China 2016

This summer, eight pupils travelled to China to participate in the Chinese Bridge Summer Immersion Course at Tianjin Foreign Studies University. Some of our experiences are shared below.

From the 10th – 27th July, my classmates and I embarked on a fantastic experience where we spent 17 days becoming truly immersed in the Chinese culture.

One important aspect of our journey was our daily visits to Tianjin Foreign Studies University during our time in the city of Tianjin. We took part in an hour of Mandarin each day where we learned useful vocabulary to help us throughout our visit. We also had the opportunity to try different Chinese cultural activities like opera mask painting, calligraphy, paper cutting, bronze ware making and many more exciting activities. These allowed us to have a deeper insight and understanding of the culture of China and the traditions of the country.

At the end of our time in the city of Tianjin before moving on to Beijing, we all took part in a Mandarin test which we had prepared for throughout our time spent in the university. Despite our worries about having to sit a test during our summer holidays (!) we all succeeded and went on to enjoy our last week in the city of Beijing before returning back to Scotland.

Without a doubt, I can say that China was an unforgettable experience that I will always remember and look back on fondly. I'm just so glad, looking back, that I decided to apply as it allowed me to enjoy 17 amazing days in China with a great group of people, learning and seeing amazing things.

Cairney McGoldrick, 6Mo

Weishanlu High School

We spent a morning at our partner school in Tianjin. I was truly so excited for the day ahead. We all woke up early and made ourselves look better than normal! Breakfast was the same as ever and after that the Jordanhill hub gathered and waited for our transport to the school. Rosie and I were in a car along with one of the school biology teachers and the head teacher. We tried our best to use our recently taught Mandarin skills and after about eight tries they understood that I was saying 'its lovely to meet you'.

Once we arrived at the school they presented us with a welcome banner. We were guided into a conference room and introduced to some of the teachers and pupils who were learning English. This was also when we were offered a bowl of fruit which included the best dragon fruit I've ever tasted. As part of the learning experience we visited the school's museum – a rare treat for the school's own pupils. We got to know the pupils a bit better whilst moulding clay in Art, which they were great at but Alison and I not so much.

When lunch time came they took us to a noodle bar where we were given crazy amounts of food, I was full before my main course even came. You're always meant to leave some food, but I think I was taking it to the extremes. After lunch we went on to meet the families we would be spending the rest of the day with.

Cara Flynn, 6Sm

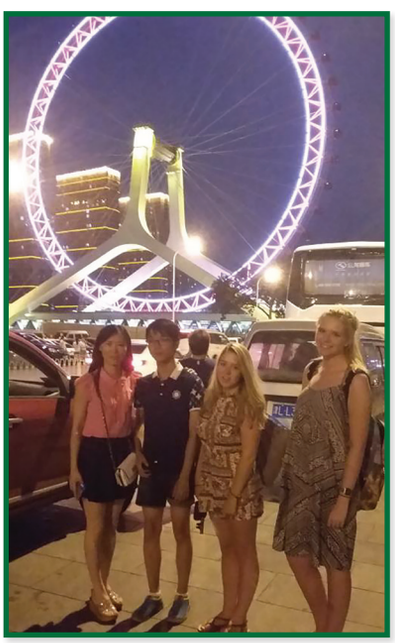
Family Visits

In Tianjin we went on a visit to our 'host families'. These are the families of students in our partner school. Michael, the boy Cara, Ms Trevena and I spent the day with, has been studying English since he was 5, and spoke it at such a level of fluency and ease that he was able to instantly translate from Mandarin to English and vice versa.

We all got on extremely well with him and his parents and spent time talking about the differences between our lives and cultures as well as their views on Scotland. They talked about how they thought Scotland was beautiful and would love to visit and experience the culture themselves. Michael and his family were very welcoming and took us for an evening exploration of Tianjin's Hai River. We saw the stunning lights of the Tianjin eye, which is much like the London eye but it is built on a bridge, so it appears to be on top of the water.

The visit was an amazing way to experience Chinese culture in a real and personal way, and for me it was one of the highlights of the trip.

Rosie Hill, 6Mo

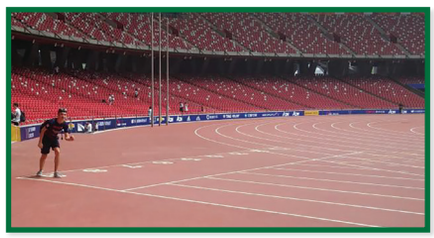


Tianjin Food Street

While we were in Tianjin we visited lots of places including the food street. As soon as we walked in we were overwhelmed by the vast amount of weird foods that were on offer! There were sweet food ranging from chocolate pastries to the famous Tianjin biscuit (which I took home with me). The people at the market didn't speak any English but they still managed to impress us by making different shapes out of caramel and somehow persuaded us to buy all of the food from their shops! One of my favourite memories from the food street was when we all thought we would try the ice cream that was purple not realizing that it was actually mashed potato flavour which was disgusting! Seeing all of the different foods was very interesting and funny to compare it to the foods that we eat at home.

Kirsty MacDonald

Beijing



Most sports fans dream of going to an Olympic stadium in their lifetime in order to see the running track that greats such as Usain Bolt, Mo Farah and Jessica Ennis-Hill have competed on. I finally got that opportunity during our trip to China to study Mandarin and visit the great landmarks of Northern China.

On the first day in Beijing, after 10 days in Tianjin studying Mandarin, I finally set my eyes upon the running track inside the Beijing National Olympic Stadium.

As a sports fan this was a special moment for me because I knew from watching the 2008 Olympic Games that Usain Bolt had broken the 100m world record on this very track. While inside that stadium my main ambition was to get onto the track for a photo.

This proved a challenge, as there were two Chinese security men ensuring that people like me didn't jump the barrier. After six unsuccessful attempts I was about to give up, but I felt I would regret not doing it so while both security guards were looking away I achieved my goal and got the photo that I dreamed of: me standing on a starting line of the 100m.

After this risky move, I adopted the phrase "Do it for the Pic", which is in normal English "Do it for the picture". This phrase soon became common among the group and soon after became one of the mottos of the experience due to its common use on other landmarks such as the Great Wall of China. This experience was truly amazing and I won't be forgetting it in a hurry.

Sam Cooke, 6Mo

Peru 2016

Approximately 15 months of preparation, thousands of pounds raised and dozens of rucksacks packed… departure day had arrived!

After a tense few moments of hoping that Andrew Nolan would turn up, half an hour behind schedule we pulled away from the school gates and waved goodbye to our families – some rejoicing at the prospect of being parent-free for 24 days, but most feeling (understandably) nervous. This would be the first time that many of us would be away from home and its comforts for so long – one of the main learning points of the trip.

After a 2 hour flight to Amsterdam, a 4 hour stop over and a 12 hour flight to Lima we finally made it to a quaint little hostel in the Miraflores region in the capital of Peru. Ravenous after a day's travelling, the team rushed out to try a classic Peruvian delicacy in the form of a Papa John's pizza which went down a treat.

The first of many 4am wakeup calls and we took off on another plane – this time departing for Cusco enjoying spectacular views of the Andes en route to the Incan Empire Capital. We spent 3 days in this beautiful city, acclimatising to the altitude of 3,400 metres. Thankfully Mrs Fleming (Claire) eventually got over the worst of her crippling altitude sickness which left her bed ridden for 2 days, after the owner of the hostel blessed her with a magical cup of Muña tea. During our stay here we soaked up the atmosphere in the local market which was not like anything we had ever experienced before. Peruvian ladies carried their children and goods in large cloths worn over the back and knotted at the front and wore tremendously colourful Montera hats. It was