Study Abroad Experience in China, by Jocelyn Lee (2011)

For the spring semester of 2011, I studied abroad in Northwest University of Xi'an China. Unlike the typical study abroad program, I applied directly to the Northwest University International School in order to further develop not only my understanding of the Chinese language, but more importantly, Chinese archaeology. Direct application to the school meant that I was not constantly surrounded by Western students but instead completely dwelled into the Chinese life. Being in the same city the previous summer for an archaeological field school, I was fortunate enough to have friends who are graduate students at the school, and I surrounded myself with them and those alike. Although I took language classes, the other students came from Vietnam or Central Asia, so very little English was spoken. Aside from Chinese language classes, I also took three other Chinese archaeology classes with the rest of the Chinese undergraduate students. My life in Xi'an was simple. In comparison to Beijing, Shanghai, and other large Chinese cities, Xi'an was a much smaller, quieter and slower city. It is currently in the peak of development and therefore there is constant construction. Nevertheless, the city gave me a sense of peace, with the advantages of a city-such as the ease of transportation, but all the while retaining its natural semi-rural, quiet element. Aside from attending classes, each day I spent quality time with my friends by taking walks around campus or off campus, or by making good use of the overwhelming amount of ping pong tables. On weekends we would take the bus to go explore other parts of the city, amongst our favorite were the Bell Towers, Muslim Quarter, and the Pagoda. Later in the semester, I was also fortunate enough to attend two excavations while I was there, giving me more hands-on experience as to exactly what Chinese archaeology meant. One excavation allowed me to travel into the far west of China, in Hami of Xinjiang Province, whereas the other allowed me to stay close to this dear city, locating in Gaoling County, just on the outskirts of Xi'an. Overall my study abroad experience allowed me to completely immerse myself in Chinese life and experience Chinese culture to the fullest.