

TIANJIN, CHINA

AUSTIN SAILING

Program: UW Intensive Chinese Language, Summer

Austin's Majors: Finance, International Business

Academic Life: The classroom setting in Tianjin was very intimate compared to the classes at UW-Madison. We had two hours of lecture per day, which had roughly 20 students in it (comparable to a discussion section on campus) and then the remaining two hours of class was in a discussion section of just five people. These smaller discussions were extremely helpful in learning a complex language such as Chinese. The teaching assistants offered immediate feedback on our pronunciation and answered any questions we had referring to the lecture earlier that day. Our T.A.'s rotated every week; I felt that this was a wise choice because the four teachers had not only different ways of teaching, but also had their own unique dialect. Understanding multiple dialects outside of the one we learned in the classroom was very beneficial while studying abroad in Shanghai, China the following semester. I took 12 credits of Chinese courses, including fifth and sixth semester Chinese as well as a course in Business Chinese. After the first week of the class I began to realize why the word "intensive" was in the program title!

Advice to Someone Considering China: Studying abroad, especially in a truly foreign country, is such an eye-opening experience that teaches you not only about the culture of country that you are studying, but also teaches you how to appreciate your own culture and values. It is also extremely beneficial for becoming fluent in the language. I strongly believe that you can't just rely on classes to learn a language, and that getting real world experience is invaluable to your comprehension of the language.

Tianjin as a Second Home: The moment I realized that the city was truly a home to me was when I could walk 5 minutes down the street and my friends and I would say hello and talk to at least 4 or 5 shop owners. Having such a close bond to native Chinese people in the area was a huge contributing factor to Tianjin seeming like home. The teaching staff at our university was also so personable that going to class never felt like a chore, but more of a privilege to get to learn from our friends for 4 hours, who just happen to be teachers. Last but not least, my roommate was incredibly important to making Tianjin a second home. We'd reminisce about Madison together, which helped with the homesickness.



Austin standing on top of the Great Wall of China in Beijing.

“Studying abroad taught me to treat everyone with the same amount of respect, regardless of their background.”

