BEIJING, CHINA
NASTASSIA SATAHOO

Program: UW Public Health, Environmental History and Design, Summer

Nastassia’s Majors: Human Development Family Studies; Gender and Woman Studies

Academic Life: Many of our lectures took place at a site, which made the experience more enriching. Even though many of the students in the program were interior design students, it was interesting to see what the major was like because it was nothing like my own. I loved the different perspectives we had that were molded by the career paths we wanted to pursue. We kept journals in which we would write about the place we visited and how it applies to what we are interested in, or how it surprised us - simply about how we being in a space made us feel and how we could utilize it in our lives or what we choose to do pertaining to majors.

Benefits of Study Abroad: There is so much to learn there from interacting with the locals, to observing how people go about their daily lives - there’s a lot to learn not just about the place, but about yourself and how to navigate a space you’re not familiar with. The experience will push people to reflect on who they are and how they choose to react in situations especially the ones they aren’t comfortable in.

Self-Reflection: Being a Black woman born in Jamaica, I’ve had to learn how to function in American society, and so it was taking the skills I’ve learned in my nine years in the U.S. to my time in China. Some of those skills included me being patient with myself in not knowing what to expect and just going with the flow. It was also about being patient with the people who lived there in how they reacted to me or the group in general, and keeping in mind what the demographics are and what they are used to. I learned to observe a lot in how people interact with each other and what was acceptable from what wasn’t. It was about learning cultural differences and accepting them as such rather than being upset that it didn’t coincide with what I’m used to.

Advice for Future Students: Go without any preconceived notion. What the media tells us is so much different from the reality of things. Even research isn’t enough, though it helps, because what you’ll experience is worth so much more. Studying abroad will help you to expand your comfort zone and it will do you a world of good if you go hungry and ready to take it all in rather than thinking you’ll know exactly what to expect.

“Go with an open mind and be ready to learn everything. It’s worth it.”