Xi'an!
August 28 - September 1 2017

Xi'an! Our next stop is home to over 150 types of noodles, famous xiaolongbao (small soup dumplings), and the terracotta warriors. Catherine, our local tour guide, gave us her impression of her city: "Xi'an people move more slowly. It is more relaxed here unlike Beijing. We only have 8 million people in my city." You know China is pretty crowded when 8 million is a small number! The first place we went to was the Tang Palace Dance Show where we tasted 16 types of dumplings and watched a Tang style performance afterwards. Interestingly, each dumpling was artfully crafted in the shape of its contents.

Day 1: Tang Palace Dance Show

Michelle's last name is Tang so we joked that we were going to see her family-run show business XD.

Sesame duck, ham, vegetable egg mushrooms. It's hard to see in this photo but the duck one also had small dumpling peel flaps for wings.

Pickles rice noodles, and goldfish. By the way, I'm literally copying down how the menu described these, so I'm blaming all translation errors on the menu :P

Mushroom and pork, shrimp, and purple sweet potato dumpling.

Vegetable dry mushroom, pork carrot, tomato juice bamboo shoot. I think they tried to make the pork one look like a pig face (can you see it? lol).

One of the desserts we ended our meal with was this walnut pastry.
After our dumpling dinner, we waited for the show to start. If I remember correctly, there were ten different
dances, each depicting an aspect of the Tang dynasty.

There were so many instruments I had
never seen before.

Lost the program with all the names of the
dances, so I'll try to make up them up.

Sleeve Dance.

Hmm... Mask Dance

Spring Dance. Okay I actually remember a little bit
about this one. So the dance represents young girls
celebrating the beginning of spring

Uhhh.....Ribbon Dance.

Concubine Dance??? Okay I'm just gonna stop here
before I embarrass myself even more with these
titles. But in my defense, this dance was actually
about one of the emperor's favorite concubines.

Night Life

When we went back to our hotel, a pretty upscale
place even by Western standards, a couple of us
wanted to go explore the city at night. So Justin, Ryan,
Eddie (the self-proclaimed "Trolls Abroad"), Michelle,
and I set out to join a senior disco dancing group in
the park nearby. Yes, you read correctly: senior disco
dancing! Unfortunately, they ended right when we
got there. A couple of the ladies told us there were
two dance sessions, one starting at 7AM and the
other starting at 8PM, so we promised we would be
there the next morning. After that, we decided to
explore the streets.

Night view of the Bell Tower
Good morning! This was the beautiful view from our hotel room at 6:30 AM. Why was I up so early you ask? Because a group of us were going to dance with the locals at the park at 7:00AM! Honestly, dancing with the locals was my favorite part of Xi'an, not because the sights we visited weren't interesting (they definitely were) but it's just because I love dancing :) I think the regulars were amused that we joined them! But they were really nice, and even took some time to break down the dance moves for us XD

I think they have a rotation system for who leads these dance workouts, so today the man in white was leading.

The WashU crew danced in the back :)

PC: Ryan Young ("Not So Senior Disco")

Terracotta Warriors

The Terracotta Warriors are perhaps what most people come to Xi'an to see. Here's a fun (albeit sad) fact that Catherine told us. Apparently the farmer who first found the terracotta warriors wasn't compensated and didn't get any recognition. Well he did get compensated - he got $30 :/ However, when President Clinton heard of this farmer's story, he made a trip to Xi'an to personally meet him, so at least the farmer's famous now :)

Group photo :}
At the site, there were three pits which showcased the different types of warriors and a fourth area which housed the Bronze Chariots. Another fun fact: no two warriors have the exact same face which is pretty impressive considering there’s roughly 8,000 soldiers!

Pit 1 had the most reconstructed warriors. The textbook/internet images probably come from this area.  
PC: Ryan Young

Pit 2 had a couple of warriors on display which was nice because we could get close enough to see just how detailed these statues are.

Pit 3 was the smallest out of the three, but it had the most detailed and preserved statues.

The Bronze Chariot and Horses

The detail on the horses’ faces were really impressive.

Archaeologist at work
Because Xi'an is known for their noodles, it was only natural for Catherine to take us to a hand-made noodle restaurant. This particular restaurant had two types: stretch noodles and shave noodles, named for the way they are made. Both of them were really good, though I preferred the shaved ones :)

Stretch Noodles

Shaved Noodles

Okay, I agree it’s not the most flattering photo, but I promise it tasted really good :) 

Chinese Calligraphy

Next up was learning Chinese calligraphy! Most of the WashU crew didn’t know how to write Chinese (me included), so our art tour guide who was also a calligraphy expert showed us the eight basic brush strokes.

Am I proud of my calligraphy skills? Nope. But it was pretty fun anyway :) 

This is supposed to be the hardest Chinese character to write. It’s “Biang” which is a type of noodle :) 

My “Biang” turned out horribly, so I will showcase Austin’s instead.
When I first heard we were going to the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, I was a bit confused. I didn't know what a pagoda was so it sounded more like a petting zoo XD. Turns out we weren't able to enter the tiered tower pagoda, but the Buddhist temples and shops near the pagoda were nice to visit.

Jerry, Austin, and Matt trying to mimic the Buddha statue

Ryan, Justin, and Eddie looking excited in front of Ryan's "Young family favorite." He had been raving about this pagoda since we were in Beijing.

Muslim Quarter
The first things I noticed at the Muslin Quarter were the sea of people and the exotic food. There were chefs hacking away at cooked pigs hanging from poles, people flattening bread by banging them with large whack-a-mole hammers, and restaurant employees shouting and dancing to draw people's attention.

Sea of People
PC: Ryan Young

Senior Disco at Night
Yup! We went back to dance again at night. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a quality photo, but all I have to say is the senior dancing parties at night are poppin' (to quote Michelle :P). The songs had so much more hip action! XD
Day 3: Round 3

We were flying to Shanghai in the afternoon, but even with a 9AM bus departure from our hotel, we couldn't pass up the opportunity for one last early morning dance with the Xi’an seniors.

They brought the fans out :) 

Shanghai Bound!

Wow, I wrote seven pages for two days! I honestly could have gone into more detail, but I think I’ll wrap up here :) Next stop is Shanghai! I can't wait to tell you guys about how much fun I’m having in my new host city! Check back again soon!

谢谢阅读
Thanks for reading!

See you in Shanghai!