This week has mainly consisted of classes, and as we move further into our time here things are beginning to feel more comfortable.

Personally, I found myself coming up against health complications. Not even a week into my stay in China and I find myself on antibiotics. A stitch site from my wisdom teeth extraction became infected and fat. Luckily, I packed antibiotics with me, so didn’t have to search the city for it. However, I had not pre-empted the same of panadol or nurofen and so had to battle the language barrier with the sales assistants in the pharmacy.

The weather has improved dramatically since we first arrived, with warm balmy days and blue skies peeking through the smog. The nights stay warm, and allow us to go out and eat late, and then go for walks afterwards. The quadrangle is occupied with groups playing badminton, and there is a nice feeling of community developing within the hotel. The hotel is a cultural melting pot, with students from all around the globe coming together.

The classes are long, but enjoyable and the teachers are lovely. This week marked the start of elective classes - in which students can do extra classes in the afternoons. Calligraphy, Chinese singing, tai chi and a Chinese business class are all offered. Shelley and myself had our first calligraphy lesson today. It was a lot of fun, and the teacher is a lovely portly man with a fantastic sense of humour.

Sam bought a basketball, so we can now make full use of the courts just outside our hotel. It is constantly in use, and playing with the locals allows us to further improve our Chinese, and them their English. It would seem however, that language barriers are left on the bench whilst on the court.

Last Friday night marked the end of the first week of classes. We set off to the Chinese club that most of the students go to at about 11:30 - not quite sure what to expect out of the night.

Arriving at the club was like something out of a movie. Strobes flashed relentlessly as we walked through the dimly lit club - abusing the senses. Unlike the clubs at home, the floor space was taken up by long, luxurious benches with people serving alcohol. Upon podiums stood performers - men with two ladies each draped over them dancing. For most of the members of our team, Saturday was written off as a day of rest.

On Sunday, we boarded the bus headed for the city. The heat from the day penetrated the bus, and it quickly became clear that the air con was not working. A 30 minute bus ride brought us to the front of the shopping area, and it was here we grasped the full population of Tianjin. People were crammed into the outdoor space, the heat beating down on the consumers. Altogether, a successful weekend was had by all.

Sam, Shelley, Matt and I are headed to Pingyao for the weekend, as the International photography festival is being held there. It will be exciting to get out of Tianjin and begin to explore other places.

-Danielle Basser