some new scenery. We all reconvened late that evening and headed back to the dorm. We hadn't had dinner yet, and it was about 9:30 before we pulled up to McDonald's. There were so many of us and we were STARVING, but we didn't get fed until 10 pm. We left McDonald's at 10:30 and got to the dorm just in time before they were locked. A 15 hour field trip was a little much, and we still had homework to do for projects due Monday and Tuesday! However, that McDonald's was awesome! I had not only 1 double cheeseburger, but two!! It was about time for something besides noodles.



At the Kung Fu show



Posing at the Shaolin Temple



Dr. Huang & Mrs. Serena



Little girl playing in the water



Dad & son in a nearby field



The Pagoda Forest



Never-ending stairs



Reaching the top!



Gorgeous view from the top of the mountain



A nearby wheat field

Sunday, 23 May 2010

Sleeping late

I took full advantage of the free morning and slept until about 11. I then grabbed lunch, did some schoolwork, and then met with our host family. Alyse, Ali and I were in a group. We got into a Honda pilot with Mr. Li and our translator and traveled to his home where his wife and son were waiting for us. The car ride was mostly quiet, with a little bit of small talk going on. As we arrived to the apartment the family lived in, we were welcomed by the wife and son. We gave introductions and they gave us a tour of the house. After, we enjoyed fresh cherries, nuts, and hot tea with the family as we had conversation. They asked about the normal marrying age in the U.S., security, school programs, living expenses, and so on. We then all assisted in making dumplings with pork, egg, and leek. We made about 200. Then the husband and wife went into the kitchen to prepare the rest of dinner. I asked if I could help with anything, but the answer was no because I was a guest. I asked if the husband always helped in the kitchen, and the reply was yes; they share all household duties. We ate dinner, which was delicious. They offered beer to Ali, the only male with us, but to nobody else. Our only option for drink was milk, which was warm. Their son played piano for us as well as showed up some magic tricks. He was learning English but still could not communicate very well. The translator was the only person who spoke English. The family spoke of their love to travel and although there were not many decorations in the house, they did have several pictures of them visiting different countries including Israel. On the deck, they had many plants and flowers they were growing. They gave us paintings on scrolls as parting gifts. And I had a pack of Black-eyed Susan flower seeds that resembled the state license plate of "Georgia." I also gave them some pecans from Georgia and they were thrilled to be able to plant the American flowers and watch them grow together. Mr. Li then drove us back to campus, which was about a 45 minute drive. They were a lovely family and we luckily had the opportunity to exchange email addresses. We got back around 9:30 pm, and decided to do more homework.



Host Family's living room



One of the family pictures on the wall that I loved



Making dumplings



Students with the host family

Monday, 24 May 2010

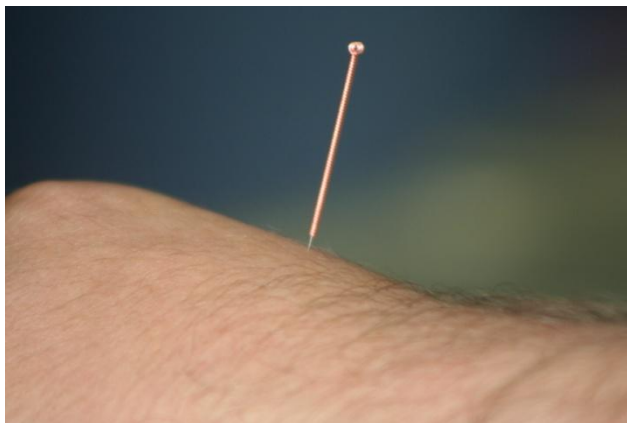
Back to School

We had class and projects due today. We found a place on campus that sold Spicy Chicken Sandwiches and Fries—a nice taste of home when you need it. After class, we had another cultural enrichment until 5:30. This enrichment was about paper cutting. We cut out patterns with intricate detail. It was much more difficult than it looks. After enrichment, I took a cab and went to have a massage done at the “blind massage parlor.” I had business cards to show the driver where I needed to go. I was taken into a room and beat to death for an hour and a half. It cost me about \$6 U.S. I loved it! However, other people were in a room with me also getting massages, the lights weren’t dim, and the masseuses chattered while they massaged. Regardless, it was much needed and thoroughly enjoyed. They massaged my butt as well as my stomach! It was odd and somewhat awkward, but pleasant.

Tuesday, 25 May 2010

I’ve lost track of the days

We had more class, more projects, and other cultural enrichment class. This enrichment was about acupuncture. The speaker gave a presentation, then some demonstrations on students. It was quite interesting. Afterward, I went to the Pizza Hut and the alleys in the city for some shopping with two classmates. Eating the same meal breakfast, lunch, and dinner can get a little old, so Pizza Hut was like a haven for us. We gorged on mashed potatoes, waffle fries, hot wings, and pizza. While shopping, we were able to negotiate price with vendors. They would type the price on a calculator, and then you would type a price until you could agree. No words needed! There was food, clothing, and purses GALORE! We headed back to the dorms, a 30 minute- 35 Yuan cab ride away and hit the books.



Acupuncture cultural enrichment



Students on campus taking graduation pictures

Wednesday, 26 May 2010

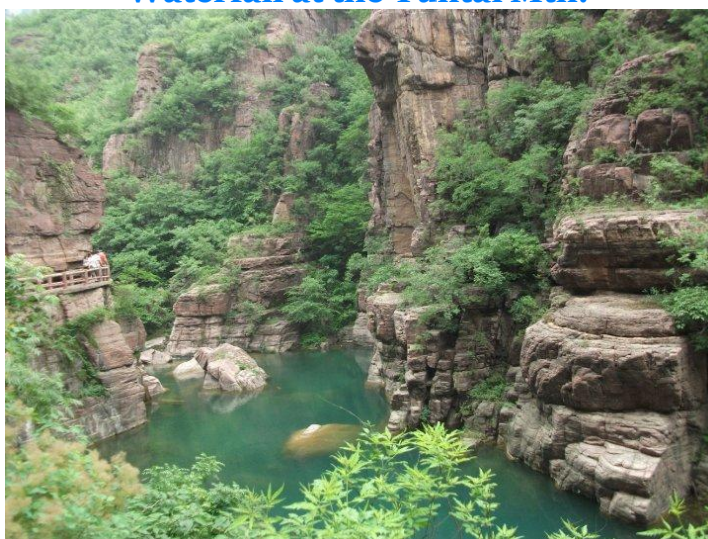
The day I have no pictures of

Today we visited Yuntai Mountain Geological Park. There were gorges, waterfalls, rocks, walking trails everywhere. There was one large opening with shallow water that was supposed to be “long life water.” People were splashing their face, drinking the spring water, walking through the water. I decided to take part in this as well. I needed help across some of the rocks and several Chinese offered to give me a hand so I wouldn’t slip. It was nice to see that facial expressions and body language are universal. The water was freezing cold, but refreshing. I continued to go barefoot for a while after it. The scenery was gorgeous. It looked just like something straight out of The Lion King. I was, of course, upset again that I had charged my camera battery all night yet it was dead for some reason. The pictures I have are pictures I had to “borrow” from other classmates. We had lunch on the mountain. Everything was grown fresh. However, it was probably the worst meal I’ve ever had. We had a bowl of hot water with a whole chicken

in it. And by whole chicken, I mean the head and the feet were still sitting in the “soup.” There was a lot of gelatin in the meal as well. But gelatin and Misty don’t jive. It’s a texture thing. It drizzled rain on us for the majority of the day. It felt more like a mist in what looked like a rain forest, so it fit the occasion. This was the most beautiful place of the whole trip. I would love to revisit it with MY camera.



Waterfall at the Yuntai Mtn.



Scenery at Yuntai

Thursday, 27 May 2010

I love Gongbao Jiding (kungpao chicken)

More class. More spicy chicken sandwiches. In Dr. Huang's class we were talking about policing, and one topic was about phases that occur such as honeymoon phase, adjustment, rejection, and acceptance. This reminded me of how I was feeling about China at the moment. To begin with I was in awe with everything. Thought everything about China was amazing...really gung-ho about the whole experience. Then as we adjusted, the glitz and glamour started to fade: mental and physical exhaustion set in, we were getting tired of Chinese food, starting to get a little homesick. We began the rejection phase the more homesick we got, the more we ate American food, the more we had negative comments, the more we wanted to rebel. We were just still waiting for the acceptance phase to kick in. Later after classes, we went on an afternoon field trip to the radio station that we got to tour. Afterwards, we went for another massage. I just couldn't resist the good price. Besides, my body hurt from the hard beds! Oddly enough, I was sleeping soooooo good at night. Probably because of the 15 hour field trips, 2 miles of stairs, and all the walking and studying we were having to do. I was just pooped! THEN, something AMAZING happened. We went to an authentic Sichuan restaurant. It was a hole in the wall that advertised dog on the outside window. We ordered fried rice, kung pao chicken, sweet and sour chicken, tomatoes and eggs, and I immediately fell in love with China again. This was the best food!! Of course, it was a mile long walk to the restaurant and a mile back. It was a nice way to walk off a full belly. I went to bed FULLY satisfied.



The News Station



Getting massages

Friday, 28 May 2010

TGIF

More class. We had another cultural enrichment in the afternoon. It was a Chinese calligraphy class. After some practice, I was told that my calligraphy was terrible by Dr. Guo, so I gave up my dreams of being a world-famous calligrapher. It's a beautiful art, but just not for me. After class, I decided I needed more KungPao chicken and Fried Rice for dinner. So I went back to the Sichuan restaurant and it was sheer bliss all over again.



Wanting more GUNGBAO JIDING!



ZZU Campus



Lots of bicycles on campus

Saturday, 29 May 2010

It's so hot in China! Feels like Georgia!

Today, we got up early and went to Luoyang to see the Longmen Grotto, White Horse Temple, and other places along the way. It was about 94 degrees...steaming hot. We admired the historical relics, the architecture, and the people watching. Then as we waited for the tour to be finished, we entertained ourselves, ate ice cream, and chilled in the shade. By this point, our bodies were craving fresh veggies. At lunch, we got served steamed broccoli and cabbage. It was gone in a heartbeat. We wanted more, so we had to buy more. We ended up buying 3 more plates of broccoli as well as extra drinks. It was worth every penny. We cleaned almost every plate we had. Great meal. When we came back, I thought I should have kung pao chicken yet again. So, I walked the mile back to the restaurant to have my favorite meal. Then I walked it back off again.



Longmen Grotto



I love the babies



Mom & baby



Beautiful little girl



Daddy & Daughter



I thought she was beautiful!



At the Temple



“Wishing Well”

Sunday, 30 May 2010

No Free Day?

Today was supposed to be a free day. Instead, we had a mandatory field trip in the morning. We went to the Hunan museum. As we arrived, we watched a musical show in the theater. The instruments were the types of instruments recovered from emperors' tombs. They were beautiful pieces, all with meaning behind them. The meanings were displayed on a large screen in English and Chinese. We got the chance to browse around

the museum before Mrs. Serena offered to take us to the train station market. While we were browsing, I got a text message from my sister saying she had just gotten engaged! It was still Saturday night back home. I was a little bummed for not being able to celebrate with my family, but figured I would get my fill for wedding activities in the months to come. We had lunch at McDonald's, which is always a pleasant surprise in China, then visited the train station market with Mrs. Serena. Everywhere we went, we could negotiate prices. However, at this market, you could not. It was mostly clothes that we could not even try on. We decided to take the bus back to the dorm rather than a cab. It was much cheaper, but it took about an hour and we had to stand the whole time. All I could think about was Kung Pao Chicken, so I went back to my favorite restaurant for the 3rd day in a row.



The musical performance

The moon over the Pass and Mountain

《关山月》

The music describes the magnificent scene. It expresses that the ancient officers and soldiers defending the frontier miss their families and homes in the moonlight.

This song was beautiful & had beautiful meaning; made me miss my family and home as well.



Erica, Alyse, and Myself becoming 1 with history



YUM!

Monday, 31 May 2010

3 week itch

May 31st and the day before my 25th birthday. Today we had another class day. Time in Zhengzhou was running out and our classes were peaking in intensity. After class, I was hungry because I had skipped lunch. It was 3 pm and 2 guys in my class were also hungry. They wanted some KungPao Chicken and I knew just the place. So, we walked to my favorite restaurant and it was closed. We assumed it didn't open until dinner, but we were really disappointed. One of the guys with us speaks fluent Chinese and he asked a lady in the store nearby when the restaurant opened. She said the owner lived above the restaurant and she would call her and tell her she had customers. Of course, we didn't want to bother her, but the lady made the phone call anyway. The restaurant owner came downstairs and apologized for doing her laundry. She opened the restaurant just for us! We had another lovely meal and I left her a tip for her troubles, even though they don't traditionally accept tips. (Come to find out, a few days later, one of the guys went back to the restaurant and the lady told him to give me my tip back!) We thanked her and had a nice walk back to the dorm.



Roomies



Our dorm: Room 510



My last day being 24!

Tuesday, 1 June 2010

Halfway to 50!

My 25th Birthday!!! I got to celebrate it a whole 12 hours sooner! I had a great breakfast from the vendors next door: pita style bread with cabbage and a fried egg, a banana and a Nestle ice tea! It was International Children's Day, a big deal in China, so we visited a bilingual middle school. We jumped rope, played basketball and soccer, and played other games with the students. We didn't stay long before we were off to the Best International Children's school, which is a primary school. We toured the school, got into groups, and had a relay race. The children spoke amazing English. After running around like crazy doing relays, we had lunch: spaghetti, SALAD, tuna salad, fresh veggies and ice water! It was so nice to eat a salad. It's easy to forget how much we take for granted like refrigerators, cold beverages, ice water, fresh raw veggies and fruits, and so on. Then we took tours around the school. Drawings, paintings, and United States maps lined the halls. Later, we all met back up and the children placed red bandanas around our necks and saluted us with the Chinese flag. We felt as though we were being sworn into Communism, but they insisted it was to signify our joining with China. Same difference! We all at least got a good laugh out of it. Finally, one of the teachers asked me to come to the front and stand before the group. Everyone there proceeded to sing me happy birthday! Then the teachers gave me kisses on the cheek! We all said our goodbyes and left. We then made plans to celebrate my birthday at a real Chinese Karaoke club, about a 20 minute walk from the dorms. Throughout this time, I had been doing quite a lot of texting with several of my Chinese buddies. They wanted to give me a traditional Chinese birthday, but my buddy Jack was the president of student union and was always busy. I understood of course. Jack texted me and said he was really sorry, but they could not attend my birthday. However, Mandy would still be able to accompany me. I was bummed, but went back to the dorm to get ready. About that time, there was a knock on the door, and all my Chinese buddies burst through the door and sprayed silly string all over me and had a huge cake with 25 candles lit for me! They brought me flowers and

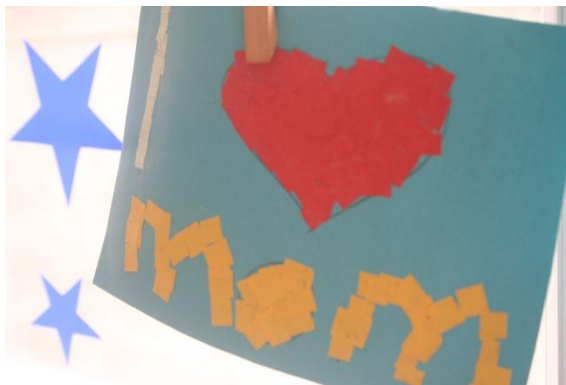
gifts and it was the sweetest thing ever! I was in the process of changing clothes, so my halter top dress was untied and I tried to keep it up as I was sprayed with 5 cans of silly string! Jack said he had to tell small lie because he wanted to surprise me. He definitely did! He did say that unfortunately, they really did have a meeting and that Mandy would be the only one who could attend. But after he put that much thought into a birthday surprise for someone he barely knew, it didn't matter! We got dressed and headed to what we assumed would be a typical karaoke bar. However, we got our own room with our own TV and got to choose our own songs! It was like private karaoke! There were several Chinese students who joined us American students and we all took turns singing songs for each other. It was my most memorable birthday ever. I will never forget it!



My Birthday Breakfast



At the middle school with the students



Inside the primary school on the wall



Adorable!



Saluting China!



One of the surprise birthday gifts I received



Mandy, myself and Jack covered in silly string



My Buddies!



Birthday roses still covered in silly string



Trista singing Karaoke for us



Birthday Karaoke

Wednesday, 2 June 2010

Still my birthday back home!

I woke up and immediately thought it was still my birthday back home. So I continued to somewhat celebrate it. I went to class, had dinner, and spent the rest of the evening preparing for our last day of class/exam day!

Thursday, 3 June 2010

Last day of class

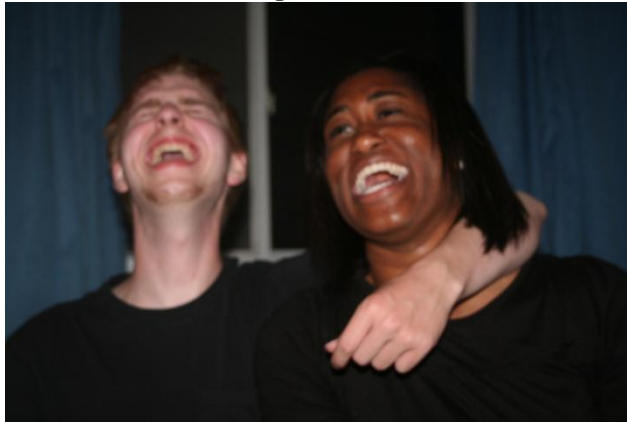
Today was the last day of class and we did all our class evaluations. I loved both of my classes and really learned a lot from them both. However, most of my knowledge was obtained by experiencing the culture itself. Regardless, I enjoyed my classes even though I felt pressed for time. We spent the majority of the day packing our entire luggage. It was the last day in Zhengzhou so we had to have our luggage on a train before we left so it would arrive to Shanghai on time. After packing, I decided I needed KungPao Chicken at the Sichuan restaurant for a 6th and final time. By this point, the owner knew us, had learned to say “hello” and I knew how to order the entire meal in Chinese! Gongbao jiding, dan chow fan, tong su lee gee, pijiu. I knew how to say hello, thank you, how many to order for, how to say I was hungry, and so on! We spent the night celebrating our last night with our Chinese friends on the roof. The roof was wide open and we could be louder up there than we could in the halls. Even a couple of our teachers came to celebrate with us. This night was pretty awesome because we got the chance to really bond with classmates that we hadn't gotten the opportunity to bond with yet. Of course, someone filed a noise complaint, so our celebratory fun was short-lived.



The Infamous Sichuan Restaurant



Rooftop Celebration



Making new friends

Friday, 4 June 2010

Leaving ZZU

We woke up this morning to head to the train station. I had gotten my buddies a few small parting gifts and written them letters so they had agreed to come see me off at 10:30 am. We gathered in my dorm, chatted, and finally it was time to head to the bus. They gave me parting gifts as well. Jack offered to carry my small bags for me. He was always so polite and such a gentleman. We walked together down the halls and to the bus and up until this point I had been really excited to get to Shanghai and even more excited to get back home. But the walk to the bus wasn't as exciting as I'd hoped..in fact, I found that I was sad to leave my dorm, the university, and my new friends. I knew I likely would never see them again. We began to hug goodbye and I got really choked up and tears began to stream down my face. I had to excuse myself for a minute to try to compose myself but I was just too emotional. I had become attached to them, their way of life, and I was going to miss them very much. They had etched a spot in my heart that I hadn't expected. I didn't feel so bad when they, too, began to tear up. We said a final

goodbye and as I boarded the bus, I saw that several American students, including males, had become very emotional as well. It was very bittersweet. Sitting on the bus, we stared at them out the window, waving goodbye a final time. Finally, we left to head for the train station. We took another high speed train to Shanghai. I slept and read for most of the trip. When we arrived, we checked into the Shanghai International Studies University Hotel. It was about 11 pm and we hadn't had supper, so several of us walked to the nearest McDonald's. Thank goodness for 24 hour service. Finally we went back to our rooms where we had real beds!! It was a nice distraction from being so sad earlier in the day. It was time for a good night's rest.



My sweet buddy Jack



Waving goodbye

Saturday, 5 June 2010

Hello Shanghai

On this day, we spent a lot of time at the Nanjing Road shopping district. It was basically three levels of shopping mall filled with knock-offs. We had lunch, which was a delicious rice and chicken meal, and thought we would go to the Hard Rock Café in Shanghai. We rallied up about 16 people and hailed about 4 different cabs and gave them written directions, just to find out the Café had been closed for 4 years. We were dropped off at

the Ritz Carlton where a valet worker told us of a great club we should try. It was called Muse, so we went. It was extremely crowded and they played all American music. I'm not big on the clubbing scene, but I went anyway. We met several other Americans, French people, Germans, more Chinese! It was such a diverse club, almost like a melting pot of ethnicities! We danced for a bit, but I decided to leave. I can't stand all the cigarette smoke. Luckily, a classmate had asthma and enough alcohol for the night and she needed someone to go back with. So I offered to take her back so neither of us would have to ride by ourselves. Besides, the next day was the Expo. I needed my rest!



Classmates in Shanghai



The crowded bar

Sunday, 6 June 2010

The Expo!

We got up early and headed for the World Expo. We waited in line forever. It was really hot and people stood so close together, it was even hotter. The Chinese and Americans have very different views of personal space. Each of the buildings representing the countries at the expo was unique. Some were much bigger than others. However, the

lines were about 3 hours for each country so we spend the day walking the 3 square mile area just looking at the architecture. Afterwards, we took a ride on the Huangpu Riverboat. We got to see the city at sunset and saw the Oriental Pearl Tower and the downtown Shanghai district. Afterwards, we decided to try one of the Mexican restaurants we heard a lot about for dinner. We got dressed up, and headed out for burritos and margaritas. It was delicious and a very relaxed atmosphere with hardly anyone inside.



India's building



Possibly Nepal's building



Korea, very cool



We met a Chinese man who lived in Montgomery, Alabama.
So we Alabama girls had to have a picture!

Monday, 7 June 2010

Last Day in China

Today was our one and only purely free day for the entire trip. Luckily it came at a good time for me because I was not feeling well at all. I rested for the earlier part of the day, went for walks, and so on. Finally that night, we decided to visit the Pearl Tower for our last night on the town. It is the tallest structure in China I believe and was absolutely beautiful. We waited in line and finally got up to the top, which was about 250 stories. Parts of the floor were glass so you could see below. It offered an amazing view of Shanghai and its nightlife. A group of us had dinner at the Blue Frog, which served a variety of ethnic foods. Then we took a taxi back to the hotel and prepared to head back home. We were told that staying awake all night could help us again in flying home and that it would help us sleep and adapt to the 12 hour time difference more easily. I spent the night packing and organizing, setting out my clothes, and so on. Finally, I took a shower around 3:30 and went to bed at 4 just to wake back up at 5.



With "Heather" on the way to the Pearl Tower

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

Is today still yesterday or is it tomorrow yet?

After waking at 5 am, we had to have our luggage down in the lobby by 5:30 and we had to be on the bus by 6 am. We then drove to the airport, and at this point I was sleepy but couldn't sleep. We got to the airport, checked our luggage, and boarded the plane. I still could not sleep. I watched movie after movie after movie. I sat with 2 guys in my program. After a while, we all coordinated bathroom breaks with each other. Then we would return to our seats and watch other movie, followed by another bathroom break and so on. It was about a 14 hour flight, and I slept a max of 1 hour in 30 minute increments. I saw the sun set, the stars come out, and the sun rise again. I became very excited when we had crossed the Pacific ocean and were flying over the Rocky Mountains. You could see them covered in snow! We arrived to Detroit, went through customs, and I wanted to kiss the ground of the great U.S. But, no longer did people look at us with awe. Nobody stopped to have pictures taken with us. Nobody giggled when we said hello. We no longer felt important. But it was a nice breath of fresh air to just seem normal. We had a layover and then boarded the 2 hour flight to ATLANTA! During this time, it was still Tuesday in the States, and we felt as though it was Wednesday. I still hadn't slept but 2 hours in the last 2 days. But I was so eager to get home for my welcome-home dinner that I took "No-Dose" so I could stay awake for them. That 2 hour flight went by so quickly. We arrived to Atlanta, grabbed our luggage and at 6 pm, my mother and her smiling face happily greeted me outside baggage claim. We were home by 7:30. I showered and had dinner with my Mom, Dad, and boyfriend. I went to bed around 11:30 and told my Mom that I would sleep in the next day. I planned to sleep until lunch to ensure that I got plenty of rest. After all, I still had a 4.5 hour drive to Valdosta for class.

Wednesday, 9 June 2010

Sleepy Girl

I had been sleeping so well. My mom came into my room and gently shook me. She asked if I wanted to get up. I had planned on sleeping until noon-ish so I assumed she was home on her lunch break waking me up. She said she didn't want to freak me out, but it was 5 pm and she was home from work already. I tried to stir around but was so groggy and disoriented. My dad was home soon after. They tried to wake me up by riding me around on the golf cart, showing me plans for my sister's wedding that would take place at our house and so on. Not much worked. Finally, around 9 pm, I started coming to. They didn't want me driving to Valdosta while I was acting so loopy, so I decided I would head out in the morning.

Thursday, 10 June 2010

Hit the ground running!

I was finally coherent enough to talk about China and all my experiences and start sharing photos late Wednesday night. Unfortunately, I couldn't sleep. I finally forced myself to bed at 2 am and got back up at 4 am to pack and drive through Atlanta traffic so I could be in Valdosta for class by 10. I was WIDE open, awake, alert, enjoying my car that I had missed driving. It was nice being on highways where people generally follow traffic regulations. As the day went on, my eyes became heavier and heavier. The jet lag was here to stay for the next couple of days. Eating American food back home upset my stomach. I was so used to Chinese food and Chinese versions of American food that my stomach couldn't handle what I was used to. I still miss noodles.

Final Words

This was possibly the best experience of my life. I consider myself very fortunate having spent this time in China. No journal entry or words can capture what this meant to me, nor can it capture the essence and beauty of the culture. Photographs are the closest thing that can attempt to capture China at its best. For that reason, I decided to include photographs in my journal entries. I have craved Chinese food since I have been back. I recently went to a Chinese restaurant and said "Ni Hao" (hello)..XieXie (thank you)..and ordered Xuebi (Sprite). Waitresses giggled as I spoke small Chinese phrases and as I used my chopsticks correctly. I miss China, the faculty, our students, our buddies. I talk about it on a daily basis and so far have kept in touch with other group members at other schools as well as some of the Chinese buddies. These memories are very dear to my heart and it is something I will treasure always. I hope to return to China again someday.

Dr. Huang & Mrs. Serena:

Thank you both so much for helping out so much with this trip. Dr. Huang, I know you helped us in trip preparation, you helped us with our visas and passports, and I thank you for your hard work. We all absolutely adore you and your wife and you two are some of the kindest people we have ever met. I am so happy your office is right next to Jennifer's so we can stay in touch! Tell Mrs. Serena thanks for all her translating skills and for offering to take us to so many places. I miss her smiling face; I'm sure everyone else does to! This trip wouldn't be the same without you both!



Jennifer:

Thank you too for working so closely with Dr. Huang to create a way for us to get credit for study abroad. It was really nice of you to allow us to do our projects after our return, so thank you for your understanding and flexibility. This is by no means being written to influence my grade! Haha...it's just a genuine thank you for all you do for us as well. If you'd be interested in seeing any more pictures, I'd be more than happy to show you! ☺

The End

