你好！ 我们都很好！
(Nǐ hǎo! Wǒmen dōu hěn hǎo!)

This week quite literally kicked off with a bang. We were quite fortunate to have been in Tianjin for the national Mid-Autumn public holiday festivities. It seemed that the entire population of Tianjin had hit the streets to make the most of the day, and to get their hands on the abundance of Moon Cake that the day’s celebration is renowned for.

On Monday evening, our team of ambassadors was treated to a night of entertainment at the official Opening Ceremony for Tianjin Normal University, which was held at the main campus. The ceremony encompassed singing, dancing, fashion showcases, poetry recitals, martial arts and complementary Moon Cakes for all. And then who could forget the magical formation of fireworks that lit the night’s sky as formalities came to an end.

The Opening Ceremony for International Students was something entirely different, but eye opening nonetheless. An early-morning start, followed by a formal assembly (conducted entirely in Chinese), brought home the fact that we are actually here to immerse ourselves in Chinese language, Chinese culture, and the Chinese community.

A week after we had initially arrived in Tianjin, our classes commenced. For all but one of us, this meant jumping into the deep end in order to tackle a language that we had never attempted. Our beginner’s classes consist of Chinese Culture, Elementary Spoken Chinese (where we learn Chinese phonetics and pronunciation), and Comprehensive Chinese (basic conversational and written Chinese). Thankfully all of our teachers are extremely patient and understanding, making the task at hand slightly less daunting.

Outside of class, this week has been a week of discovery. With a very limited understanding of Chinese, we have managed to make friends with local restaurateurs, and have become regular customers of the local street markets. Despite our own misapprehensions, the few classes that we have had have served us well, and we appear to be making progress every day.

Between the time that we spend studying in class, the further time that we devote to individual studies, and the time that we each spend with our own Chinese buddies, this week has positively flown.