Daylon Cottingham
TIANJIN, CHINA

Daylon's Major: Human Development and Family Studies/Chinese

Term Abroad: Summer

What were the classes like? During my time in Tianjin, my fellow classmates and I stayed in a 3-star hotel right on campus, which was really convenient. The classes were typically 4-5 people and we had 4 TA’s for the course. Every week, the TA’s would switch between the classes. We had 2 lessons a week, a quiz everyday and a test every Friday. We also had optional culture classes to take. We had Chinese opera, Calligraphy, Tai-Qi, and Erhu. I took Calligraphy class which turned out to be quite relaxing.

Where did you live? During my stay in Tianjin, we stayed on the campus so it was very convenient. There were little shops on the campus that had day-to-day essentials and sold some pretty good food. There was also a cafeteria on campus which had a wide variety of different foods. We also lived near a big grocery store called vanguard and a mall. There were plenty of things to do and places to go where we lived so we were never bored.

Suggestions for students thinking about study abroad? One tip I can give to someone who plans on studying abroad is to stay conscious of the decisions you make and the attitudes you hold toward other people. Remember that the cultures are very different and the standards we may hold in America are not the same everywhere else in China. Also, never forget when you study abroad you don’t only represent yourself, you also represent America.

What did you learn from your time in China? I think studying abroad has changed me in a way that I would have never imagined. It really helped me step outside of my role as an American and all the luxuries we receive. Even though my family isn’t of higher economic status, I was still able to see that even the least of what we receive is more than the most of what some people in China got. It made me count my blessings and to value the things I receive even more.

What was unique about your program? On this program, students get to conduct a week long fieldwork research project. A partner of mine and I chose to study sexual awareness in relation to homosexuals in China. China has different tiers of cities based on the technological development. We went to 3 different cities with different levels of development. We found that the cities that were more developed had more ‘out’ individuals and seemed to be more aware about sexual health. It was very interesting doing our study because we would have to enter local gay communities and be very casual and friendly and gradually get into conversation because we didn’t want to make people feel awkward or like they were a just a case study. When speaking with some of the people, we had to pick up on some slang and learned different words used to refer to sexual terminology. When all was said and done, the experience was far greater than ever imagined.

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