Day 1: Arrival

Before I delve too much into detail, I should give a bit of background on the study abroad program I’m in. The Global MedPrep Scholars Program is a unique WashU run study abroad program in Shanghai, China that is geared towards students interested in global health and international health care. As part of the curriculum, we get to shadow physicians in both traditional and western styles of medicine while taking Chinese and anthropology classes at Fudan University. The program was perfect for me for a number of reasons: 1) I’ve never stepped foot in China before, 2) I’m Taiwanese and I can hardly hold a conversation in Chinese, and 3) I would get to shadow doctors trained in different styles of medicine.

I should also say a bit about how this program is run. In 2014, Dr. Polites, an incredible doctor at WashU, was recruited to help grow an existing program for pre-health students into what has now become one of the most unique international programs of its kind in the country. Along with Dr. Polites, Mu Laoshi (who traveled with us to Shanghai and will return to teach at WashU in the spring), helps with all the logistics. All the other courses are taught by WashU hired professors.

But before we start classes in Shanghai, we got to spend a week exploring Beijing! I headed out from Dallas with four other people from WashU: Michelle (my roommate), Matt, Cintia, and Velimir. The 13 hour flight was nice - a personal TV always helps pass the time :) After picking up our luggage we set out to find David, our local tour guide, who would take us to our hotel. Our hotel was called The Presidential Beijing, which was very similar to a high end Marriot back in the U.S. The familiarity definitely helped with transitioning to a foreign country.

Dinner

After most of the students arrived, Mu Laoshi (basically our mom while in China) took us to a Chinese restaurant close to the hotel. I was definitely ready to eat. We ended up ordering, Chung Yao Bing (scallion pancakes), Chinese eggplant, Chinese broccoli, meatballs, sweet and sour chicken, and some sort of tomato based soup. As you can tell, I don’t really know the names to all of these dishes, but I took pictures!
Looking back, there was so much that happened today, so I’ll stick to the highlights. The first place we went to was the Summer Palace which is the largest and most well preserved garden in China. Originally conceived during the Jin dynasty in the 12th century, the palace was reconstructed in the 19th century by Emperor Guangxu for his Empress Dowager Cixi. Most of the things in the garden represent happiness and longevity.

There were so many wonderful, unusual, and even hilarious things to see around the palace. We also had to walk a lot. If I remember correctly, by the time we were done visiting the palace, Michelle's step counter clocked in at around 9,000 steps!

We also climbed to the top of Longevity Hill to get a better view of the palace and lake. Although the climb wasn’t pleasant, especially in humid 90° F weather, the view was absolutely worth it.
After climbing up many flights of stairs, it was nice to take a boat ride back to the entrance. In fact, the dragon boat ride was one of the best parts of the Summer Palace experience, at least for me. The view of the Tower of Buddhist Incense was really beautiful from the lake.

![The dragon boat we went on with the Seventeen Tunnel Bridge in the background](image1)

![A really pretty lakeside view of the Tower of Buddhist Incense](image2)

**Lunch**

I'm just going to say this now, but I don't know the names of almost all of the restaurants we went to. Of course I took pictures though! And everything was delicious! :) This specific place specialized in Beijing Pecking Duck.

![I actually did take a photo of the name of this restaurant, but I can't read Chinese to save my life! Maybe by the end of the semester I be able to tell you what it says :)](image3)

![Beijing Pecking Duck](image4)

![There was a lot more food that came - these were just the appetizers](image5)

**Temple of Heaven**

The Temple of Heaven is a Taoist temple where many rituals and human sacrifices took place. Most of the colors on the platforms and walkways were blue and green which symbolized solemnness. It was a way of telling people that this was a serious place for worship.

![The Temple of Heaven was renovated for the Beijing Olympic Games](image6)

![One of the sacrificial alters. Guess who they sacrificed. Three month old babies. Two of them - a girl and a boy. :/](image7)
The next stop was the tea shop!! I love tea :) We tasted six different types of tea. All of them amazing and each one had a different health benefit. I only took pictures of a couple of them though, but my favorites were the oolong and jasmine tea. The taller cup was for smelling and the rounder one was for tasting.

**Dinner**

We got to explore the restaurants around our hotel for dinner. Austin, one of the students in our group, really was craving hotpot, so fifteen of us decided to go hunting for a hotpot restaurant. We ended up dining at the first restaurant we saw. Well, it was more like the waiters very strongly encouraged most of the people in our group to sit down while three of us were looking over the menu. By the time we realized this wasn’t that great of a place, everyone else in our group had sat down so it was too late. Chinese waiters sure are proactive. But our table was so much fun, especially when it came to poking fun at the catfish (something we definitely was not expecting).

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This is an awful photo of us (I look constipated lol), but I needed to add a group photo of us because our table was just so much fun.

Front to Back and Left to Right: Michelle, Ashley, Jerry, Cintia, Me, David, Matt

Jerry and Cintia holding up the catfish head. They’re the adventurous ones in our group so they ate the catfish’s eyeballs.

Just in case you guys wanted to see this premium grade catfish head we got (just kidding :P catfish meat really isn’t anything special)
Today we were supposed to go to the Great Wall, but since it rained, Dr. Polites and Mu Laoshi shifted the schedule around so that we would climb the wall on a day with nicer weather. So today we set out for the Lama Temple, the largest and best-preserved lamasery in Beijing. Construction for this Tibetan Buddhist temple started in 1694 during the Qing dynasty, so it’s pretty amazing that it’s still in such great condition. We weren’t allowed to take pictures inside the temples, but the Buddha statues were interesting to look at and we saw many people praying and kneeling in front of them.

Lunch

Ironically, for lunch, we went to a hotpot place XD But this time we each got our own personal hotpot. The meat was a choice between chicken, beef, and lamb which was much better than the fish we had the previous night.
Art District

After lunch we stopped by the Art District to walk and shop around. There was a lot of cool graffiti on the buildings, and the shops were really fun to walk into and look around. This was primarily called the Art District because there were a lot of art showcase buildings. Unfortunately, most of them charged a fee for admission.

Kong Fu Legend Show

Later that night we went to the Red Theatre Beijing Kung Fu Show. Unfortunately, we couldn't take photos of the show. I thought it was pretty interesting even though a couple of people in our group fell asleep XD. The most impressive parts of the show was when the actors were suspended by sharp spears and when they were lying on beds of nails.

I found this on the internet, but this is the sort of crazy suspensions we saw
Day 4: Tiananmen Square

Today we visited Tiananmen Square which is where the Tiananmen Square massacre occurred in 1989. Interestingly, not many people in China, including our tour guides, talk about the massacre even when people asked about it. Being in the square was pretty amazing considering how much history occurred where I was standing. The nice weather was an added bonus.

The boy in the middle is Tony, a local teen who wanted to practice English so he tagged along with us for the day. His parents have some sort of connection with Mu Laoshi I believe.

Jump shot :) Or at least we tried

A lot of people wanted to take pictures with the people in our group who didn’t look Chinese. A family wanted their baby to take a picture with Cintia XD

We climbed up there to get a better view of Tiananmen Square

Tiananmen Square is huge! We only walked through the center portion of the square

At the top was this platform that said "The Center Point of Beijing City"

Lunch

For lunch we went to a local restaurant where they served us a variety of dishes. Don’t really remember the name of the restaurant or the dishes though.
This was probably my favorite place of the day. We went to a nice lake which was surrounded by shops of all kinds: bubble tea places, restaurants, and vendors who were selling toys by the sidewalk. I was on the hunt for a magnet (since my family collects them), but I ended up getting distracted by the amazing stationary store they had here.

Michelle had been talking about going to a bubble tea place since we arrived in China, so once we saw one we had to get some!

For people who like stationaries, I don’t think you would ever want to leave this place :)

The paper post it notes hanging around the store was familiar decoration

Wall of post cards. A lot of people on this trip started collecting post cards

This view is so nice. One day I’ll go back, sit by the lake side, and just people watch
Next stop was the bug market. I don't think it was called "the bug market" but that's what we went there for :) Actually, Dr. Polites had been looking forward to seeing students eat scorpions since the beginning of this trip so a couple of us promised him we would. I actually wanted to try a scorpion, which might come as a shock to people who know me and my picky eating habits. New country, new me I guess :D

They had all sorts of...tasty things: seahorses, scorpions (small and large), centipedes, starfish, snakes, grasshoppers, and cicadas just to name a few.

Baby scorpions. They were actually still moving before we bought them. Don't worry, they were fried before we ate them ;)

Here's the proof XD. A couple of us shared this larger black scorpion. Tasted like salty chips

Not sure what this is. Looks cool but also a little sketchy

Also not sure what kind of food this is but they look cute

Dr. Polites with the lizard
**Day 5: Great Wall**

My phone said I walked 22,000+ steps yesterday, so today I was relatively sore (guess I'm out of shape :P ). Climbing the Great Wall wasn't pleasant for my legs, but it was completely worth it! I'm gonna go a little photo happy on this page because there were just so many cool ones.

*Before the climb!*

*This is my favorite photo from the whole trip so far :)*

*The Jerry, Austin, Matt crew*

*Not surprised I found this photo of Justin standing on the ledge XD*
**Ming Tombs**

The Ming Tombs were built by emperors, and many of the tombs were for the emperor's concubines. I think now is a good time to briefly talk about some of the cultural differences I've noticed, especially during the tours. I think China still has a very masculinist mindset, so some of the things David, our tour guide, said took us by surprise. For example, when he talked about concubines he would say the emperor "played with the girls" and other things along those lines. Of course, oftentimes meaning is lost in translation, but still it was interesting to pick up on the cultural differences.

![Ming Tombs Image](image1)

We only visited one tomb. It was more like a museum exhibition decked with robes, hair accessories, and other artifacts on display.

**Day 6: Until Next Time**

I think I'll wrap up this recap here because it's wayyy too long already (sorry!). Not really expecting that many people to make it this far, but thank you if you did! I can't really express how eye-opening, exciting, and amazing China has been so far! We left for Xi'an in the morning on a bullet train that tops off at 175mph which was a pretty cool experience. I'll leave you guys here and hopefully I will get the Xi'an recap out in a timely manner (fingers crossed).

![On the bullet train](image2)

On the bullet train :) See you in Xi'an!