Meeting at the Melbourne Tullamarine airport, Shelley, Matt and I boarded the plane bound for Hong Kong. We connected with Sam in Hong Kong and flew through to Beijing. We arrived hot and tired, and followed signs and arrows that directed us to our luggage. With no idea where to go next, we were so thankful when Adam appeared behind us, having come to collect us and take us back to the hotel. Proving that a president is always present when help is needed. A train, two subway rides and a bullet train later, we arrived in Tianjin at the train station. Hopping in cabs, we got our first taste of the Tianjin city, as well as the hectic traffic. Smog filled skies and rubble footpaths looked very different to anything we would get in Melbourne. It was then I think we all realised that these three months were going to be like nothing we had experienced before. Arriving at the hotel, we dropped our stuff and headed out for dinner and drinks before retiring after what proved to be a long and tiring day.

The first morning in Tianjin, we hopped aboard a bus to the University. We proceeded to sit through three hours of speeches- not understanding a single word. Essential information was told to us, about enrolling and times for classes. Adam translated what was important, and we sat confused at the rest of it. Each student was presented with a Tianjin University t-shirt and DVD- and then re-boarded the bus back to the hotel.

Our first weekend was spent settling in and finding our way around- something that was made easier when we all bought bikes from a local market. We found restaurants, a local supermarket and got to know the other international students in the hotel.

Classes started on Monday. They are held on the top level of the building and begin at 8:30am every morning. We are done by midday, and free to do what we please with the afternoons. However, we have found for these first few days that the morning classes leave us fairly exhausted through the afternoons. The class content is also fairly heavy- but the teachers are patient and accommodating, smiling warmly at our fumbles and mumbles.

After class on Monday, we were treated to a lunch by two members of Tianjin Normal University. We ate a myriad of different foods (ranging from octopus to plant root) and spoke to the women about how we were settling in.

Overall, the week has been a success. We initially had some issues with enrolling ourselves and registering- but they were sorted out. The culture shock was quite extreme, but quickly settles as we began to figure out our way around and had our own means of transport.

I think we can all safely say that Adam has been an absolutely invaluable member of the team as the rest of us settled in. Tianjin has very few English speaking locals, so without Adam most of what we did (navigating taxis, buying bikes etc) would have been a lot more difficult and time consuming. Not to mention we may have still been sitting in Beijing airport.

-Danielle Basser