We are having a very interesting and amazing time in Tianjin, China and are every day learning so much about the Chinese culture and the differences between that and what we are accustomed to in Australia. I would love to share with you our weekend trip away to Beijing.

We packed the night before so we could leave straight from class. After the bell rang we all ran up to our rooms and grabbed our bags. It was very funny to see the bag size of each of us. Negah had the smallest bag, she was carrying only a backpack for the weekend, this was very different to Whitney who had packet a wheely suitcase and giant makeup box.

We travelled to Beijing by fast train which travelled at speeds of up to 300 km/hr! At that incredible rate we arrived at Beijing in only 30 minutes time. It was fascinating to see the change from the high rise landscape of Tianjin to the farmland and unbuilt up areas between the two cities. When we arrived in Beijing we caught the subway to our hotel, again taking note of the amazing efficiency of the public transportation systems in China. Although there were many people using the subway service the cars of the subway came very regularly which kept the flow of passengers moving. The subway also had a Chinese/English loudspeaker system and pinyin as well as character station maps which made our travels in Beijing very easy.

Our first day in the capital city of China: Beijing! We awoke early and went to a very missed western style restaurant for breakfast which was very appreciated and delicious. We sat outside in t-shirts because it was such a beautiful day with a warm sun, slight cool breeze and very clear blue sky. Then, feeling healthy and exhilarated we caught the subway to the very famous Tiananmen Square which was so different to how I expected it to be. I expected it to be a small square surrounded by nothing in particular but it was actually HUGE with many monuments. We saw the Monument to the People's Heroes, which has the inscription ‘The People's Heroes are Immortal' engraved on it. We took many photos to remember this renowned tourist attraction. I also didn't expect that right across the road would be the Forbidden City. We went there next and I was in awe of its size and number of doors and walls guarding its depths. We read that for many centuries it served as the home of the Emperor and for his household.

The next day was the best day of my life so far. Me and our Korean friend Rachel climbed the Great Wall. It was a three hour bus ride away from our centrally located hotel which was good because it allowed us to have a little nap before walking the Great Wall. This was very needed because the bus picked us up from our hotel at 6am. When the bus pulled up I was surprised at how mountainous the land was. We were very excited to finally see one of the seven man made wonders of the world. We went with a tour group and so on the bus we were told some very interesting things about
the Great Wall and when it was constructed. Our tour guide told the group that the wall was constructed some time between the 5th century BC and the 16th century as protection. We were also told that the wall is longer than 6000km. Luckily we were only planning to walk for 10km of it. It was an amazing mini-break weekend and really increased our love and admiration for China and its amazing feats and our commitment for getting the most out of our UMAP scholarship and learning of the Chinese language.