

10-9-2018

## First Month in Beijing

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### Recommended Citation

Gurzell, Paul, "First Month in Beijing" (2018). *2018-19 Postcards*. Article. Submission 2.  
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Year Abroad 2018-19

## First Month in Beijing

From an intercultural communications perspective, taking courses in the Chinese style has been very fascinating. At first, our young teachers took a very Chinese approach to our lessons; that is, one with a rather large power distance and a lot of lecturing with little student intervention. After a week or two, however, we students and our teachers happily met in the middle as everyone got more and more comfortable with our respective roles.

Our program has already taken us to some fascinating places! We went to the Great Wall and the Temple of Heaven. Both days were absolutely gorgeous.



In fact, the pollution in Beijing has been, for the most part, very minimal—especially when compared with the last time I was in Beijing in 2015. I had been to the Wall before, but it is always a truly amazing sight to see such an old and significant structure trail along the mountainside on a clear blue day. There truly is nothing else in the world like it. The Temple of Heaven was incredible! An absolutely clear blue sky greeted us to Tiantan Yuan, or the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing.

Of course, I have done a little traveling of my own. A few weeks ago, I took the high-speed rail to Tianjin, a port city not far from Beijing to meet my oldest Chinese friend. I met her 5 or so years ago when I was in middle school, and she was the first Chinese friend I'd ever made.

She sparked my interest in China and is the reason I'm here today. Seeing her and hanging out with her was an amazing experience, and since she's so close we've been going back and forth between Beijing and Tianjin to hang out. This last week was the Mid-Autumn Festival here in China, so I took advantage of the break to go with my friends to Shanghai! Shanghai is truly an incredible city. A mix of old and new, foreign and Chinese, all of it can be found within China's largest city. The Bund, the modern and sleek Shanghai skyline, pierces through the heart of the city. The old French Concession—an area of Shanghai once controlled by France—would make you think you were walking the streets of Paris. Old Shanghai includes the Yu Yuan Garden, and in the suburbs you can find an ancient village called ZhuJiaJiao, complete with canals, small alleyways with tea shops and massage parlors, and excellent food.



So far, my experience studying here in the Middle Kingdom has truly broadened my perspectives. I'm so glad to be back here, and there will be more stories to come.